ISHMAEL AS TRAVEL WRITER: MOBY-DICK'S REWORKING OF THE TRAVEL NARRATIVE

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ABSTRACT

Melville's achievement in Moby-Dick becomes evident when we investigate his handling of travel writing conventions in Typee, his first book. The publishing history of Typee demonstrates that although Melville was desirous of criticizing many aspects of western society, he was obliged to temper his critique in order to attract readers. While in Typee Melville challenged the claims of imperialist discourses, he was constrained by a genre in which narrators readily employed the language of conquest.

Moby-Dick emerges out of this travel writing tradition to expose the political underpinning of the genre. Ishmael, the narrator, adopts various voices of lettered, imperial authority, and disputes the bases of their claims by revealing the senses in which they function as vehicles of containment. Ishmael challenges the dominance of such narratives as those of natural science, ethnography, and capitalism, at the same time ascribing value to the experience and knowledge both of working class westerners, and of peripheral inhabitants. In Moby-Dick, Melville directs our focus to the political subtexts of modes of representation, and reveals how travel writing can teach us, not about the periphery, but about ourselves.

Introduction

In Chapter 89 of Moby-Dick, "Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish," Ishmael discusses the legalities of ownership in the whaling industry, specifically in the case of a harpooned whale that has been claimed by another ship. A "Fast-Fish," Ishmael explains, "belongs to the party fast to it," whereas a "Loose-Fish is fair game for anybody who can sooner catch it" (MD 1216). Characteristically, Ishmael's "fish" are transformed into metaphoric representations of sexuality, as in the case of the "harpooned" wife, and politics, as evidenced by "the America of 1492" (MD 1218-19); his petition to the audience: "And what are you, reader, but a Fast-Fish and a Loose-Fish, too?" (MD 1219), implies that our ideas, our institutions and even our most basic relationships are inextricably governed by such rules. As an undergraduate, I was that "Loose-Fish"; susceptible to the gill nets, lances, and harpoons of writers, philosophers and artists, I maneuvered through the waters of academia like the basking, unsuspecting whales of Ishmael's observances. Unlike Moby Dick, however, who could withstand Ahab's mad obsession, I was defenseless against his persuasive benedictions and hypnotic iambics; like the awe-inspired crew, I too remained transfixed by the captain's wild and mysterious gesticulations. Yes, Melville's whaleboat pursued me with a

single-minded purpose that was unequaled by any other, and from the moment that first harpoon was launched, and I felt the lines wrap inevitably around me, I knew that I had become a "Fast-Fish," not likely to become the possession of another.

There are those who might object to this line of reasoning, and argue that the reader ultimately chooses the text--not the other way around--yet I enjoy the metaphor, and unlike Ishmael, I refuse to be "cajoled into the delusion that [my attraction to Moby-Dick] was a choice resulting from my own unbiased freewill and discriminating judgement" (MD 799). After all, he was the one who beckoned "Call me Ishmael": with this enticing bit of bait, what power had I to resist? Like Ishmael, I too was allowed to embark on a whaling voyage free of charge, and trade in my "Yale and Harvard" (momentarily, at least) for a whaleship. He promised that "almost all men, in their degree, some time or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings toward the ocean with me" (MD 795). Perhaps I happened upon Moby-Dick, as Ishmael came upon New Bedford, at a propitious time, a time in which we both yearned to explore "that ungraspable phantom of life" (MD 797); whatever the case, I have my reasons for believing that not a little bit of determinism played a part in my becoming a Fast-Fish, and that I, however fleetingly, could also "see a little into the springs and motives which [were] cunningly presented to me under various disguises" (MD 799).

I borrow Melville's metaphor of the Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish not only as a means to express my "siamese ligature" to

his masterpiece, Moby-Dick, but also as a method of illustrating what first attracted me to the novel. My initial experience with Moby-Dick presented itself in the form of an undergraduate presentation, and Melville's writing soon captivated me with its richness, its complexity, and the ease with which it transformed the most seemingly mundane experiences of shipboard life into metaphoric allusions to politics, language, nature, philosophy--in short, a microcosmic representation of how we order our lives and respond to the world. Even more so than these learned turns of phrase, and his witty, humorous aphorisms, I was immediately struck by Melville's self-conscious reveling in language, an unfettered, wholehearted resignation to meditation, playfulness, and exuberance.

Yet not until I encountered Typee, Melville's first novel, in a graduate class on American travel writing, did I begin to realize Melville's achievement in Moby-Dick. Perhaps more important than displaying Melville's development as an artist, Typee suggested a context in which I could situate and discuss Moby-Dick. While many critics would agree that Typee is a travel narrative, there has been little consensus as to which genre Moby-Dick inhabits; it has been read as an epic, a novel, a quest narrative, an anatomy, a modernist text, and an allegory, to name but a few. These various critical categories resemble Ishmael's attempts to classify the whale in "Cetology," only Ishmael readily acknowledges the self-consuming nature of such an enterprise. More pointedly, we

can say that Ishmael's attempts to understand Moby-Dick are a guidebook for how we should approach the novel. His playful jesting in the cetological chapters suggests that natural science is only one means of understanding the whale; only by regarding him from multiple perspectives can Ishmael begin to shape an idea of the living Leviathan. One can see, then, that those critics who operate on the principle of exclusivity, and uphold Moby-Dick as a constituent of a single genre, occupy a circular orbit; they make the mistake of settling into an authoritative posture, their absolute claims on the text readily belying their own critical limitations. This thesis, then, does not seek to represent Moby-Dick as a travel narrative per se, but as a work that emerges out of the travel writing tradition and responds to some of the problematic concerns of the genre.

While it is important at the outset to establish how Moby-Dick is informed by the conventions of this genre, there remains the more pressing concern of why this narrative structure is important to the thematic and ideological concerns of this novel. The flexibility of this type of writing, with its inherent ability to contain a wide possibility of various forms and discourses, may be posited as a partial answer, but this affords very limited practical applications for our discussion. Stacey Burton remarks that travel literature often gives "more compelling insight into the cultural situation and expectations of the writer than into the subject of his or her observations" and that one of

its defining characteristics is that it "reveals much about the construction of the self, the representation of experience, the ideologies of colonialism and imperialism, the boundaries between fact and fiction, and the relationship between readers and texts" (Burton 51). My discussion of Moby-Dick will examine many of the conventions associated with the travel narrative genre, and it presupposes that the emergence of travel writing is only truly understandable in the context of Euro-American imperialism and foreign colonization. Mary Louise Pratt convincingly demonstrates how "travel books by Europeans about non-European parts of the world went (and go) about creating the 'domestic subject' of Euro-imperialism; how they have engaged metropolitan reading publics with (or to) expansionist enterprises whose material benefits accrued mainly to the few" (Pratt 4). While Typee may have inadvertently contributed to the production of imperialism's "domestic subject," Moby-Dick works to invert the telescope and offer some suggestions as to how this "domestic subject" produces, or at least contributes to, the dominant authorities of American society. Though Moby-Dick surpasses Melville's earlier novels in its criticisms of the ideologies of capitalism and imperialism, it must be remembered that this novel does grow out of the tradition of the travel narrative, which provided the model for his earlier works. In order to understand the achievement of Moby-Dick, it becomes necessary to explore the way in which it is

informed by many of the conventions of travel writing, and how it reworks them to expose the limitations of the genre.

Melville's decision to render his earlier works in the form of travel narratives bespeaks his awareness of the public appetite for exotic accounts of distant lands. Yet aside from the lucrativeness of this genre, Melville also recognized the political underpinning of travel writing, and its power to legitimate imperial conquests and shape the social consciousness. Typee, with its blend of biography and fiction, allowed Melville to reconstruct his own experiences in a fashion which challenged many of the dominant ideologies put forth in travel writing. Yet despite the attempt in Typee to manage a critique of empire and imperialism, it remained too firmly situated in the political implications of the genre, creating a conflicting subtext which attacked, yet paradoxically reinforced, many of the tenets of imperialism and ethnography that it sought to unmask. The inability of Tommo, the narrator of Typee, to relinquish the "language of conquest" which informs his account, results in a narrative that never manages to afford the Typees a voice; Tommo displays an obvious willingness to discover social inequities, yet he never escapes from the limitations of the genre in which the colonizing eye makes its observation of "the other." Melville was caught between the pressing need to gain an audience, thereby securing an income and a reputation, and the desire to effect social change; despite his genuine concerns with imperialism and colonization, his willingness to appease

his publishers by expurgating his text suggests that effective social criticisms gave way to fiscal pressures. In this sense, it may be useful to conceive of Moby-Dick as a critique of ideology, a novel which functions as a kind of artistic solution to the problems that hindered his earlier works. Given Melville's prior skill at gauging the public interest, reflected in the success of narratives like Typee, Omoo, and Redburn, the disastrous reception of Moby-Dick suggests that he was making a conscious break from his audience. Moby-Dick is the truest testament of Melville's artistry, largely because he eschews the prudential concerns of publishers and "cultivated" readers, to produce a work which is unbridled and unconventional, one that can finally effect the type of social criticism he attempted in Typee.

Tommo, the hero and narrator of Typee, exhibits a frustration with the way in which the Typees confound his expectations of Polynesian culture. The problem resides in how these expectations were shaped, since Tommo's only prior knowledge of South-Sea culture was gleaned from the travel narratives that furnished his library. Tommo's language, rooted in the discourse of imperialism, highlights its inability to accommodate, or even acknowledge, alternate systems of belief; the power of his language is contingent upon controlling and containing cultural and linguistic differences, and "naturalizing" these differences as "absences and lacks" (Pratt 51). His remark on the tattooing ritual, that "the nature of the connection between it and the

superstitious idolatry of the people was a point upon which I could never obtain any information" (Typee 246), belies his fear of immersing himself in Typee culture; his fear of receiving a tattoo mirrors his unwillingness to be inscribed, both in a literal and figurative sense, with the codes and customs of Typee society.

Ishmael, by contrast, describes the tattoos that adorn the body of Queequeg in a manner which seeks to afford them a particular cultural significance:

> And this tattooing had been the work of a departed prophet and seer of his island, who, by those hieroglyphic marks, had written out on his body a complete theory of the heavens and the earth, and a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth; so that Queequeg in his own proper person was a riddle to unfold; a wondrous work in one volume; but whose mysteries not even himself could read. (MD 1307)

Despite the indecipherable quality of Queequeg's tattoos, Ishmael's recognition that they represent "a complete theory of the heavens and the earth" endows them with local importance. Unlike Tommo, who feels threatened that the existence of alternate forms of meaning may undermine the power of his own convictions, Ishmael willingly succumbs to the tattooing ritual, inscribing the measurements of the whale on one arm, while leaving the other "parts of [his] body blank for a poem [he] was then composing" (MD 1274-75). The figure of Ishmael's partially tattooed body serves as an apt metaphor for the whole of his narration; his ability to contextualize the tattoo, to cover one part of his body and leave the remainder "blank," evinces his willingness to mediate between

various systems of meaning within and outside of his culture. Ishmael's engagement with foreign customs does not prefigure a complete submission to that culture, yielding one set of conceptions to another; instead, his narrative manages to contain various claims to authority by allowing for linguistic and conceptual differences.

Tommo's prefatory disclaimer promises that in his treatment of Typee customs, he will "[refrain] in most cases from entering into explanations concerning their origin and purposes" (Typee vii), a remark which sharply diverges from Ishmael's rendering of Queequeg's history in "Biographical." In Queequeg's eyes, it is the Christians who speak "gibberish," and it is the threat of Christianity that may have "unfitted him for ascending the pure and undefiled throne of thirty pagan Kings before him" (MD 853). Though Tommo, too, is confounded by the way in which the Typees resist imperial classification, and is momentarily reluctant to use the imperial denotations of such tags as "savage" and "cannibal," he cannot wholly free himself from the language of conquest that informs his account:

> But, notwithstanding the kind treatment we received, I was too familiarwith the fickle disposition of savages not to feel anxious to withdraw fromthe valley, and put myself beyond the reach of that fearful death, which, underall these smiling appearances, might yet menace us. (Typee 116)

Clearly, Tommo's familiarity with the "fickle disposition of savages" indicates his intimacy with the travel writing genre; he remains unable to divorce the western view of cannibalism

from its cultural signification in the Typee Valley because of the political implications of the travel narrative. His sojourn with the Typees places him in the position of the observer, or colonizer, and his task becomes one of fitting the Typees into preexistent imperial categories for his narration. In this instance, one can see the self-consuming nature of Tommo's attempt at criticizing aspects of Euro-American imperialism. His strategy is contingent upon reducing the Typees to a homogenous entity by "stuffing multiplicity into a manageable hierarchy" (Schueller 10), a metonymic rendering of their customs and lifestyle which denies them individuality and potential. Although he seems devoted to issuing his critique of imperialism, he still resorts to the paradigmatic discourse of the language of conquest. Tommo mistakenly interprets the existence of an alternate system of language and beliefs as a possible replacement for his own, rather than as part of a dialogical model which shapes the world. His escape from the valley, then, "presuppose[s] the imperially correct outcome" (Pratt 87), as the survivor reenters the Western world to narrate his account of "the other."

By contrast, Ishmael's gestures toward ethnography display a significant amount of cultural tolerance. His ability to work through the constructed categories of his own discourse is evident in his dismissal of Queequeg's cannibalism, as he rationalizes: "Better to sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian" (MD 819). Despite his

initial fear of the harpooner, Ishmael manages to attain a measure of cultural relativism in the first few chapters that Tommo is unable to effect through the entire course of his narrative: "What's all this fuss about, thought I to myself--the man's a human being just as I am: he has as much reason to fear me, as I have to be afraid of him" (MD 818-19). Ishmael's willingness to partake in Queequeg's pagan rituals is not a resignation to another system of beliefs; rather, it evinces his desire to dismiss cultural boundaries in favor of a common denominator--that of humanity. Ishmael smokes Queequeg's tomahawk pipe, and worships in front of his pagan idol, displaying a marked ability to adopt usages from diverse cultures for himself. His observations on the culture and beliefs of Queequeg are not posited from a strictly western viewpoint, and instead suggest that Ishmael is attempting to understand this man through the lens of Polynesian codes and customs. Rather than become frustrated by the inefficacy of his language to contain Queequeg's differences, Ishmael views his participation in alternative rituals as an opportunity for society and friendship. Crucial to Ishmael's narration in Moby-Dick is the fact that the Pequod never reaches land. By limiting the narrative to the voyage itself, Melville is free to comment on a host of possibilities that are largely excluded by a narrative such as Tommo's, which operates under the terms of colonizer and colonized; situated firmly within the boundaries of another culture, Tommo feels as though he must choose one system of language and beliefs over another.

By assembling a multiracial crew in Moby-Dick, Melville may maintain his interest in ethnographic portraiture, but in a way that manages largely to avoid the imperial laden subjectivity of a Euro-American traveler reporting on the customs and practices of a foreign culture. Though Ishmael's attempt at understanding the culture of Queequeg is couched in ethnographic terms, it is a representation divorced from a particular physical surrounding, thereby avoiding the political subtext of a narrative which depends upon the reduction of peripheral cultures in order to extend the reaches of empire.

The Pequod serves as the most neutral of Melville's "contact zones," a term denoting the coming together of disparate cultures, usually on vastly unequal terms (Pratt 6). The ship never enters the terrain of colonized and colonizer; instead, its voyage is predicated on the practices of capitalism--for the monetary reward of sperm oil--and revenge, evident in Ahab's unifying quest for the white whale. Such a framework, with the familiar metaphor of the ship-as-society, offers Melville new exploratory possibilities, as he imaginatively reconstructs a society, perhaps no less exploitative, in which people are not understood in terms of their cultural allegiances, but as units of labor. The Pequod is the only ship in Melville's novels on which a product is actually made; it is, in fact, something akin to a floating factory. Melville's interest in the effects of capitalism is intense, and Moby-Dick contains many vivid descriptions of

officiary rank (linking the officiary, traditional naval rank of the sea with the hierarchical structure of capitalist economies), the capture of whales and the production of oil, the duties assigned to various ship personnel, and tributary effects such as the degradation of nature, the slavery of labor (as well as the "Guinea-coast slavery" of Ahab's command), and the despotic, authoritarian behavior, paralleled by the radical inequality, that is spawned by industrial capitalism.

Melville's earliest works, Typee and Omoo, sought to challenge the effects of American imperialism by altering the prevailing stereotypes of peripheral cultures. His subsequent works, however, operate more within the confines of western society, as he attempts to free the working class from equally constraining modes of representation. In Redburn, notably, Melville exposes capitalism as a decidedly undemocratic ideology, evident in the tension between the decadent London gambling houses, and the filthy, rancorous conditions of the Liverpool slums. While the subjects of Typee and Redburn are quite different, the narrative strategies that Melville employs in these works are remarkably consistent; taken together, these works link the "others" who are reduced by imperialism with the lower classes who are oppressed by capitalism. Though the social commentary in Typee often falters, Melville displays an evident desire to wrest the Typee people from an imperialistic discourse that contains them for the interests of empire. In Redburn, meanwhile, the

defeated expectations of the narrator, Wellingborough, expose the suffocating limitations that capitalism exerts on the lower classes; though the social critique in Redburn is also at times dubious, it does strive for new ways to represent the worth of the sailor. Moby-Dick effectively combines the critique of imperialism in Typee with the reproof of capitalism found in Redburn; Melville's decision to align these two marginalized groups suggests his recognition of the complementary narrative strategies that were devised to contain them. Wai-chee Dimock, commenting on this symbiosis of imperialism and capitalism, argues that "what empowered both narratives, what made them such effective instruments of governance, was precisely their ability to fashion a 'destiny' out of temporality, to impose a 'manifest' harmony on what might otherwise appear naked conflict" (Dimock 20). In other words, by positioning itself further along the evolutionary scale, America could justify, or "naturalize," the genocide at home, on the frontier, and abroad, in her imperial endeavors; the same social group which legitimated this form of progress could do the same from within American society by depicting the working class as "uncivilized," thus sanctioning the disparate class differences sprung from capitalism.

If we understand Ishmael's polyphonic narrative as a means of challenging the exclusionary ideologies of imperialism and capitalism, we may begin to explore Melville's appropriation of diverse tropes in Moby-Dick as an effort to attain, or speculate on both inter- and intra-cultural

relativity. In order to hear and value these voices, and make them narratable in the context of popular fiction, Melville first attempts to deauthorize many of the tenets of imperial discourse. Such a strategy enables him to restore significance and importance to the narrative of the worker, affording the "peasant knowledge"(Pratt 5) of seasoned sailors equal footing with those dominant ideologies that so desperately need to suppress it. Similarly, this strategy allows Melville to confront the exploitation of cultures outside of his society, evident in his refashioning of ethnography to allow for a discourse that can accept, rather than exclude, intercultural differences.

Closely linked with the narratives of ethnography and labor is the narrative of science, the discourse of the scientific journeyman and explorer. For the imperial aspirations of Europe and America, the emergence of natural science offered a means of codifying and legitimating the subjugation of other forms of knowledge, particularly those manifested by the lower classes. As he does with other kinds of competing authorities, Ishmael attempts to test the boundaries of science, and expose the myth of absolute scientific objectivity. As with his meditations upon Calvinism, philosophy, phrenology, and cetology, to name just a few, he does not assume a fixed position, supporting one ideology at the expense of others, but displays the limits of each in understanding the mysteries of life; for Ishmael, the pagan idol-worship of Queequeg is as important as the devout

Christianity of Father Mapple, and "an ancient Hawaiian war-club or spear-paddle, in its full multiplicity and elaboration of carving, is as great a trophy of human perseverance as a Latin lexicon" (MD 1083). The achievement of Moby-Dick, relative to Melville's earlier works, resides precisely in this dialogical nature; Ishmael's concern is not with using his own culture as a norm from which he may understand people, cultures, and belief systems through varying degrees of relative "otherness," but in constructing a forum that manages to hear and value experiences that would normally be overwritten by dominant ideologies. The polyvocality of such a narrative seeks to overcome the monologism of imperial attitudes that inform travel literature, and which severely diminished the import of Tommo's social commentary in Typee.

My examination of Moby-Dick, as I have stated earlier, is premised upon the way in which Melville responds to different conventions of the travel narrative in order to fashion an effective social criticism. Hence, my thesis is divided into three chapters, each addressing how Ishmael's narrative is informed by a different convention of the genre. The first chapter explores Ishmael's employment of the scientific narrative, wedding two distinct branches of scientific knowledge, technology and natural science, as a means of anticipating the concerns that will be addressed in the final two chapters. The first portion of the chapter investigates how Ishmael affects the voice of the scientific traveler, only to exploit it as deeply conjoined with the aspirations of

imperialism. My examination of Melville's treatment of natural science provides a framework for my investigation of his refashioning of ethnography, the subject of the second chapter. The second half of Chapter One investigates the emergence of technological advancements and studies Ahab's use of technology to subdue the crew to his purpose; it recalls the role of technology in nineteenth-century America and illustrates how the dehumanizing cost of Ahab's quest implicitly challenges the contemporary narrative of technological progression. The section on technology foreshadows my discussion of the labor narrative in chapter three, as it details the way in which the narrative of technology is sanctified, and eventually leads to the mechanization of production. In Chapter Two, I discuss Ishmael's reformulation of ethnographic representation. As a component of natural science, ethnography was perhaps the most effective tool for legitimating imperial conquest and justifying Manifest Destiny, since it could naturalize the inferiority of foreign cultures. With the figure of Queequeg in Moby-Dick, Melville is able to subvert the ethnocentric biases which informed earlier narratives, such as Typee. The final chapter explores the subject of labor in Moby-Dick, how Ahab's authoritarian command epitomizes the radical inequality produced by capitalism, and how Ishmael attempts to validate the voice of the common sailor. Common to all three of these chapters are Ishmael's consistent attempts to emancipate the "others" of foreign cultures and the crew of the Pequod from

constraining ideologies. He unsettles a complacent faith in scientific authority in an effort to hear and value the "peasant knowledge" of the worker, while his representation of Queequeg lays bare the imperial mechanisms that regulate ethnography. By continually appropriating different modes of the travel narrative, and then exposing their political investments, Melville is able to create a forum in which we can hear those voices that are usually stifled by the ideologies of capitalism and imperialism.

I am arguing that Melville was aware of the political implications of the travel narrative genre, and that he realized the marginalizing tendencies that these exerted on vast segments of people, both inside and outside of his culture. Melville, who has relied on his own travel experience for many of his novels, formulates an effective method in Moby-Dick of unmasking some of the latent motivations of such writings, often unconsciously embedded in the language of the observer, to reveal the limitations and the dangers inherent in such a discourse. The reader, navigating through the cetology of Ishmael, the (auto)biography of Queequeg, or the production of sperm oil by the crew, is not offered a stable, authoritative discourse, but instead is left with various rival claims to authority, each with its own systems of knowledge and experiences. Just as travel writing exists in a reciprocal relationship with its readers, simultaneously informed by their discourses and informing them, so Melville is a "cogged wheel" to borrow

Ahab's mechanical metaphor, inserted into the machinery of travel literature to perhaps change its rotation, or alter the society which at once sanctifies it and is shaped by it.

CHAPTER 1

Science, Sailors, and Scrimshaws

The tenets of science, in particular natural history, were instrumental in marginalizing the proletariat in America and the colonized inhabitants of foreign cultures. As Mary Louise Pratt has demonstrated, the emergence of Linnaeus' Systema Naturae, a scientific classificatory system, gave rise to a "planetary consciousness," which conceived of nature as a primordial chaos upon which scientists and botanists imposed order. Such a project, with the newly developed language of the Linnaean system, emerged as a highly narratable subject for travel accounts, its "democratic" nature allowing anybody acquainted with the system to classify various constituents of the natural world. Notably, both the scientists who developed and continued this naturalizing project, and the travelers who published such accounts, were white, European, educated men who supported the hegemonic interests invested in scientific emergence. Promulgating natural history had decidedly imperialistic advantages, as it could "naturalize" the position of Europeans as colonizers of "less developed" cultures, and at the same time legitimate their authoritative positions within western society by "[overwriting] local and peasant ways of knowing" (Pratt 35). The definite tendency of European natural history to subsume all of nature into one overriding scheme, severing particular elements of nature from

cultural, societal, or religious significations, "interrupted existing networks of historical and material relations among people, plants, and animals wherever it applied itself" (Pratt 32). The forum of travel literature thus became the essential mediator between the journeyman-scientist and the reading public; given the impact of this literature in developing and sustaining what Pratt has termed a "planetary consciousness," Ishmael is forced to adopt the same medium to deauthorize scientific knowledge and restore the "peasant knowledge" of the sailors that has been displaced.

The tension and ambivalence that characterize Tommo's narrative in Typee illustrate just how deeply this scientific perspective was embedded in the discourse of western travelers. While science provided a framework for locating and "classifying" various peoples, plants, and animals, it operated on the principle of exclusivity, ordering the world from an intensely subjective western perspective. The most effective part of Tommo's social critique in Typee, rather paradoxically, occurs precisely when he is unable to divorce himself from the influences and prejudices of imperialist discourse. The fact that Tommo consciously attempts to confront this ideology, yet cannot help but resort to the language of conquest, is a poignant reminder of how powerful the narrative of natural science had become in nineteenth century America. In Moby-Dick, Melville transcends the critical limitations of Tommo by exposing the problematic union of science and imperialism through the characters of

Ishmael and Ahab. Ishmael's rambling and disjointed narrative parallels his unwillingness to adopt a fixed viewpoint of the world; his continual narrative maneuvering is usually accompanied by a philosophical shift or a "trying-on" of another character's attitudes or beliefs. It is this unsettled, flexible quality which allows Ishmael's narrative to test the limits of scientific authority, and reevaluate other brands of knowledge. The "fixed purpose" of Ahab, meanwhile, presents the perfect foil to Ishmael's ambulatory philosophizing. Ahab remains solely devoted to chasing and killing Moby-Dick, the white whale who has dismembered him in an earlier voyage. For Ahab, all things--the profits of the voyage, the safety of the crew, even his own soul--are secondary to his frenzied desire to slay Moby Dick. Ishmael's concerns with lettered scientific authority are largely abstract, as he demonstrates the way in which this authority displaces the discourses and experiences of working men and peripheral cultures. The figure of Ahab, on the other hand, illustrates precisely how scientific knowledge can facilitate this type of oppression. Ahab manipulates applied science, what I will hereafter refer to as technology, as a means to compel and subordinate his crew. His embodiment of technological authority displays how scientific knowledge can be abused to marginalize lower class workers and members of foreign cultures.

The first half of this chapter will study Ishmael's attempts to subvert the notion of lettered, scientific

authority, and restore a measure of worth to various types of knowledge that have been displaced. Aside from providing the context for understanding Ahab's appropriation of technology, this section will foreshadow my examination of ethnography in Chapter Two. The second half of this chapter will study Ahab's use of technology to order his quest. Many of the issues that are addressed here will be echoed in the third chapter, which examines Moby-Dick as a critique of capitalism. The narratives that I have selected--natural science, ethnography, and labor--are not unique to Moby-Dick; they are predominant tropes of travel writing, tropes which contain and foster the ideologies of western civilization in the 19th century.

Pratt cites the following excerpt from Daniel Defoe prefatory to her chapter dealing with scientific travel writing:

> [He may] make a tour of the world in books, he may make himself master of the geography of the universe in the maps, atlases and measurements of our mathematicians. He may travell by land with the historians, by sea with the navigators. He may go round the globe with Dampier and Rogers, and kno' a thousand times more doing it than all those illiterate sailors. (Daniel Defoe, The Compleat English Gentleman (1730))

Defoe's remarks are portentous, foretelling the radical shift toward global understanding that would be facilitated by the expansion of the printing industry, and the increased availability of literature to the reading public. Travel writing allowed the reader to explore Africa, the Americas, and Australia, usually through the subjective lens of western

travelers. Defoe's remarks on literacy, in particular his complacent acceptance of the verity of travel accounts, accentuates the degree to which readers were influenced by the imperial perspectives of contemporary travel literature. After all, these "illiterate sailors" were incapable of narrating their own accounts, hampered not only by their inability to write, but by their fundamental opposition to the ideologies that controlled and legitimated themselves through travel literature. At the same time that these authorities constructed the globe from a distinctly western perspective, marginalizing or rewriting cultures to suit their own imperialistic objectives, the "illiterate sailors," the working class who made such excursions (and by the same logic their narration) possible, were usually denied a voice and discredited as worthy observers. In Moby-Dick, Melville is unsettling the complacent voyeurism of the reading public as he exposes the intense political subjectivity of these accounts; by upholding the experiential as an alternative to the lettered, imperially correct observer, he inverts the myths inherent in Defoe's remarks and affords the reader a radically new perspective on travel writing, that of the proletariat.

Ishmael examines the whale from a compendium of scientific perspectives, not with the intent of harnessing their authority, but for the effect of laying them bare, and exposing the limited applications that science has for the proper understanding of Moby Dick. A complementary part of

Ishmael's strategy resides in his frequent juxtapositions of bourgeois, scientific discourse with the relatively unlettered, experiential knowledge of the sailor, the effect of which is an unsettling of the elite scientific faith that forms much of the consciousness of American and European society. A cetologist, a paleontologist, a phrenologist, a physiognomist, and a physiologist, to name a few, Ishmael dons these scientific vestments to be exhaustive in his research, at the same time that his unanswered queries expose the limitations of such a discourse to account for the many mysteries of the whale. Pratt's term "transculturation," which describes how "subjugated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture" (Pratt 6), may be useful to describe intracultural dynamics, namely how laboring members of the American lower class inform and contribute to its dominant authorities. Pratt's focus is on how "the periphery determines the metropolis" (Pratt 6), a question which propels the narration of Ishmael. Certainly, the heteroglot discourse he employs, including his generic variations, are culled from the dominant, bourgeois, lettered world, yet they are used in a way that is directed back against this world. Ishmael subverts the very institutions which provide him with his language and form, managing, with a certain degree of success, to allow us to view things from the opposite end of the telescope; Ishmael's participation in the daily routines of

working sailors allows him to expose some of the ideologies that function as a measure of restraint on the voyage.

Melville's contempt for those who held up science as an absolute and "objective" means of understanding the world may be seen in his "The New Zealot to the Sun," an ironic poem in which a scientist, the "new zealot," heralds science as the new object of humanity's worship and adulation. He outlines a brief history of cultural progression, in which scriptural authority eventually succumbs to the "improved" and infallible system of scientific knowledge:

> But Science yet
> An effluence ampler shall beget,
> And power beyond your play--
> Shall quell the shades you fail to rout,
> Yea, searching every secret out,
> Elucidate your ray.
> (Poems, 264)

Science, the speaker assumes, will produce "an effluence ampler" than the sun, and explicate (or "elucidate") the many mysteries of the universe. Such a claim betrays as much arrogant egotism as Ahab's promise: "I'd strike the sun if it insulted me" (MD 967); any source of absolute authority, Melville seems to suggest, whether it be the exclusionary claims of natural science or the monomaniac obsession of Ahab, is inherently dangerous.

Defoe's "armchair traveler," as Pratt has designated him, is precisely the sort of figure that comes under attack in Ishmael's narration of Moby-Dick. Describing the inadequacy of science to understand the sperm whale by measuring its skeleton, Ishmael ruminates:

> How vain and foolish, then...for timid untravelled man to try to comprehend aright this wondrous whale, by merely poring over his dead, attenuated skeleton, stretched in this peaceful wood. (MD 1277)

Ishmael's remarks concerning the whale's skeleture are revealing for their qualitative, rather than their quantitative descriptions. His diction includes words such as "majestic" and "mighty," adjectives that evoke a subjective impression of the whale's size and grandeur, rather than the objectively calculated measurements of cetologists. His desire to present a "particular, plain statement, touching the living bulk of this Leviathan" (MD 1276) is rather quickly discarded in favor of a metaphoric discourse that operates in almost direct opposition to the relatively dispassionate observations of scientists. Comparing the spine to "Pompey's Pillar," and remarking that the vertebrae recall "the great knobbed blocks on a Gothic spire" (MD 1277), Ishmael fosters an appreciation of the beauty, the majesty, and even the vitality of the whale, which the discourse of science is powerless to convey. Similarly, Ishmael maintains that the ribs of the whale are often used by the inhabitants of the Arsacides "as beams whereon to lay footpath bridges over small streams" (MD 1277). Pratt's observation that "natural history extracted specimens...from their places in other peoples' economies, histories, social and symbolic systems" (Pratt 31), is being reworked by Ishmael's scientific narrative, as he invokes scientific discourse, only to extend its boundaries; he measures the physical size of the whale, and also restores

its particular cultural significance to the Arsacidean people. Common to all of Ishmael's descriptive apparatuses, however, is his experience; his metaphoric allusions and subjective responses derive from his actual sightings of the live whale, while his mention of the "footpath bridges" evinces not only his participation with a peripheral culture, but a willingness to include its usages in his attempt to "measure" the whale. His conclusion, with its warning to the Defoes of the world, is especially revealing:

> Only in the heart of quickest perils; only when within the eddyings of his angry flukes; only on the profound unbounded sea, can the fully invested whale be truly and livingly found out. (MD 1277)

Ishmael's insistence on the experiential is not so much a negation of science, as it is an assertion for alternative systems of knowledge that cannot be explicated by scientific discourse.

Such a strategy is apparent in "Cetology," a chapter in which Ishmael proposes a revised taxonomic structure for the proper classification of the whale. Again, Ishmael grounds his authority in experience, scoffing at those naturalists who, having never been "in the heart of quickest perils," nevertheless attempt to classify the whale. There is evident scorn in his remark that "though of real knowledge there be little, yet of books there are a plenty"(MD 933), and he deplores that "of all the names in this list of whale authors...but one of them was a real professional harpooner and whaleman" (MD 934). For Ishmael, scientific authority is

important, but not exhaustive; somehow, the proper comprehension of the whale must extend itself to include the experiences of the men who hunt him.

Not surprisingly, Ishmael's cetological classification is organized into "books." The sperm whale, he claims, "scientific or poetic, lives not complete in any literature. Far above all other hunted whales, his is an unwritten life" (MD 934). The juxtaposition of the "scientific," on one hand, and the "poetic," on the other, is important in that it evinces the necessary inclusion of both spheres to appreciate Moby Dick. Ishmael's narrative is a means of providing the whale with a written life, and the structuring principle of "books" that he employs constitutes a metaphor for the reading process. Comparing Moby-Dick to a text, Ishmael's cetological foray immediately invokes the process of reading; his adoption of various voices, both scientific and unscientific, instructs the reader on how to approach the novel. Sheila Post-Lauria, in her treatment of Melville as a writer of "mixed forms," argues that he "does not present alternative worldviews for the purpose of endorsing one over the other; rather, he advocates a necessary multiplicity of views" (112-13). This remark encapsulates a facet of my argument that cannot be overstressed: Ishmael's mockery of the scientific voice is not simply a renunciation of natural history or scientific authority. Instead, his strategy is contingent upon deauthorizing a predominant tendency among Western powers to regard science as an all-encompassing, unrivalled system with

which to understand the world. Only by doing this may he advocate the necessary inclusion of competing authorities, namely the potential of sailors and the "others" of foreign cultures.

Ishmael's proposed system for cetological classification is an endeavor to "attend to a matter almost indispensable to a thorough appreciative understanding of the more special leviathanic revelations and allusions of all sorts which are to follow" (MD 933). Too frequently, readers and critics of Moby-Dick, cognizant of the farce that Ishmael employs, treat the chapter as a form of comic digression. Instead, it becomes more instructive to explore Ishmael's use of farce as a means of attaining the multiplicity of perspectives that are necessary for a proper understanding of the whale, and by extension, the world. More pointedly, his employment of comic elements spares him the wrath of publishers and "cultivated readers" who would undoubtedly find a frontal attack on the omnipotence of scientific authority reprehensible. Jesting about the inefficacy of the Linnaean system, and toying with the inconclusive writings of noted scientists, Ishmael accomplishes two things: one, he avoids retribution from these "cultivated" readers by cloaking his remarks in comic garbs, and two, he maintains the ability to unsettle the complacent acceptance of an overriding scientific authority. Such a strategy may be seen in his quarrel with Linnaeus's System of Nature. Quoting Linnaeus's declaration "I hereby separate the whale from the fish," Ishmael retorts: "But of my own

knowledge, I know that down to the year 1850, sharks and shad, alewives and herring, against Linnaeus's express edict, were still found dividing the possession of the same seas with the Leviathan" (MD 935). Unfortunately, the obvious humor of this image risks obfuscating Ishmael's veiled assertion. In the context of this chapter, Ishmael has been making similar such jibes at the expense of lettered, but mostly inexperienced naturalists. If we recall the "generalizing purpose" of their writings, and Ishmael's disdain with the fact that only one of these authors of the whale was "a real professional harpooner and whaleman" (MD 934), we may begin to see that the reference to Linnaeus is more than merely comic diversion; it is a continuation of Ishmael's attempts to display the arbitrary limitations of scientific authority and restore a fundamental value to the experience and knowledge of common sailors. Citing the criteria upon which Linnaeus relied to distinguish whales from fish, Ishmael explains: "I submitted all this to my friends Simeon Macy and Charley Coffin, of Nantucket, both messmates of mine in a certain voyage, and they united in the opinion that the reasons set forth were altogether insufficient. Charley profanely hinted they were humbug" (MD 935-36). In this instance, Ishmael juxtaposes the educated, Latin lexicon employed by naturalists, with the jargon and colloquialisms of Nantucketers, and in the midst of this comic discrepancy, a forum is created which can hear and value the voice of the proletariat; the subsuming tendencies of the Linnaean System are subverted, and it is exposed, from the

perspective of the whalemen, as an inconsequential, if not completely irrelevant project.

In these examples, it may be noted that Ishmael is a notorious fence sitter. Anxious to assert the need for multiple perspectives, he cannot be wholly partisan (this can also be attributed to conflicts with publishers and portions of his audience), but must encourage diverse experiences, beliefs, and authorities from a variety of social, economic and cultural perspectives. Not surprisingly, Ishmael straddles the scientific community and the world of the laboring sailor. He does value the books on sperm whales that are written by Beale and Bennett, partially attributing this success to their tenure as surgeons aboard English whaleships. Their work, Ishmael argues, "is necessarily small; but so far as it goes, it is of excellent quality, though mostly confined to scientific description" (MD 934). While Ishmael's recognition of the contributions made by these naturalists confirms his willingness to value different systems of knowledge, his phrase "mostly confined to scientific description" indicates that he is reluctant to conceive of science as an absolute form of authority; it is only one means, and a limited one at that, of understanding the whale. While the Linnaean system may specify where Moby Dick belongs in a certain order of things (an order, nonetheless, arbitrarily constructed by these naturalists), it cannot convey what this whale is, inasmuch as it cannot convey an impression of his majesty or his awe-inspiring strength. Much

of what Ishmael wishes to express resides in an intuitive response to the experience of seeing the whale, of being "in the heart of quickest perils." Part of his classificatory scheme depends upon rescuing this impressionistic element, this response, from a dispassionate and "objective" scientific methodology that normally works to suppress it. Ishmael compares his task to "grop[ing] down into the bottom of the sea" and "hav[ing] one's hands among the very pelvis of the world" (MD 935), and indeed, his descriptions of the various whales continue this metaphoric discourse. Ishmael has "swam through libraries and sailed through oceans," (MD 935) and his classification of the Leviathan reflects this tension between his book-learned "facts" and the first hand observations he has gained through his journeys as a sailor. While his cetological divisions roughly approximate those employed by scientists, Ishmael often reverts to his experience as a sailor to unsettle the scientific nature of his structure. Thus, in proposing a renaming of the Black Fish to the Hyena Whale, he explains: "I give the popular fishermen's names for all these fish, for generally they are the best" (MD 941). Employing the colloquial nomenclature used by these whalemen restores significance to their experiences, and rescues their legacy from the usually abstract and generalizing tags produced by scientific discourse. Similarly, Ishmael appends his own editorial notes to substantiate the authenticity of his document, at the same time that he uses them to produce a disjunction in readers' expectations. One such note explains

that certain fish, such as the Lamatins and the Dugongs, "are included by many naturalists among the whales." Immediately, however, Ishmael wrests this authority from natural science to declare: "But as these pig-fish are a noisy, contemptible set, mostly lurking in the mouths of rivers, and feeding on wet hay, and especially as they do not spout, I deny their credentials as whales; and have presented them with their passports to quit the Kingdom of Cetology" (MD 140). Despite the apparent comedy, Ishmael is pricking the complacency of his readers; garnering authority for his claims based on the experiential nature of his account, he frequently disrupts the reading process by including humorous assertions about the whale. Most importantly, however, he introduces the notion of an alternate means of valuing and understanding Moby-Dick; his descriptors of the pig-fish as "contemptible" and "noisy" are clearly connotative and imply a subjective response, a stark contrast to the physical evidence which provides the criteria for natural scientists. In addition, Ishmael's system manages to restore a richly suggestive historical, mythological, and commercial significance to whales; it allows the reader to view the whale through the eyes of the sailor, or perhaps from the perspective of a different culture. In either case, it rescues the whale from the appropriating embrace of natural history. Ishmael "promise[s] nothing complete; because any human thing supposed to be complete, must for that very reason infallibly be faulty" (MD 139). It is this unstated, totalizing notion of modern science, especially evident when

it is conjoined with imperialist aspirations, that Ishmael steadfastly rejects.

In "Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales," Ishmael attempts to enlighten his readers about "the true form of the whale as he appears to the eye of the whaleman" (MD 1073), an effort, nonetheless, contingent upon freeing the whale from those "pictorial delusions" which abound "not only in most popular pictures of the whale, but in many scientific presentations of him" (MD 1073). Ishmael's desire "to set the world right in this matter" (MD 1073) parallels his ambition of restoring worth to the lived experiences of common men, a strategy which again involves challenging the implicit assumptions of scientific authority which are promulgated through the form of travel literature. Citing those pictures of the whale which claim to be "sober, scientific delineations" (MD 1074), Ishmael catalogues a host of inaccurate depictions, including the plates from the Spitzbergen voyage which display polar bears running over the back of the living sperm whale, and representations of the narwhale in Goldsmith's Animated Nature which Ishmael compares to "an amputated sow" (MD 260). Frederick Cuvier, in his 1836 work A Natural History of Whales, presents a picture of a sperm whale which Ishmael compares to a squash, jokingly speculating that the source of this picture was the same from which "Demarest got one of his authentic abortions; that is, from a Chinese drawing" (MD 261). Much of the scientific portraiture of whales, Ishmael argues, is derived from

stranded or beached specimens, and for that very reason, they miss the mark; the only true measure of the whale, he suggests, must be attained "by going a whaling yourself; but by so doing, you run no small risk of being eternally stove and sunk by him" (MD 1077).

Ishmael's contempt extends to more than scientific landlubbers, and includes those scientists who comprise the crews of naval voyages and exploratory expeditions. For Ishmael, the best depictions of whales and whaling scenes are those which convey some impression of the living whale as he is perceived by the men who hunt him. Not surprisingly, then, he proclaims the finest works of whale art to be those engravings which are based on the paintings of Garneray, lauding their ability to "[convey] the real spirit of the whale hunt" (MD 1080). In one particular engraving, "a noble sperm whale is depicted in full majesty of might, just risen beneath the boat from the profundities of the ocean" while the "heads of the swimming crew are scattered about the whale in contrasting expressions of afright" (MD 1079). Clearly, Ishmael values these engravings for their subjective responses to the whale; the qualities of "nob[ility]," and "majesty" which are ascribed to him, coupled with the terrific expressions of the crew, represent a faithful attempt to reproduce an encounter with the Leviathan. Ishmael concedes that "serious fault might be found with the anatomical details of the whale" but he asks that the reader "let that pass" (MD 1079); a true picture of the whale resides in more than merely

"presenting the mechanical outline of things, such as [his] vacant profile" (MD 1080). Moreover, the accuracy of Garneray's portrait is directly ascribed to that painter's intimacy with the common sailor; as Ishmael notes, "[Garneray] was either practically conversant with his subject, or else marvellously tutored by some experienced whaleman" (MD 1079). Ishmael manages to validate the experience of the whaleman by allowing his authority, not the scientist's, to serve as the basis for accuracy.

Thus far, we have discussed Ishmael's appropriation--and subsequent subversion--of natural science as a means of restoring a fundamental value to displaced discourses, primarily those represented by the laboring hands, and the indigenous peoples who were the objects of an imperial appetite. Ishmael's decision to represent these two groups as "victims of progress" (Dimock) may be elucidated with a brief discussion of the politics of representation in nineteenth-century America. Wai-chee Dimock argues that "even to a liberal reformer like Theodore Parker, there was a definite parallel between the two forms of barbarism: on the frontier, the 'Savages, the Inferior Races, the Perishing Classes of the world,' and, 'in the centre of civilization,' the 'Dangerous classes of society'"(18-19). This "narrativization of conflict" (Dimock 20), as Dimock terms it, could accommodate this "barbarism" by temporalizing it; naturalizing the extermination of natives (or peripheral inhabitants) as a form of human progression, on the one hand, or attributing the

unjust treatment of the working class to its need of "civilization," the particular voices of these groups became essentially unnarratable. Ishmael's decision to render their experiences and worth in Moby-Dick, then, represents a challenge to these imperial notions. In "Of Whales in Paint; in Teeth; [etc.]," Ishmael explicitly equates the "savages" of the working class with their counterparts both in and outside of continental America:

> 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, owing no allegiance but to the King of the Cannibals; and ready at any moment to rebel against him. (MD 1082-83)

Ishmael's strategy here is dependent upon elevating the usages of sailors, and by extension, those of peripheral cultures, to at least an equal footing with dominant social authorities. His citation of a "crippled beggar," who displays his painted re-creation of the "scene in which he lost his leg," furnishes one such example; as Ishmael notes, "his three whales are as good whales as were ever published in Wapping" (MD 1082). Speaking of the sailor's ability to fashion scenes "of much accuracy" on the likes of whalebone and shark's teeth, Ishmael asserts a significance for such scrimshaws on a par with the great mythologies which, ironically, form the foundation of civilization and cultivated literature: "As with the Hawaiian savage, so with the white sailor-savage...he will carve you a bit of bone sculpture, not quite as workmanlike, but as close packed in maziness of design, as the Greek savage, Achilles's

shield" (MD 1083). Important to both of these examples, the beggar's painting and the "sailor-savage's" carving, is that their drawings represent their stories. In each case, a particular artwork is an expression of historical, experiential, and perhaps even mythological significance.

Just as natural history proposed a discourse and vocabulary for perceiving the living world, thus influencing, and to a certain extent dictating, the way in which one could discuss nature and her inhabitants, so Ishmael offers an alternative means of evaluating the landscape. Again, Ishmael's vision depends upon the lived experience, and the way in which this contributes to and shapes one's perceptions:

> In bony, ribby regions of the earth, where at the base of high broken cliffs masses of rock lie strewn in fantastic groupings upon the plain, you will often discover images as of the petrified forms of the Leviathan partly merged in green grass, which of a windy day breaks against them in a surf of green. (MD 1083)

The geological import of this survey is clearly subordinate to the impressions that the landscape evokes for the traveler. Adjectives such as "bony" and "ribby" convey more than the mere description of the rocky terrain; they recall "the unspeakable foundations, ribs, and...pelvis of the world" (MD 935) and anticipate the physical outline of the whale, which is washed over by "a surf of green surges." Similarly, Ishmael claims that one may "trace out great whales in the starry heavens" and "catch passing glimpses of the profiles of whales defined along the undulating ridges" (MD 268). The "images" of these whales, however, do not readily present

themselves to every person who views the landscape; as Ishmael warns, their manifestation is contingent upon the viewer's experience and imagination: "you must be a thorough whaleman to see these sights" (MD 268). Ishmael's qualitative and subjective evaluation of nature is no less meaningful or valuable than those methods employed by natural scientists; his ability to discern an image of the whale in a rocky pasture illustrates how our conceptions, language, and experiences regulate our observations. This notion of relativism, then, casts natural science as an equally arbitrary and subjective measure of ordering the natural world. Just as Moby-Dick highlights the tension between fact and fiction, upholding the latter as a no less objective and viable rendering of accounts, so Ishmael's insistence on the impressionistic element of experience argues for an equal valuation of the discourses of working men with the ideologies that regulate and inform society.

While Ishmael's treatment of scientific authority is largely abstract and philosophical, Ahab's application of technology readily demonstrates how knowledge may be wielded as a measure of abuse and restraint. Ahab's desire to embody technological authority underscores his recognition that herein resides a source of power; within the context of Ishmael's subversion of lettered scientific authority, Ahab epitomizes how laying claim to such knowledge can produce oppression and inequity.

Technological innovation made it possible for machines to perform the tasks normally done by human energy, thus lowering the price of their labor and eradicating specialized fields of work; lauded by abolitionists as a replacement for slavery, these machines did not benefit the working class in a labor-saving sense; rather they superceded and displaced it. The fruits of technology now consigned the proletariat to intensely dehumanizing work, work that saw them as appendages of an organically sanctioned machine. Something of this sort may be seen in the narrator's observations of the working "girls" in Melville's short story "The Tartarus of Maids":

> Nothing was heard but the low, 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 seem accessory wheels to the general machinery as mere cogs to the wheels. ("TOM" 221)

The picture of these girls feeding an "iron animal" inverts the common notion that technology is equivalent to progress, and instead registers the subjection of individuals to the technology. Just as slavery in the southern states subjugated blacks, it nevertheless exposed, in a fashion that threatened to undermine the Union, America's dependency on an ugly trade to maintain her paradoxical democracy. Melville's epigraph to his short story "The Bell-Tower" reads: "Like negroes, these powers own man sullenly; mindful of their higher master; while serving, plot revenge" ("TBT" 190). The quotation suggests that America has created a Frankenstein monster; her need to

enslave will prove catastrophic, in the end, only highlighting her own enslavement. Similarly, the figure of Bannadonna in Melville's "The Bell-Tower," the "great mechanician" who dies at the hands of his invention, offers a strikingly accurate prophecy of America's fate: "So the blind slave obeyed its blinder lord; but, in obedience, slew him. So the creator was killed by the creature" ("TBT" 205). Bannadonna's desire to stock "the earth with a new serf, more useful than the ox, swifter than the dolphin, stronger than the lion, more cunning than the ape, for industry an ant...and yet in patience, another ass" ("TBT" 202), is reminiscent of a speech Ahab makes to the carpenter, as he details the perfect man to abet him in the slaughter of Moby Dick:

> I'll order a complete man after a desirable pattern. Imprimis, fifty feet high in the socks; then, chest modelled after the Thames Tunnel; then, legs with roots to' em, to stay in one place; then, arms three feet through the wrist; no heart at all, brass forehead, and about a quarter of an acre of fine brains; and let me see--shall I order eyes to see outwards? No, but put a skylight on top of his head to illuminate inwards. (MD 1295)

Ahab's blueprint for the ideal sailor is revealing in its insistence upon effective and efficient physical capabilities minus an individual will; despite providing the prototype with "a quarter of an acre of fine brains," his refusal to give it eyes implies the infringements upon its free will. For Ahab, intelligence is only valuable in the giant man insofar as it helps him to perform his duties; Ahab is the eyes, Ahab ultimately controls these brains and directs them toward his own monomaniacal purpose.

Thomas Ewbank, one high priest for the cult of technology, decreed that "Not till mechanical as well as ethical science is fully explored and universally applied can man achieve his destiny, and evil be swept from the earth" (Karcher 249). His declaration that "Onward! is the standing order of God" (Karcher 249) infuses the laws of natural progression with the power of technology. Inextricably yoked with the narrative of progress outlined by individualism, technological faith was an aberrant form of the scriptural authority which formed the basis of John Winthrop's "A Model of Christian Charity." Winthrop, a Puritan reformer who emigrated to Massachusetts in 1630, delivered this sermon to a group of Puritans who made the voyage with him to America. He outlines a utopian vision of Christian life in which the Church and Christ comprise one "body" which is united by the "ligaments" of love. "All the parts of this body," Winthrop continues, "are made so contiguous in a special relation that they must needs partake of each other's strength and infirmity, joy and sorrow, weal and woe" (175). While this analogy seems to be founded on democratic principles, Winthrop's metaphor of the body suggests a constructed hierarchy; although each member of the church comprises part of this "body," Winthrop naturalizes their differing positions by ascribing class differences to the grand design of Providence. The organity of this Church, Winthrop suggests, will ensure that "the rich and mighty [do] not eat up the poor, nor the poor and despised rise up against their

superiors and shake off their yoke" (Winthrop 170). As Ahab's "blueprint" for the ideal sailor demonstrates, the narrative of technology also relied on an organic metaphor, only this time, the organic serve to sanitize the mechanization of labor; another body, with the limbs explicitly serving the bourgeois head, this one was welded by iron limbs, and impelled by cogs and wheels.

In "The State of the Nation," Theodore Parker claimed that "instead of kidnapping a man who can run away...[the North] kidnaps the elements, subdues them to its commands, and makes them do its work...It lays hands on fire and water, and breeds a new giant" (Rogin 137). Contrasted to the slavery in the south, Parker's boast would seem more humane, as it insisted on subjugating the natural world rather than individuals. Despite his claim that the exploitation of nature was innocuous, and "would replace human labour," the command of Ahab "showed how the one facilitated the other" (Rogin 137). Ahab is an uncanny personification of Parker's "kidnapper", as he virtually appropriates nature and makes her respond to his commands. Just as the technological emergence celebrated by Parker and Ewbank enslaved the common laborer rather than liberated him, so Ahab's mastery of technology is wielded as an instrument to terrify his crew and procure their obedience.

The ultimate promise which individualism and capitalism extended to members of the proletariat is that they could one day become employers. Ahab tests the limits of such an

ideology and through his actions exposes the paradoxical inequality that is produced by its seemingly democratic principles. Yet this notion of individualism is also directly linked to the narrative of technology, a link which the figure of Ahab exemplifies in his chase of Moby-Dick. The "ungodly, God-like" (MD 878) character of Ahab embodies both individualistic aspirations, as he assumes the role of the Creator to fashion a self, and the blasphemy wherein the self is its own creator. We may say that Ahab is "ungodly" precisely because the scriptural deity has been supplanted by the God of technology. Since technology was also a narrative of progress, technological advocates could naturalize the movement away from Christian worship to the "fetishism of commodities" (Rogin 126); in this respect, given the nominal Christianity and capitalist framework of the voyage, Ahab must be "ungodly" to assume complete authority and be truly revered by the crew. He epitomizes the shift in the dominant ideology which "endowed material objects with magical, redemptive power, detaching them...from the human labor that produced them and...from the power of God that lay behind them" (Rogin 126). Ahab realizes that the God of Christianity is an inefficacious instrument to subordinate his crew; his reliance on the mysteries of technology to compel them exemplifies his awareness of the sacrosanctity of technology in nineteenth-century America.

Refusing "mortal indebtedness," Ahab descends to the blacksmith's forge to "weld his own iron" (MD 1314). His

strategy of disavowal again points to his aspiring individualism, as he endeavors to create his own harpoon and infuse it with magical power: "Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli" (MD 1315). Ahab lays claim to the ritual of baptism, and not surprisingly, his Satanic invocation pays homage to a self-fashioned iron creation rather than to an individual. Indeed, the repeated allusions to steel and iron which pervade the chapter recall Ahab's purpose, which "is laid with iron rails whereon [his] soul is grooved to run" (MD 972), and the "clamped mortar" of his soul. Ahab's welding of the steel, then, is somewhat analogous to the self-imposed creation of his own soul; his unification of the harpooners, using their blood to temper his steel, bespeaks his tendency to perceive his crew as mechanical appendages to his own machinery.

Rogin suggests that Ahab "infus[es] the traditional prerogatives of master over slave with the modern magic of technology" (Rogin 138), a strategy which evinces the collation between "the exploitation of nature [and] control over men" (Rogin 137). Rather than manifest the imperial dictum that technological advancement corresponds with societal "progress," Ahab's command displays how technology may be utilized as a measure of restraint and oppression; his appropriation of technical mastery is an approximation of those institutions which contribute to the advancement and implementation of technological apparatuses in society. The control that Ahab exercises is significantly mystified, and

the crew is awestruck with his ability to perform such portentous ceremonies as the baptism of his harpoon, as he injects it with a prophetic power to slay Moby-Dick. Along similar lines, Ahab's destruction of the quadrant represents both his desire to escape from the bourgeois ideologies of society, and the self-consuming nature of such an act, namely that it only enmeshes him further in the same system he so desperately wishes to transcend. Deploring the inefficacy of the quadrant to tell him "where [he] shall be" or "where is Moby Dick?" (MD 1326-27), Ahab exclaims: "Science! Curse thee, thou vain toy; and cursed be all the things that cast man's eyes aloft to that heaven, whose live vividness but scorches him, as these old eyes are even now scorched with thy light, O sun!" (MD 1327). Like Ishmael, Ahab too is challenging the limitations of science, and the idea that it provides a salve for all earthly ills, yet the method which each employs to counter this ideology produces markedly differing results. While Ishmael maneuvers through various forms of scientific discourse, perpetually discarding one viewpoint and affecting another, Ahab's appropriation of technology ironically produces a radically subjective, self-fashioned form of this same ideology. Ahab's address to the quadrant, "no longer will I guide my earthly way by thee; the level ship's compass, and the level dead-reckoning, by log and by line; these shall conduct me, and show me my place on the sea" (MD 1327) evinces his embodiment, rather than his renunciation, of technological authority. In "The Candles," Ahab refuses to lower the

lightning rods during a thunderstorm, and the yard-arms catch fire. As with the quadrant, he remains unwilling to accede to the power of scientific instruments which furnish the ship, instead choosing to wrest that power for himself: "I own thy speechless, placeless power; but to the last gasp of my earthquake life will dispute its unconditional, unintegral mastery in me. In the midst of a personified impersonal, a personality stands here" (MD 1333). Despite what Ahab feels to be his existential dilemma, his quest nevertheless subjects his crew to a comparable measure of suffocating mastery. Ahab's reckless challenging of the elements endangers both the lives of the crew and the safety of the ship, yet they only manage "a half mutinous cry" (MD 1335), owing to the brandishing of his emblazoned harpoon. Waving the fiery dart in the air, Ahab threatens "to transfix the first sailor that but cast loose a rope's end," and after this restores them to their awestruck reverence, he holds the harpoon to his lips and "blow[s] out the last fear" (MD 1335). For the crew, Ahab approaches the status of a deity as he rejects scientific authority and displays his own power to tame the elements and bend them to his will.

Perhaps the most striking example of Ahab's technological expertise can be found in "The Needle." As a result of the lightning storm the compasses have gone awry, and though the Pequod is on an eastern bearing, the needles point to westward. Having discovered the problem, Ahab orders Starbuck to gather the necessary materials to construct a rudimentary

compass. Interestingly, it is revealed that Ahab may harbor some "prudential motives" for fashioning such an instrument, "whose object might have been to revive the spirits of the crew by a stroke of his subtile skill, in a manner so wondrous as that of the inverted compasses" (MD 1346). While the compasses may have been inverted, the real inversion here is Ahab's supposed triumph over the power of technology; his claim that he can make a needle "that will point as true as any" (MD 1346) represents his attempt to claim technology for himself, an effect of which is that it will procure for him the same sort of subservience that it does for hegemonic authority in society. If this risks sounding like allegory, one might recall Ahab's "prudential motives"; his display is as theatrical as it is pragmatic, an interested spectacle calculated to frighten the sailors. Ishmael's description of the process of magnetizing the compass is especially revealing in this respect: "Then going through some small strange motions with it--whether indispensable to the magnetizing of the steel, or merely intended to augment the awe of the crew, is uncertain--he called for linen thread" (MD 1346, emphasis added). Ishmael's shrewd instincts touch upon a striking facet of Ahab's character--his skill as a performer. Cognizant of the power that is to be had by mastering technology, Ahab engages in some form of mystical gesticulations which appear to be endowing the compass with its magnetic virtue. His self-lauding reminder at the completion of the ritual--"Look ye, for yourselves, if Ahab be

not lord of the level loadstone! The sun is East, and that compass swears it!" (MD 1347)--casts technology as a servant to Ahab. He declares the position of the sun, and technology reaffirms him.

Ishmael's reproach of scientific authority questions how lower class workers are allowed to "know" and understand the world. Even as Ishmael exposes the way in which science stifles the experiences and perceptions of the sailors, he still depends upon the tyranny of Ahab to offer a concrete demonstration of how such knowledge can be exploited. Ahab's manipulation of technology to subordinate his crew shows how the narrative of technology is an extension of the more abstract claims of natural history that Ishmael critiques. In effect, Ahab's abuse of technology reaffirms Ishmael's hypothesis; Ahab's exploitation of applied science disputes the notion that scientific and technological advancement contributes to social progress. Instead, his despotism exposes applied science as deeply conjoined with the capitalist ideology, a source of immense power for those who can propagate the narrative of technology and lay claim to its authority.

CHAPTER 2

Creating Cannibals: Ishmael's Quarrel with Ethnography

The study of ethnography may be loosely defined as the means by which Europeans and Americans represented the customs, traits and social systems of foreign cultures. Not surprisingly, since encounters with these "others" were occasioned by the explorations of foreign lands, the essential vehicle for delivering ethnographic portraitures was the travel narrative. A component of natural science, ethnography also had its roots in the Linnaean classification system, one which ordered diverse cultures and peoples in a typically Eurocentric and hierarchical model. In the mid-eighteenth century, one would probably be acquainted with the codified traits of Africans as "black, phlegmatic, relaxed...governed by caprice," a description fashioned in almost direct opposition to the decidedly positive characteristics of the European: "fair, sanguine, brawny...governed by laws" (Pratt 32). This strategy of representation points to an imperial subtext, one that sought to create a subject whose savage propensities necessitated European "civilizing" expeditions, accompanied by social and economic "development." Imposing this taxonomic structure had decided advantages, as Europeans could position themselves further along the narrative of human and cultural progress, thereby justifying their conquest of foreign lands, and their subjugation of native peoples.

An important component of this narrative of progression was its self-sanitizing nature, one which could disavow the inequities of European, and later American expansion by rewriting intercultural differences as deficiencies on the part of peripheral cultures; by appointing themselves the arbiters of social and cultural progression, the powers of western imperialism negated the significance of alternative discourses, thereby excluding any variations which could not be meaningfully situated within the confines of their own language and social structure. While the majority of ethnographic depictions represented cultures outside of the geographical boundaries of western civilization, the same strategy served as a powerful containing device within the physical confines of nineteenth-century America. Using a similar method as the one outlined above, pro-slavery apologists could justify their trade by asserting the inherent cultural and intellectual inferiority of blacks. Similarly, proponents of Manifest Destiny could defend the atrocities committed against natives by depicting them as "victims of progress," a chronological, naturalized term which masked brute conquest and deflected blame to the actual process of human and social evolution.

The vocabulary that was devised to represent the inhabitants of peripheral cultures, despite its scientific origins, was anything but objective. Words such as "savage," "heathen," and "barbarian," which originally denoted people of various stages of cultural, social, and intellectual

development, rapidly acquired pejorative values. These values allowed for the terms to enter an agitated environment within American society, as less "civilized" members of the working class were variously described with the same terms used to represent natives, Africans, Polynesians, and so forth. Such an overlap suggests not only the contempt with which such "uncivilized" peoples were held, both inside and outside of American culture, but also the complementary strategies that were devised to contain them. While the third chapter will explore the corresponding logic of progression as it is utilized within American society, the focus of this chapter is on the way in which imperialism demanded a method of representing peripheral cultures in order to sanctify its aspirations for land, resources, and in some cases, slaves. This mode of representation will be examined within the context of American travel writing, specifically in terms of Melville's management of ethnography in his works prior to, and including Moby-Dick.

I have argued that Moby-Dick is indebted to the conventions of the travel narrative, conventions that have largely formed the narrative framework for his earlier novels. Yet while Melville relies on many of the defining tropes of this genre for the construction of Moby-Dick, he simultaneously exposes them as inextricably linked with the political aspirations of imperialism. This brand of social critique was attempted in his first novel, Typee, but never wholly effected; he was somewhat too enmeshed in the political

implications of the travel narrative and could not manage to attain the objective distance necessary to advance such a commentary. The ethnographic depictions of the Typees, in this case, were highly ambivalent. Tommo, the narrator of Typee, displays a willingness to uncover the unjust treatment of the natives at the hands of missionaries and explorers, and a desire to free them from such reductive and misleading appellations as "cannibals" and "heathens." Despite the effort, however, Typee contains a conflicting subtext, one that often undermines the effectiveness of the social import, and reinforces existing western stereotypes of the Polynesians. Moby-Dick, though it undeniably grows out of this tradition, nevertheless attains a means of valuing these other cultures by affording them their own voices; the ethnography in this novel allows these "others" to participate in a dialectic that shapes the world.

If we recall the brief discussion of Tommo's narrative in the introduction, particularly with respect to his ethnographic portrait of the Typees, we may establish a basis of comparison with Ishmael's management of this mode of representation in Moby-Dick. During the life of Melville, Typee enjoyed a much more lucrative success than did Moby-Dick, mostly owing to the fact that Melville altered his text to ensnare middle-class, general readers, and also to avoid offending literary and cultivated readers. In the revised American and British editions, Melville omitted segments of the narrative which frontally attacked missionary endeavors,

or attempted to criticize other effects of western imperialism. Similarly, he tailored these editions to quell a predominant complaint among British cultivated readers that his was not the voice of a common sailor. Appending "factual" observations of local geography and the social habits of the Typees, Melville avoided being cast as simply a "man of letters" by bolstering the "authenticity" of his narrative. These editorial revisions produced a commercial best seller, as Sheila Post-Lauria has demonstrated (45), the result of which was a novel that entertained, rather than delivered the thrust of social criticism that Melville had initially intended. Even so, the original manuscript version of Typee, replete with its challenging of various assumptions about western dominance and "civilizing" missions, harbors a certain tension and ambivalence between embracing Typee culture, and being unable to relinquish completely the popular western conceptions of these Polynesian Islanders.

The desire to proffer social commentary is clearly evident in Typee, but the overtly partisan method that the narrator employs risked alienating his audience. In the original unedited version, Tommo reveals that the Nukuhevans "have become somewhat corrupted, owing to their recent commerce with Europeans" (Typee 24), and that "in all the case of outrages committed by Polynesians, Europeans have at sometime or other been the aggressors, and that the cruel and bloodthirsty disposition of some of the islanders is mainly to be ascribed to the influence of such examples" (Typee 41). In

such cases as these, the term "civilization," as it is applied to western society, begins to assume a negative color, leading Tommo to the conclusion that "it would seem, perhaps better for the barbarous part of the world to remain unchanged" (Typee 31). These are but a few examples of Tommo's attempt to deride the encroachments of western imperialism, and they would seem, at first glance, to invert the stereotypes of savages and westerners; the "savage" tendencies of the islanders are induced by the infinitely more barbaric actions of the Americans and Europeans who operate under the pretense of "civilizing" them. Although one may be tempted to ascribe the tempering of this social criticism in the revised editions to Melville's concerns for his audience, the original text still betrays a reluctance to relinquish the paradigmatic, and often reductive conventions of the travel writing genre. Despite Tommo's interest in liberating the Typees from a codified western discourse which seeks to contain them for the interests of imperialism, his ethnographic portraits often manage to confirm, rather than subvert, the popular conceptions of these people as primitive, uncivilized, indolent children of nature.

Tommo's basis for criticizing western imperialism actually derives from his own unchallenged notion of the west as being more progressive in terms of intellect, scientific innovation, and moral rectitude. This is the very reason why Tommo strongly opposes many of the imperial efforts abroad, efforts which undermine the very qualities upon which his

society is supposedly built. Rather than acknowledge the Typees as an alternative culture, with their own system of customs, beliefs, and institutions, Tommo's critique depends upon reducing Typee culture to a natural, barbarous state in order to illuminate the contrast. His digression on King Kamehameha III of Oahu engenders such a strategy; remarking on the character of his "gracious majesty," Tommo explains: "He has lost the traits of the noble barbarian without acquiring the civilized graces of a civilized being" (Typee 213). For Tommo, the Typees are chaste because of their natural state, one which admits, perhaps, of nobility, but cannot claim the sort of "civilization" which is characteristic of European and American society. Indeed, Tommo's metonymic rendering of the Typees suggests his indebtedness to the trope, as his descriptions deny the Typees potential for change: "one tranquil day of ease and happiness follows another in quiet succession; and with these unsophisticated savages the history of a day is the history of a life" (Typee 172). Similarly, Tommo's description of his abode applies to "nearly all the other dwelling places in the vale, and will furnish some idea of the generality of the natives" (Typee 99). Even Fayaway, the object of Tommo's affections, closely approximates "nearly all the youthful portion of her sex in the valley" (Typee 106). This narrative strategy bears a striking resemblance to the narrative of Manifest Destiny, and is regulated by the same imperial mechanism. By depicting native Americans as uncivilized children of nature, they became incapable of

progress, both intellectually and culturally; their "extinction," then, was nothing more than the result of natural succession. For Tommo, the conventional tropes of the travelogue provided him with a means of ordering chaos, much like the botanists and natural historians who imposed "order" on the world around them; the recurring tendency of the Typees to contradict western-sanctioned stereotypes initially threatens to undermine Tommo's faith in his own linguistic and social authority, but the codification offers him a means to avert a crisis by placing a mantle of generality over the whole of the native population. Clinging to the genre provides him with more than a means to order his narrative and account for seeming contradictions; it restores a faith, however tenuous, in the implicit superiority of western culture.

Though Tommo occasionally abandons these generalized abstractions of Typee culture, his instances of specific ethnographic representations still betray familiar western conventions for portraying the "other." Tommo and Kory-Kory, for example, may be regarded as the fictional precursors of Ishmael and Queequeg. Yet while Ishmael and Queequeg possess the common bond of reciprocity and friendship, Tommo's portrayal of Kory-Kory as his "faithful servitor" not only evinces his desire to remain fast to his own culture, but reinforces his sense of cultural superiority. As Michael C. Berthold and Wai-chee Dimock have recently argued (Berthold 563; Dimock 33), Tommo avoids representing Kory-Kory as a

jail-keeper or an appointed guard, and instead attempts to force him into preexistent categories of "peripheral servitude" in accordance with the genre. Kory-Kory is frequently described as a "servitor," a "valet," and a "porter." Tommo flagrantly ignores "the functions of the post assigned to [Kory-Kory]" (Typee 106), and instead chooses to perceive this man's attentiveness as an aberrant form of slavery. Clearly, Kory-Kory's function is to prevent Tommo from escaping, and to limit his knowledge of such facets of Typee culture as the ritual of cannibalism. Tommo's insistence on casting this man as a servant, then, works to undermine the actual observations which he posits of the surrounding people; it mirrors the tension between trusting one's own perceptions, and remaining loyal to the dictates of one's own social code.

What then, does Melville accomplish with his ethnography in Moby-Dick? In order to answer this question, we must begin to explore the interactions of Ishmael and Queequeg. Ishmael's introduction to Queequeg occurs at the Spouter-Inn, where the two are forced by circumstance to share a bed for the night. Upon first seeing the purplish, tattooed face of this "cannibal," Ishmael is paralyzed by fear and cries for the landlord to rescue him from certain death. Doubtless, Ishmael's trepidation is summoned by western representations of south-sea islanders, and by the accompanying significations of such a word as "cannibal," yet he displays a marked ability to trust his own perceptions of the "soothing savage" and

discard stereotypes. Initially, however, Ishmael still retains the sense of cultural superiority that characterized most, if not all, of Tommo's narrative in Typee. He remarks that Queequeg's bedmanners suggest civility, but that he is really only "a creature in the transition state--neither caterpillar or butterfly. He was just enough civilized to show off his outlandishness in the strangest possible manner" (MD 823). Ishmael's remarks point to the theory of human progress which proved such a formidable containing tool in travel literature, the implicit assumption being that he, as an American, is the butterfly, whereas Queequeg is in a state of flux: better than his "caterpillar" counterparts in Polynesia, but still an unrefined "undergraduate" in the study of civility.

Though Ishmael betrays a hesitancy to abandon ethnographic discourse, his narrative does display an early willingness to view America as a multicultural, heteroglot society, one which cannot be reduced to the monologic certainty characterized by imperial attitudes. "In New Bedford," Ishmael explains, "actual cannibals stand chatting at street corners; savages outright; many of whom yet carry on their bones unholy flesh. It makes a stranger stare" (MD 827). This observation is tempered, though, with his consideration that in "Bombay, in the Apollo Green, live Yankees have often scared the natives," and with his recognition that the greenhorn landlubbers emigrating from

Vermont are a far more curious and comical sight than the cannibal harpooners who peddle their embalmed heads.

Ishmael's tolerance of, if not eagerness to embrace, foreign codes and customs may be seen in his incipient recognition of Queequeg's sound moral character. Describing the Polynesian's tessellated visage, he displays a remarkable perspicacity to look beyond the tattooing that adorns Queequeg's face:

> Savage though he was, and hideously marred about the face--at least to my taste--his countenance yet had a something in it which was by no means disagreeable. You cannot hide the soul. Through all the unearthly tattooings, I thought I saw the traces of a simple honest heart. (MD 846)

While Ishmael's observation of Queequeg has not, as yet, ascribed any particular value to the hieroglyphic tattoos, his concession, "at least to my taste," allows for an alternate system of valuation. This is especially evident when we compare Ishmael's remarks with those of Tommo, his earliest narrative predecessor. During a stroll with Kory-Kory, Tommo lights upon an artist engaged in the process of tattooing. Initially intrigued by the operation, Tommo quickly betrays a feeling of repugnance when he discovers that he is being entreated to lie for a tattoo. Tommo believes that he would be "rendered hideous for life if the wretch were to execute his purpose," and the artist's refusal to desist in his persuasion makes him "half wild with terror and indignation" (Typee 245). This "terror," of course, resides in the fear of being written upon with the codes of Typee society, while his

"indignation" stems from his own vision of cultural superiority; for Tommo, it is sheer audacity for the Typees to attempt to disfigure a white man in this fashion. This tension between terror and indignation is not easily reconciled, as one implies a lack of power, while the other signifies some position of assumed authority. As Michael C. Berthold has shown, especially with regard to Tommo's designation of Kory-Kory as a servitor, the narrator has a tendency to conflate captivity and freedom. Not willing to relinquish the language of conquest, Tommo's narrative has the tendency to impose the superiority of western dictates, even in the most unlikely of instances. By succumbing to the ritual of the tattoo, Tommo believes that he must forsake the power of his own culture and society, and that he would never again "have the face to return to [his] countrymen, even should an opportunity offer" (Typee 245).

In his reaction to Queequeg's tattooed face, one can see that Ishmael does not display the same sort of aversion to tattooing as Tommo does, although admittedly, he is not being asked to receive one. Possibly, Ishmael is not threatened by this ritualistic practice because of the context of the voyage; unlike Tommo, who is immersed in the definite "otherness" of Polynesian culture, Ishmael serves aboard a whaleship, one which is comprised of a complex relationship among people of various races, classes, and beliefs. Instead of Tommo's insistent focus on retaining his own cultural identity in the midst of a foreign land, Ishmael must learn

how to navigate through the different social, cultural, and political systems aboard the Pequod; relating his narrative is contingent upon incorporating these voices and telling their individual stories, rather than excluding them to maintain his own identity. The relative neutrality of this context allows Ishmael to be progressive in his treatment of ethnography, since the success of the voyage, from whatever viewpoint one decides to view this success, is contingent upon the cooperation of the sailors. While this crew does suffer various forms of exploitation, it remains an exploitation quite divorced from the constructed hierarchy of ethnography. In other words, the basis of the ship's voyage--whether it is understood to be Ahab's quest or the capture of sperm whales for oil--is relatively color-blind. The monomania of Ahab, like the capitalist ideology, values the crew for its ability to produce; so long as they function to abet Ahab in the slaughter of Moby Dick, or capture enough whales to make the voyage profitable, cultural and social differences among the crew are unimportant. Ethnography somewhat disappears, or is certainly less important aboard the Pequod, as the crew becomes unified in its subservience to another form of authority, and however exploitative this authority may be, the context of the whaleship allows Ishmael to imagine a world beyond the regimented ethnographic depictions in contemporary travel literature. Ishmael can attempt to hear and value Queequeg's experience precisely because the agitated context of interior exploration (with the implicit subtext of

colonizing inhabitants and appropriating resources) has been displaced. While Tommo's situation within Typee society cannot allow him to forego the conventions of the genre, the shipboard rule of Moby-Dick allows Ishmael to escape the "we-them" bifurcation, and imagine a world comprised of integration rather than opposition.

One of the most telling instances of Ishmael's reworking of ethnographic portraiture may be found in the chapter "Biographical." Ishmael's introduction to Queequeg's biography begins in a very interesting manner: "Queequeg was a native of Kokovoko, an island far away to the West and South. It is not down on any map; true places never are" (MD 852). While this may be dismissed as a clever bit of sophistry, it can also be regarded as a comment on western imperialism. The "true" nature of Queequeg's home is possibly a veiled remark on the massive western undertaking of cartography, an effort which "had already given rise to what one might call a European global or planetary subject" (Pratt 30). As Pratt has argued, the mapping out of the world's geography was inextricably yoked with the search for trade routes, on one hand, and with the quest for more lands, resources, and people to exploit. The representation of these lands in maps, like their corresponding depictions in travel literature, was highly mediated by this imperial perspective. A more abstract form of conquest, the representation of foreign lands in maps was nevertheless a claim of ownership. The unmapped home of Queequeg can be "true," then, precisely

because his culture has not been appropriated into a western model of physical or intellectual dimensions. Queequeg inverts typical ethnographic representation by describing his home from an inhabitant's perspective; instead of the usual strategies employed by ethnographers to represent the periphery to western readers, we now have a voice which appropriates the idiom of the colonizer to represent himself to this audience.

While Tommo marvels over the Typees' ability to maintain a social order "without the aid of established law" and concludes that they must be regulated by "an inherent principle of honesty and charity towards each other" (Typee 226, emphasis added), Ishmael's biography of Queequeg describes a visible social system which governs native life in Polynesia: "[Queequeg's] father was a High Chief, a King; his uncle a High Priest...There was excellent blood in his veins" (MD 852). Ishmael's decision to introduce Queequeg as a kind of prince, then, inverts typical reader expectations, as it affords the Polynesian culture its own system of hierarchy and judiciary, albeit one which is analogous to western paradigms. Like Olaudah Equiano, the African slave who earned enough money to procure his freedom and eventually publish his autobiography, Queequeg's privileged status in his homeland serves as a basis upon which he may make his claim for equality. Instead of the conventional ethnographic portrait, in which the native is described as an unenlightened "savage" in need of civilization, Queequeg's biography exposes the

western tendency to overwrite the cultural practices of foreign peoples.

Ishmael's rendering of Queequeg's history reverses the reader's gaze, as it displays Queequeg's expectations of western culture, and depicts him as actively engaging with this culture as a means to transmit meaningful information to his own people. His purpose in joining a whaleship, he tells Ishmael, "was actuated by a profound desire to learn among the Christians the arts whereby to make his people still happier than they were; and more than that, still better than they were" (MD 853). In this light, Queequeg is not abandoning his culture for a superior western one; rather he is intent on selectively borrowing or adapting different usages of this culture for the benefit of his own society. Just as certain types of information, language, and culture made its way into western society, a result of the hybrid nature of intercultural contact, Queequeg alters the direction of the colonizer's gaze to borrow from the borrower. His high-wrought expectations, however, are soon deflated as he participates in the daily life of sailors. As Ishmael explains, "the practices of these whalemen soon convinced him that even Christians could be both miserable and wicked; infinitely more so than all of his father's heathens," leading Queequeg to resolve, "I'll die a pagan"(MD 853). Rather than attack imperialism frontally, as he did in Typee, Melville uses the perspective of Queequeg to expose the contradictions in such benevolent and purportedly altruistic undertakings as

the civilizing mission. Queequeg has tested western claims of moral and intellectual superiority, only to reject them as fundamental non-entities. His decision to remain an idolator, then, is not the result of ignorance, but a conscious choice based on the lived experiences of both cultures.

While Tommo's ethnography often functions to reinforce imperial attitudes, his interactions with Marnoo display the germination of the cultural tolerance that Ishmael exhibits in his treatment of Queequeg. Marnoo is the taboo figure who visits the Typees midway through the narrative. Accustomed to being the focal point of the natives' attention, Tommo becomes dismayed when Marnoo completely neglects him, and betrays an evident scorn that the Typees have momentarily abandoned him for the sake of this visitor:

> Had the belle of the season, in the pride of her beauty and power, been cut in a place of public resort by some supercilious exquisite, she could not have felt greater indignation than I did at this unexpected slight. (Typee 158)

The extent to which Tommo's expectations are confounded by Marnoo mirrors the ambivalent attitude he demonstrates toward his captivity; while this captivity initially offers him a springboard from which he may indict certain inequities in his own culture, he never relinquishes the mentality or the language of the colonizer. Tommo's mistaken notion that he can command his captors illuminates this paradox, and highlights the sense of urgency in his narrative. In his discussion of Tommo's attitude toward the Typees, Mitchell Breitwieser claims that he "[celebrates] their lifestyle so

long as it negates selected aspects of his own culture, but [detests] it once it begins to impinge upon himself" (Breitwieser 16).

Yet Tommo's initial response to Marnoo is tempered by a recognition of something which is decidedly <u>different</u> about this man. Tommo's scrutiny of Marnoo resonates with the sort of erotic adulation that Ishmael bestows upon Queequeg; an apotheosis of the noble savage, Marnoo displays the "matchless symmetry of...form" and "elegant outline of...figure" (<u>Typee</u> 157) which characterized depictions of natives in travel literature. One has the sense that Marnoo is a representative "specimen," extracted from his cultural context and displayed for a western audience much like his botanical counterparts in Linnaeus' garden. If Marnoo's characterization does seem like a composite sketch of brawny, dark-hued native warriors, it is certainly mediated by a delicate softness that immediately appeals to Tommo:

> The hair of Marnoo was a rich curling brown, and twined about his temples and neck in little close curling ringlets, which danced up and down continually when he was animated in conversation. His cheek was of a feminine softness, and his face was free from the least blemish of tattooing.
> (<u>Typee</u> 157)

This idealized portrait certainly recalls Ishmael's fondness for Queequeg, and the redemptive quality that Ishmael locates in their "bridegroom's clasp." Many critics point toward the figure of Marnoo as an expression of Melville's ideal; neither "savage" nor "civilized" Marnoo represents the literary equivalent of the "go-between" who can share the lived

experiences of both western and Polynesian cultures. In Robert K. Martin's words, Marnoo epitomizes "the union of civilization and savagery, rather than the victory of one or the other, [which is where] true beauty resides" (Martin 35). While Martin continues to label Marnoo's character as a "triumphant miscegenation," he risks obscuring the complexity of the Ishmael-Queequeg relationship by positing Marnoo as a Melvillean ideal. This observation fails in two ways: first, it neglects the nature of the relationship between Tommo and Marnoo, and second, it does not properly address the consequences of Marnoo's taboo status. If we begin with the first objection, we may see that Tommo's fascination with Marnoo culminates in his acknowledgement that the Polynesian's "face was free from the least blemish of tattooing, although the rest of his body was drawn all over with fanciful figures, which--unlike the unconnected sketching usually among these natives--appeared to have been executed in conformity with some general design" (Typee 157). Tommo describes the symmetrical tattooing as an organic composition which resembles "a spreading vine tacked against a garden wall," and despite the presence of numerous designs, he suggests that every one "appeared to have reference to the general effect sought to be produced" (Typee 157-58). For Martin, "Marnoo is thus identified as a life force, bearing the tree of life" (Martin 34). Yet despite the actual signification of the tattooing, what remains intriguing is Tommo's response to it. As is indicated by his labeling of the tattoo as a "blemish,"

Tommo betrays an abhorrence of the tattooing ritual, his refusal to be inscribed with one mirroring his unwillingness to delve into the culture and customs of Typee society. Importantly, his acknowledgment of a "general effect" is an attempt to endow the ritual with significance, but only in terms of how it resembles his own social norms. If we recall Ishmael's understanding of Queequeg's tattoos as representing "a complete theory of the heavens and the earth," however undecipherable, we may begin to grasp Melville's achievement in Moby-Dick. Queequeg, of course, is tattooed from head to foot, and Ishmael offers us a striking description:

> Such a face! It was of a dark, purplish yellow color, here and there stuck over with large, blackish looking squares...I remembered a story of a whiteman--a whaleman too--who, falling among the cannibals, had been tattooed by them. I concluded that this harpooner, in the course of his distant voyages, must have met with a similar adventure. (MD 39)

Unlike Tommo, who seems to gravitate towards Marnoo because he visibly differs from the rest of the Typees, Ishmael is able to move beyond the checkered visage of his bedfellow and propose an explanation for the tattoo's significance. Ishmael's rejoinder, which immediately follows this last passage, displays an early willingness to move beyond conventions and explore other cultures because of their inherent differences: "And what is it, thought I, after all! It's only his outside; a man can be honest in any sort of skin" (MD 815). The organic nature of Marnoo's tattoos, which Tommo seems to appreciate and which Martin champions as an

"original phallic power," actually functions in the same manner as do many of Tommo's predilections for bits of Typee culture; in each case, the things which he regards as meaningful are those which most closely reflect his notion of civilized cultural norms. His recognition that the "graceful branches with drooping leaves [were] all correctly drawn" (Typee 157, emphasis added) reinforces the idea that Tommo will only attempt to understand or value those facets of Typee culture which accord with his conception of beauty, culture, and art.

My other objection to Marnoo's status as an "ideal" Melvillean hero hinges upon the function of the taboo. Martin suggests that the figure of Marnoo represents a unification of his literary descendents, Ishmael and Queequeg; the "triumphant miscegenation," then, resides in his atavistic combination of savagery and civilization. It seems that a better method of understanding the complexities of the Ishmael-Queequeg relationship would be to examine Tommo's interactions with Marnoo, not to treat Marnoo as the incarnation of two opposing cultures. This sort of hermaphroditic representation suggests an unrealizable harmony in which the "ideal" is an impossible combination of western, civilized society, with "savage" culture. Such a union is almost imperialistic in its desire to overwrite differences and create a homologous whole; for Melville, redemption was not to be found in the totalizing goal of welding disparate cultures into oneness; rather, it was in the fraternizing and

fellowship which was occasioned by the actual process of removing social and political barriers, and sharing different knowledge and experiences.

The potential harmfulness of such a figure who blends and incorporates these differing traits may be seen in Marnoo's status as taboo. Smitten with the Polynesian's beauty, and wondrous at his ability to command the Typees' admiration and win them over with his humor, Tommo is desirous to learn how Marnoo acquired such eloquent versatility. Tommo initially ascribes these qualities to a "natural" endowment, yet he remains suspicious that a South-Sea Islander could naturally become such a beautiful interlocutor. Tommo's genre-induced expectations are not disappointed, for he learns that Marnoo spent three years aboard a trading vessel and in Australia, where he learned to speak English. Commenting on this experience, Tommo explains:

> The natural quickness of the savage had been wonderfully improved by his intercourse with white men, and his partial knowledge of a foreign language gave him a great ascendancy over his less accomplished countrymen. (Typee 162)

Accordingly, these "improvements" in Marnoo's character function to heighten Tommo's imperial attitudes; operating under the guise of fashioning a social critique, Tommo again resorts to conventions of his own culture to mark the stages of Marnoo's "development." Martin is correct in labeling Marnoo's state as one that transcends cultural divides, yet we must consider what the cost of this transcendence is. Marnoo may venture with impunity into any of the regions surrounding

Typee, but he is never embraced as a real constituent of any single native community. His status as better-than-savage, less-than-civilized, points toward a threatening domain of flux, in which the individual is accepted by neither Polynesians nor westerners--he becomes the true outcast, an Ishmaelite in the most literal sense. One might recall Ishmael's suggestion that Queequeg occupies a "butterfly state," neither wholly savage nor wholly civilized, and argue that similar politics of representation are at work in Moby-Dick; in this novel, however, Queequeg is not offered as an apotheosis, but as a source of friendship--a companion. Ishmael must still maintain his own identity, but this identity can only be forged by meaningful interaction with people of diverse political, social, and racial denominations.

Despite the advantages afforded Marnoo, he can little abet Tommo's desire to escape; when he is coerced into asking the Typees to release Tommo, the Typee threaten to forsake his taboo and sternly punish him. In effect Marnoo's social impotence hints at a sexual one; Tommo depicts him as a feminine, exploitable darling, and nowhere evident is there the passive male eroticism evoked by Ishmael's relationship with Queequeg. Tommo fails most notably because he refuses to partake in that loving and fraternal reciprocity which would necessitate abandoning his imperial posture.

Martin, along with many others, have extensively written on the homoeroticism of Moby-Dick, variously lighting on the

masturbatory chapter "A Squeeze of the Hand," to the ubiquitous phallic imagery (such as in "The Cassock") to the homoerotic nuptials of Ishmael and Queequeg at the Spouter Inn. I would like to push this discussion a little further, and suggest that the relationship between Ishmael and Queequeg is a conscious rebuttal of another dominant convention of travel writing, the transracial love plot, and that Melville poses the "couple" of Ishmael and Queequeg as an aesthetic reworking of the imperialistic and sexually exploitative narrative of miscegenation.

The transracial love story became a popular, sentimentalized narrative form in the late eighteenth-century, occasioned by the relationships formed by white men with female slaves in various colonies. In the wake of what Pratt terms "a legitimation crisis," propelled by abolitionist movements and slave revolts, the transracial love plot served as a cultural harmonizer in much the same way that scientific classificatory schemes did, by masking armed conflict with more abstract forms of appropriation:

> It is easy to see transracial love plots as imaginings in which European...supremacy is guaranteed by affective and social bonding; in which sex replaces slavery as the way others are seen to belong to the white man; in which romantic love rather than filial servitude or force guarantee the willful submission of the colonized. (Pratt 97)

Pratt goes on to cite the example of "Stedman and Joanna," part of John Stedman's Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam, published in 1796.

His narrative, Pratt argues, is typical of much travel writing in which a white man narrates a sexual encounter in a European colony. Many of these relationships were little more than concubines in which native women were exploited in a barely concealed form of sexual slavery; yet the politics governing their representation cast them as "nurturing natives," eager to fulfill the whims and desires of their white lovers/owners. Despite Stedman's importuning for Joanna to return to Europe with him, she desists, claiming that she would only be a "burthen" to him, and though the lovers are represented as loyal and dedicated partners, Pratt suggests that these stories nevertheless share a common conclusion--the white man eventually returns to his European homeland, while his native lover lingers in the colony, often in a stultifying and depraved form of slavery.

With the conquest of love, brute imperial force disappears from the narrative, as peripheral cultures are portrayed as willingly succumbing to their supplicating suitors. Similarly, the love interest rarely exhibits stereotypical native appearance, instead approximating some form of beauty which resembles generally accepted western norms. One can certainly note this technique of reportage in Typee, as Tommo seems well acquainted with the travel narrative genre and its method for representing female objects of sexuality in the colonies. What makes his observations so tenuous, however, is the reader's (and at times Tommo's) knowledge that Tommo is a captive, and that his situation

should not admit of his making a claim on anything or anyone in the Typee Valley. Yet as the narrative of Tommo perhaps ironically suggests, imperial attitudes die hard, and he has no more power to relinquish their hold on him than he does to acknowledge the manner in which the Typees vex his expectations. While Tommo may not share the same position of authority as a narrator like Stedman, we can nevertheless regard his objectification of Fayaway as a form of the transracial love plot.

In Tommo's descriptions of female Typees, the expository narrative rapidly gives itself over to a kind of mystical, edenic interlude. The women are regularly referred to as "river nymphs," "amphibious young creatures," "dolphins," "maidens" and "mermaids"; there is little attempt to afford them their own voices or understand them as anything other than objects of beauty and intrigue, important only insofar as they provide him with pleasant diversions. Thus Tommo makes himself the benign and passive receptor of the women's adulation; they "swarm" him and "[duck]" him under the water, and he compares his helplessness to "a cumbrous whale attacked on all sides by a legion of swordfish" (Typee 153). Clearly, Tommo's observations are being posited from the perspective of a "civilized" male, who lights upon the unspoiled and primitive sexuality of the Polynesian females. Unhappy that the "sweet nymphs" are forbidden to ride in canoes by the edict of the taboo, Tommo exhorts Chief Mehevi to revoke the ban, and accordingly the natives are portrayed as unable to

resist Tommo's loquacious and persistent demands. Completely ignorant of the social significance of the taboo, Tommo remarks that "it was high time the islanders should be taught a little gallantry" and is oblivious enough to label this deed "Fayaway's emancipation" (Typee 154).

Again, while Tommo's indoctrination into Typee society initially provided the contrast to launch his own social critique of European and American imperialism, during his stay in the valley he slides back into the regimented, and presumably superior customs of his own culture. Tommo mistakenly interprets his gestures as emancipatory, and conflates Kory-Kory's nervous gesticulations and hollering on shore with admiration for his sailing skills. Once marveling at the uninhibited nakedness of the islanders, his affection for Fayaway summons his latent faith in western conventions, and he makes her a dress out of some calico to restore a certain measure of propriety. In this attire, Tommo confesses, she looked "something like an opera dancer," while the tantalizing cut of her robe "reveal[ed] the most bewitching ankle in the universe" (Typee 156). It is this valuation of Fayaway (and by extension the remainder of the females) by western standards which repeatedly enters Tommo's descriptions: "The distinguishing characteristic of the Marquesas Islanders, and that which at once strikes you, is the European cast of their features...many of their faces present a profile classically beautiful" (Typee 208-9). Even more illuminating in this regard is the degree to which Tommo

measures the beauty of Typee women according to the relative "whiteness" of their complexions; he observes that the women anoint themselves with the juice of the papa root, and that "the habitual use of it whitens and beautifies the skin" (Typee 206). The yoking of "whitens" with "beautifies" is not so much an observation as it is an equation; their beauty is "immeasurably superior" to the "dark-hued Hawaiians and wooly-headed Fijis" precisely because the milky tint of their skin more closely approximates the "Saxon damsel's" (Typee 208).

Tommo persistently attempts to represent Fayaway as the colonial love interest that proliferated in travel literature, and her voice is characteristically muffled by the genre. Tommo's decision to make her the object of his adulation, then, serves as his claim upon her; this is a privilege which he bestows upon Fayaway, and any attempt on her part to rebuke this love interest would be inconceivable within the imperial confines of the genre. There are, of course, some limitations inherent in any comparison between Tommo's narrative and John Stedman's, the most important being that Stedman's narrative occurs in the colony of Surinam, where he is posted as a member of the Dutch militia. While there is a sense of inequality in Tommo's narrative, it is much less discernible; Typee, notably, is not a colony, and if there are power struggles, they involve Tommo's attempts to rebel against a native society which holds him captive. Against this context, Tommo's colonial attitudes seem increasingly tenuous.

Despite the absence of impingement during his stay with the Typees, Tommo displays a frenzied desire to quit the valley. As so often happens in the course of his narrative, this desire demonstrates the vacillation between actual observances and genre-informed expectations. As the hero of this piece of "survival literature," Tommo must emphatically break his ties with Polynesian society and reenter the western world to offer his account, thereby confirming implicit notions of western superiority. Decidedly, Tommo's fidelity is to the genre, not to Fayaway; despite her presence as a possible lover and source of diversion, his love remains firmly affixed to the social code that he must uphold. Like Stedman, who quits Surinam with a sense of mingled obligation and regret, Tommo displays no hesitancy about where his loyalties lie. Not even the disconsolate image of Fayaway, who "clung to [him], sobbing indignantly" (Typee 277) as he attempted to make his escape, can thwart Tommo's loyalty to his own culture. The representation of Fayaway, "who seemed speechless with sorrow" (Typee 277) is redolent of those tropes which sought to create a sense of reciprocal love between the colonizer and the female slave, yet here Fayaway's depiction evokes a highly suspicious response. Prior to Tommo's departure the narrative admits of little evidence of Fayaway's emotions, much less whether she actually requited Tommo's love; rather too conveniently, Tommo's reunion with the British whaleship, which marks his reentry into Western culture, coincides with his depiction of Fayaway as the pining

damsel. In fact, it seems equally plausible that Fayaway is reacting much like a child who has been robbed of her source of amusement, since she, not Tommo, is the one who is justified in making claims of possession.

Pratt's designation of Joanna as the embodiment of the "nurturing native" mythos may also be readily ascribed to Tommo's characterization of Fayaway. Merely identifying her as the object of his love, Tommo casts her as a willing and acquiescent recipient of his gallant "chivalry." Again, however, it must be acknowledged that Tommo's attitudes only betray the potential for glossing over exploitation, as he is in actuality rendered powerless during his captivity. What remains important here, is that he is remaining faithful to the political conventions of the genre, and propagating contemporary politics of representation at the expense of the actual context in which his encounters take place. At the risk of belaboring this discussion of Tommo and Fayaway, I must stress that it is this relationship which Melville transforms in Moby-Dick with the companionship of Ishmael and Queequeg. To assert, like Robert Martin, that Marnoo manifests the "civilized" and "savage" propensities that will dissolve into the respective characters of Ishmael and Queequeg, is to ignore the antithesis of their relationship, whose lineage recalls the love interest of Tommo and Fayaway. This latter relationship, compared with that of Ishmael and Queequeg, illustrates Melville's attempts to parody, and

subsequently undercut, a prominent convention of the travel writing genre.

The homoerotic nuances of Ishmael's narrative have provided nourishing and plentiful fodder for numerous critics of Melville, and the subject alone has fuelled the whale-lamps of recent Melvillean studies. In exploring the line of argument which is the focus of this paper, I am proposing that this homosexual bonding be regarded as a conscious attempt by Melville to flout the ideological conventions of the genre, in this instance, the seemingly innocuous narrative of sexual exploitation which we have discussed as the transracial love plot. As our examination of Fayaway has demonstrated, Melville was aware of how genre-induced expectations informed the accounts of travelers; his manipulation of Tommo suggests that he was attuned to this problem, but remained unable to reconcile it in the course of the narrative. In fact, the figure of Queequeg, who succeeds Fayaway as the romantic love interest, controverts his predecessor in an almost absolute fashion--he is a man; his appearance is representative of his own culture (as opposed to Fayaway and other Typee women, who are appealing because they approximate western ideals); and he is afforded something of his own voice, as he actively transmits information to a dominant culture. Furthermore, certain elements of context are transformed in order to accommodate such a radical relationship: since they are not on land, cultural affinities are relatively suspended, and under the larger umbrage of capitalism, Melville invites a

unification of sailors (lower class workers, social bottom dwellers) with their colonized counterparts. While these conditions influence the way in which we understand the text, it must be remembered that Ishmael's introduction to Queequeg is occasioned by their sharing a bed: Melville purposely extends the boundaries of fraternity into the arena of male couples. Ishmael's relationship with Queequeg involves flouting a taboo, something which Ishmael acknowledges, perhaps implicitly, as a rigid code which defines his own culture. Certainly, what could be more "taboo" in a Christian society than Ishmael's worshipping of Yojo, Queequeg's ebony idol? The phallic nature of this idol, which Ishmael "help[s] prop up" and then "kisse[s]," points to an even more intriguing taboo: sexual relations between men. Even Ishmael's theory of cultural relativism must be considered "taboo" in the eyes of ideologically invested ethnographers who sought to measure the innate inferiority of native peoples. In each of his dealings with Queequeg, Ishmael confronts a taboo of his own culture, and exposes it is as both limiting and damaging; importantly, Ishmael's harmonic vision depends upon challenging taboos, and transcending them. Like Tommo, he senses that the taboos are somehow linked to social and political rites, but importantly, Ishmael moves beyond interpreting them as quaintly primitive curios that only exist in superstitious and pagan locales; he recognizes that they perform a far more threatening function in his own

society, where they are often arbitrary and self-serving tools of those who wield power.

Some have treated Ishmael's and Queequeg's "marriage" as Melville's attempt to personally endorse a homosexual society; yet if we are to posit this relationship as a response to representations of sexual encounters in the travel narrative, we must understand the bond between Ishmael and Queequeg as one which counters ideology, and unleashes some sort of potential. The transracial love plot asserts a harmony that is powerless to transcend the confines of the narrative; what is related as reciprocal love is nothing more than a rite of absolution. The shared guilt of readers at home, who felt complicit merely in their voyeurism, could be assuaged by depicting sentimentalized accounts of women who willingly succumbed to earnest suitors. Of course, textual boundaries marked the disparity of the lovers' individual stations: such a relationship was possible only in those politically and socially suspended states as the colonies. Underlying the basis of requited love was the implicit notion of the female lover's inferiority, and the acknowledgement that such a "marriage" would be taboo within the physical confines of Western society. As Pratt has noted, the question of whether love is actually reciprocated is irrelevant, since the result always remains the same: the narrator returns to western society and the female languishes in squalor, often dying shortly after his departure. The fact that such privileged spaces were needed to accommodate miscegenation, and by

extension, to make it acceptable, only highlights the futility of achieving racial harmony within the confines of western society. Once extracted from her cultural nexus, a lover/slave such as Joanna would most certainly constitute a "burthen" to someone like Stedman, since she would immediately be regarded as an inferior in his homeland.

Ishmael's relationship with Queequeg flouts many of the conventions which typified transracial love narratives, and importantly, as critics like Robert K. Martin have observed, his quasi-sexual relations with Queequeg occur on land, in the confines of the Spouter-Inn. By situating their encounter in New Bedford, Melville imaginatively realizes an America that can accommodate racial and cultural differences; in effect, Ishmael's narration substitutes America, rather than the decidedly neutral venue of the whaleship, as this "privileged space" in which taboos may be lifted and cultures intermingled. Had Ishmael and Queequeg shared their "hearts' honeymoon" aboard the Pequod, the potential of Melville's vision would be seriously undermined. More directly, we may say that Ishmael's decision to accept Queequeg's "bridegroom clasp" before he shipped removes the contingencies of shipboard life as a possible reason for their union. The ship-as-society is a metaphor that exerts some potential for social reform, but is, nevertheless, a highly idealized and utopian vision. Ishmael's decision to engage the Polynesian and move beyond taboos while he is subject to the dictates of America, rather to Ahab, calls for removing the racial

conflict with Native Americans, African Americans, and indigenous peoples of other cultures.

In an even more subversive gesture, Melville locates the possibility for redemption and reconciliation in the form of a male couple. Again, to understand how he reworks the transracial love plot, we must understand why he replaces the female love interest with a male. Aside from the obvious demands of plot, which could not realistically admit of a female character aboard ship, Melville's decision to cloak the "friendship" of Ishmael and Queequeg in sexual innuendoes and matrimonial garb bespeaks his knowledge that the male couple was a necessary foil to the heterosexual lovers in conventional narratives. In his refashioning of the love plot, Melville would have had three basic options: one, to maintain the heterosexual, transracial nature of the relationship; two, to rescind the miscegenation but maintain the heterosexual; and three, to maintain the interracial marriage, but in a homosexual fashion. The first option would have provided little relief to the ideologically charged narrative of love in the periphery; as Martin notes, "Queequeg is no dark maiden trailing perfume" (Martin 78-9). Clearly, had Melville woven a female love object into the fabric of Ishmael's narrative, the critique would have faltered in two important ways: one, she would risk succumbing to traditional forms of patriarchal conquest, in which she is "claimed" as a wife; and two, her (or Ishmael's acquiescence) might be read as merely another in the long line of transracial love plots,

inserting romantic love as the preferred tool of conquest. The objection to the second option would equally apply to any same-race homosexual relations Melville might have depicted. The fact that Ishmael and Queequeg are of different races invites us to consider the arbitrariness of racial and cultural hierarchies: without miscegenation, there can be no critique of imperialism, slavery, or Manifest Destiny. In short, the logical choice becomes the third option, which is best able to propagate Melville's social and political criticisms. Only in a same-sex, interracial marriage can Melville begin to dismantle the imperial investments of the transracial love plot, and transcend them in favor of a society of equals. The nuptials of Ishmael and Queequeg serve a number of symbolic, thematic, and political ends: the allusions to their sexual escapades lead to the even more highly cherished status of "bosom friends," providing Ishmael with the fraternal solace which so often comforts him in the course of his narrative; it symbolically "weds" two distinct cultures, and by extension discourages the arbitrary divisions of "civilization" and "savagery" in favor of the higher order of humanity; and it rescues the powerful tool of love from an imperial form of servitude, which wielded its sentiment as a form of conquest rather than liberation. Not surprisingly, Ishmael goes so far as to characterize himself as the "wife" of this pair, his identification with the feminine perhaps a veiled attempt at reversing narratives of colonization, and placing the savage in the position of male conqueror. For

Ishmael, though, both "conqueror" and "conquered" disappear from the equation of love; he willingly "succumbs," and the passivity is extolled as virtuous rather than cast as a sign of feminine acquiescence.

Melville extends the reward of fraternity and cultural harmony for this interracial love, a vision that recalls the cogitations of Wellingborough, the youthful narrator of Redburn.

> There is something in the contemplation of the mode in which America has been settled, that, in a noble breast, should forever extinguish the prejudices of national dislikes...our blood is as the flood of the Amazon, made up of a thousand noble currents pouring into one. We are not a nation, so much as a world...On this Western Hemisphere all tribes and people are forming into one federated whole; and there is a future which shall see the estranged children of Adam restored as to the old hearth-stone in Eden. (Redburn 185)

Wellingborough's remarks resonate with phrases and ideas that recur in Moby-Dick; America, Melville suggests, should celebrate her mixed ancestry, and embody the democratic principles which form her foundation. The "federated whole" is reiterated in Ishmael's characterization of the harpooners who, along with Ahab, comprise the "federated keel" of the Pequod, and notably, each of the harpooners belongs to a marginalized community which was invaluable to the formation of America: Tashtego is a native American; Dagoo an African; and Queequeg, a Polynesian Islander. Wellingborough's remarks on the composition of ships which are docked in Liverpool's

harbor provide an eloquent metaphor for this marriage of disparate cultures:

> Canada and New Zealand send their pines; America her live oak; India her teak; Norway her spruce...here, under the beneficent sway of the Genius of Commerce, all climes and countries embrace; and yard-arm touches yard-arm in brotherly love. (Redburn 181)

While Melville lauds the possibility of such harmony, tinged with the homoeroticism of the touching "yard-arms," his obsequious invocation to the "Genius of Commerce" is imbued with derision. As the narrative of Redburn illustrates, the fruits of "commerce" are not evenly distributed, and inequality is as rampant in this system as in its social adjuncts ashore. While this subject will receive more direct treatment in the ensuing chapter, it is worth noting that the relative absence of racism on board merchant and whaling vessels, independent of whatever other abuses the sailors might suffer, nevertheless exposes the sheer arbitrariness of racial and cultural distinctions. While capitalism is certainly not posited as an answer, it provides the necessary context for understanding that these prejudices are highly constructed to serve certain ends, and that the possibility exists for members of all races and cultures to coexist harmoniously.

CHAPTER 3

Sailorly Servitude: Moby-Dick's Critique of Capitalism

Sheila Post-Lauria, in her book Correspondent Colorings: Melville in the Marketplace, identifies the "nautical reminiscence" as a form of travel writing that emerged out of opposition to the more romanticized tales of adventure which had become characteristic among 19th century popularized versions of the genre. "The nautical reminiscence," Post-Lauria explains, "presents realistic accounts of life at sea from the perspective of the forecastle, the living quarters of common sailors, rather than from the foredeck, the home of [James Fenimore] Cooper's romanticized gentleman-sailors" (Post-Lauria 48). The nautical reminiscence was popular with that same group of British cultivated readers that censured Melville's narrator in Typee as being "a very uncommon, common sailor"; for a portion of the readership bent on veracity and realism, the nautical reminiscence was an instant favorite. At the same time, Post-Lauria argues, this type of writing catered to the middle-class, "general" American audience, because of its sheer adventurousness and lack of pretension. Characterized by copious descriptions of shipboard life and exhaustive accounts of sailors' duties, the reminiscence forewent idealized portraits of refined sailors in favor of a stark and "objective" presentation of the "tar" (Post-Lauria 51). Part of the problem with the reception of Typee, of

course, resided in the educated voice of Tommo, who virtually omitted any of the rigors of the sailor's routine in favor of a sentimentalized description of life in the Typee Valley. Whereas Post-Lauria is primarily concerned with the manner in which Melville created and revised his works in order to bring them into accord with the sympathies of various audiences, both British and American, I am more interested in the way Melville wishes to use Moby-Dick as a means of challenging the expectations of his readers.

Post-Lauria contends that these cultivated British readers "expected a narrator to reflect--or more accurately remain within--his class status" (Post-Lauria 44), in other words, that he should avoid the sort of sophistication and eloquence that is often manifest in Tommo's narration. This readership, then, did not object to sailors publishing their accounts, so long as those accounts confirmed the expectations of the British class system. Cultivated readers expected that "realistic" sea-stories would portray sailors as uneducated, brutish, and often vulgar members of the lower classes, travel narratives that rewarded their expectations and confirmed their sense of social superiority; any "real" sailor who attempted to affect a voice of sophistication was promptly expelled from the ranks of seamen.

Such an audience proved troublesome for Melville, since his was an educated and refined voice; despite his editorial wrangling to appease publishers, there was little doubt that he was a man with great literary and artistic talent. If

Melville was to narrate the "heroics of labor" he had to create a realm in which sailors could be regarded as social equals, with their own distinctive and meaningful systems of knowledge and experiences. One might be tempted to contend that the nautical reminiscence afforded such an opportunity; as Post-Lauria argues, the "sketch," which was a popular form for this sub-genre, "helped to validate the voice of the 'ordinary seaman,'" and she observes that writers such as Richard Henry Dana Jr. delivered an antiromantic narrative of shipboard life, often depicting the crew as "drunk, brutal, ignorant sailors" (Post-Lauria 51,49). Dana, a Harvard graduate, wrote Two Years Before the Mast in 1840, a narrative that emerged out of opposition to the more sentimentalized accounts of literary precursors such as Fenimore Cooper. In his preface to Two Years Before the Mast, Dana promises to deliver "an accurate and authentic narrative" (Post-Lauria, 51), much like Tommo claims, in the preface to Typee, "to speak the unvarnished truth (Typee viii). The willingness of both Dana and Melville (in Typee) to accentuate the veridicality of their respective narratives, suggests the degree to which cultivated readers were fascinated with the lives of "real" sailors. While Dana may be reactionary, his posturing is no more realistic than the romanticized narrators of Fenimore Cooper's sea-fiction; Cooper's "gentleman sailor" may be off the mark, but Dana's adoption of the drunken tar immediately casts doubt on the narrative's realism, since as an educated man he is not a representative voice of the

shipmates he depicts. Whether this actually "validates" the voice of the sailor, then, is dubious; true, it makes this voice narratable in the context of popular fiction, but it does so at the expense of reinforcing the sailor's subordinate position within the class structure. The reminiscence thus remained a comfortable genre for cultivated readers to explore; its accounts of forecastle scuffles and exhausting labor were not so much a call to recognize the value of the sailor, as occasions of voyeuristic pleasure in "seeing how the other half lives."

For Melville, the question was how to construct a narrative that could value the position of sailors, without slipping into such class-constraining stereotypes as those found in popular versions of the nautical reminiscence. At the same time, a narrator that sounded pretentious, or overly "civilized," would not succeed in altering the manner in which the audience regarded the sailing profession, since a literary voice would not allow him to be viewed as a "real" representative of sailors. Moby-Dick, then, must somehow incorporate both the voice of the gentleman and that of the tar, socially-sanctioned nobility and that type of heroics which is particular to whalemen; by pitting the authorized languages and codes against those of the sailors, Melville challenges the implicit hierarchy in "authentic" narratives, and ascribes value to the common sailor. In a provocative article titled "Melville's Realism," Carolyn Porter discusses such a strategy with reference to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of

dialogical realism. "For Bakhtin," Porter observes, "language represents a social reality by representing the social languages which forever construct and reconstruct social life through their interchange. [W]hat is relevant is that this novelistic tradition grows from and fosters a realism defined by the opposition to the fixed, hierarchical distances of official cultures in the name of an 'eternally living element of unofficial language and unofficial thought'" (Porter 7). It is precisely in this oppositional stance that Ishmael's narrative is rooted; recalling the cultivated audience's demand for a "realism" that was largely their own self-affirming construct, Ishmael attempts to include the "unofficial language" of the sailor in the matrix of those social languages which contribute to and shape society. Part of this inclusion, importantly, depends upon deauthorizing "official" languages, which are inherently exclusionary, in order to admit alternative and competitive claims to knowledge and value based on experience. Porter outlines a complex and lengthy strategy which Melville employs to insert these "extraliterary" voices as part of a dialogical model, and I will only briefly summarize her argument insofar as it concerns Ishmael's narrative of the laborer-sailor. Relying on Bakhtin's theory that "the representation of language in language produces 'the perception of one language by another language'"(Porter 9), Porter contends that Ishmael garners various "official" languages as a means of investing his narrative with authority and truth; yet at the same time, she

argues, Ishmael parodies these same sources that he plunders for authority. Arguably, Tommo adopts a similar strategy in Typee, though it often seems confused and mismanaged; for example, he frequently cites notable travel books, such as those of Cook, to lend his narrative authenticity, and aligns himself with those explorers to support certain of his observations. Beneath this layer, however, lurks Tommo's confounded expectations, as the nature of the Typees seems to refute most of the assumptions made as to their character in the earlier travel books. Though Tommo's strategy is often inept, since he remains so inscribed with the cultural expectations put forth in these accounts, it still highlights the germination of what Porter observes in Moby-Dick; Tommo gains credibility and sympathy by aligning himself with the imperial representations in earlier travel literature, while his pointed criticisms of missionary expeditions, colonization, and ethnography ironize these same sources: the accounts of those such as Cook are unmasked as largely inaccurate. Only by mimicking the tone and style of the educated traveler is Tommo legitimated in the eyes of his audience, a legitimacy which is at once invoked, and then partially discarded to hear the voices of the Typees. While Moby-Dick relies upon similar tactics to lay bare many of the imperial attitudes that inform ethnography, especially evident in the relationship of Ishmael and Queequeg, it also attempts to alter the public consideration of the common sailor.

In "The Advocate," Ishmael's method of apportioning glory and distinction to the whaleman relies on a comparison with the collateral sea-pursuits of commerce and military conquest. Ishmael claims that "this business of whaling has somehow come to be regarded among landsmen as a rather unpoetical and disreputable pursuit; therefore I am all anxious to convince ye, ye landsmen, of the injustice hereby done to us hunters of whales" (MD 908). From this vantage point, he can construct whaling as a specialized field of knowledge that he may elevate to the distinction of "the liberal professions" held in esteem by the ignorant landsmen. Ishmael discounts the charge that the whaling industry is nothing more than a "butchering sort of business" by comparing it with the brutality that furnishes the glorious reputation of soldiers: "what disordered slippery decks of a whale-ship are comparable to the unspeakable carrion of those battle-fields from which so many soldiers return to drink in all ladies' plaudits?" (MD 908). The unstated answer is that the military profession is marked by honor and pride, not because of the danger or bravery peculiar to its endeavors, but because it directly feeds the appetites of capitalism and imperialism. Ishmael's oratorical flourish exalts the honor of the whaling industry, chronicling its pioneering efforts which have paved the way for later explorations and missions, and which have allowed for the fact that "American and European men-of-war now ride peacefully in once savage harbors" (MD 908), a voice which Porter describes as "ventriloquizing the rhetoric of American

imperialism" (Porter 11). Anyone acquainted with Melville's harsh treatment of missionary endeavors in Typee, and of the brutal authoritarianism of naval command in White-Jacket, will immediately discern the irony in these lines; the "peaceful" men-of war, and the "once-savage harbors" are barely concealed reminders of the brutal conquest which makes such descriptions possible. Porter's argument is that this narrative strategy simultaneously accomplishes two things: first, it allows Ishmael to bestow honor and dignity to the whalemen who have traversed the oceans and made the later expeditions of missionaries and merchants possible; second, it illuminates the very irony of whaling's "peaceful influence," since it paved the way for butchery and exploitation. In Porter's words, Ishmael "exalts whaling in a language which unravels itself in the course of its performance...exposing how the language used to ascribe distinction itself degenerates into self-contradiction" (Porter 11). This again recalls Melville's intimacy with both the genre and his audience: had Ishmael become a true "tar," narrativizing the heroism or nobility of sailors would have been inconceivable; likewise, had his voice settled into the authoritative posture of the refined and educated traveler, his praise of the common sailor would be viewed as just another romanticized, and thereby fictionalized, account of sea-faring. Melville, then, effectively weds these two positions by having Ishmael invoke authoritative voices in order to gain respectability for sailors, only to expose these voices as highly exclusionary

and imperialistic. In this gap, "Ishmael momentarily frees the meaning of honor from such limits, allowing it to be absorbed by other languages" (Porter 12).

Just as Typee provided the context for understanding Melville's refashioning of ethnography in Moby-Dick, Redburn, with its insistent focus on the effects of capitalism on the lower classes of society, may offer us some insight into how Melville attempts to restore a value to working men in Moby-Dick. The early portions of Wellingborough Redburn's narrative primarily chronicle his defeated expectations, the destruction of his romantic visions of the sea voyage. Yet in many ways Redburn is a novel of indoctrination, and Wellingborough's narration displays a marked shift upon reaching the docks of Liverpool. His arrival in England begins a growing transition from innocence to experience, and the abject poverty which surrounds him leads him to ruminate on the plight of the sailor, Melville's favorite metonymy for the working class man:

> There are classes of men in the world, who bear the same relation to society at large, that the wheels do to a coach: and are just as indispensable. But however easy and delectable the springs upon which the insiders pleasantly vibrate: however sumptuous the hammer-cloth, and glossy the door panels; yet, for all this, the wheels must still revolve in dusty, or muddy revolutions. No contrivance, no sagacity can lift them out of the mire; for upon something the coach must be bottomed; on something the insiders must roll.
>
> Now, sailors form one of these wheels: they go and come round the globe; they are the true importers, and exporters of spices and silks; of fruits and wines and marbles; they carry missionaries, embassadors, opera-singers, armies, merchants, tourists, scholars to their destination: they are a bridge 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 every thing would stop here on earth except its revolution on its axis, and the orators in the American Congress. (Redburn 153-54)

This passage anticipates Ishmael's treatment of the sailor in "The Advocate" as he attempts to uphold the worth of whalemen by asserting that they are the ones who have made the excursions of missionaries, merchants, and soldiers possible. Similarly, Redburn demands that sailors be recognized as integral and valuable contributors to society; like the mud-caked carriage wheel, sailors bear the heavy burden of commerce and imperialism, the benefits of which only accrue to the coach's passengers. The metaphor of the "coach-as-society" is both evocative and enticing, and it is tempting to believe that Melville is arguing that his sailors should be given first-class tickets as passengers. Yet the danger here resides in accepting the limits of the metaphor--one cannot help but recall Ishmael's declaration that "I do not mean to have it inferred that I ever go to sea as a passenger...I abandon the glory and distinction of such offices to those who like them"(MD 797). Though Ishmael is presumably constrained by financial necessity to ship as a sailor, he nevertheless represents his decision as an act of choice; he "abandons" the station of the passenger in favor of the sailor. Implicit in this "choice" is his notion that passengers require sailors, just as Redburn's coach requires wheels; the carriage, then, is an apt metaphor of constructed social hierarchies. Like the self-perpetuating cycle of capitalism, in which every

laborer who becomes an employer must hire more laborers to work beneath him, the carriage must always be supported by the wheels of the lower classes; Redburn, like Ishmael, knows that for every sailor who drags himself out of the quagmire and into the coach, another is needed to take his place. For Melville, it is the metaphor--and by extension the society--which must be altered, a project that can only be effected by radically changing the ways in which value is ascribed to the worker.

The six-week sojourn in Liverpool offers Wellingborough an opportunity to experience a city and culture he has only read about in guidebooks, and one by one his highly-wrought and idealistic visions of British life are dealt a resounding blow. "Old Morocco," the pet name of Redburn's favorite guidebook of Liverpool, was instrumental in providing him with the desire to ship as a sailor to Europe. It furnished him with a highly romantic portrait of Liverpool, a portrait which, he finds upon his arrival, is highly inaccurate and outmoded. Confounded by the destitution which surrounds him, he reluctantly perceives that "Guide-books...are the least reliable books in all literature; and nearly all literature, in one sense, is made up of guide books" (Redburn 172). Wellingborough's frustration with the transiency of guide-books, namely that older ones prove to be inadequate "road-maps" for posterity, is more than an acknowledgment of a rapidly changing world; it is a means of exposing the ideologies which muzzle the voices of the lower classes.

Wellingborough's loss of faith in his guide-books immediately recalls Tommo's confusion as he lands in the Typee Valley; the latter's intimacy with travel books about hostile natives and bloodthirsty cannibals is immediately challenged by the munificence and hospitality of the Typees. It seems that Wellingborough's "guide-books" are close approximations of Tommo's travel narratives, and, importantly, that they offer a travel narrative of <u>western</u> civilization. Just as Tommo's narrative implicitly tests the veracity of travel accounts in peripheral cultures, Wellingborough's initiation into the squalor and moral bankruptcy of Liverpool unmasks the narrative of capitalism in western society. For it is not merely that his father's guide-book has been surpassed, but that the ideology governing this guide-book prohibits Redburn from sharing his father's experiences. In the margin of his father's travel books are some scrawled entries, a journal of sorts which recounts his activities in Liverpool. Thus, he lists his expenses variously as "port wine and cigars," "trip to Preston," and "dinner at the Star and Garter"; Redburn quickly learns that there are a separate set of guide-books for different classes of society, since his lack of money and social authority deprives him of the chance, quite literally, to follow in his father's footsteps. In this way, Wellingborough's narrative can be regarded as an ideological replacement for "Old Morocco;" it attempts to rewrite such exclusionary guide-books, and expose their ideological subtexts.

In Liverpool he is met with an indigent populace, many of whom are starving or diseased, a situation made even more disturbing by the unwillingness of locals to aid their less fortunate compatriots. While this instills his narrative with a tone of despair, it nevertheless defines the beginning of Wellingborough's meditations on social injustice; though he is largely concerned with altering the public conception of sailors as a shoddy and disreputable sort, the piteous descriptions of the Liverpool indigents offer an analogy to the low esteem in which sailors are held, an analogy which is often invited throughout the narrative. Similarly, though Redburn is indignant with the treatment afforded him by Captain Riga, he nevertheless shuns the fraternity of Harry Bolton and retreats to his home. Although he tries, at times, to ennoble the position of sailors, he never really relinquishes the desire to share in the experiences of his privileged father; the renunciation of his sailorly ambitions, then, is comparable to Tommo's departure from the Typee Valley. Both seem to imply that criticizing aspects of their own culture is one thing, and deserting it is quite another.

My point in reverting to Melville's earlier texts is to show the magnitude of scope which he achieves with the writing of Moby-Dick, a novel which can contain many of the issues that were at least partially raised in Typee and Redburn. As the previous chapters have demonstrated, Melville purposefully invokes both the effects of capitalism and imperialism by constructing a multiracial crew. This allows him to venerate

the station of the sailor, at the same time that racial differences disappear in the "wedding" of Ishmael and Queequeg. This chapter will focus on how Melville uses the narrative of labor, a subject introduced in Redburn, to expose the effects of capitalism on the lower classes and reassert the values and experiences of working class men.

Like almost any member of the crew, excepting Ahab, Ishmael's reason for embarking on the whaling voyage is dictated primarily by economic necessity. Although he claims that the ocean provides him with a way of "driving off the spleen," he is careful to remark that the shipowners "make a point of paying [him] for [his] trouble" (MD 798). Ishmael's migration to New Bedford can be seen as part of a "mass exodus in nineteenth century America in which the collapse of subsistence farming and traditional feudal systems of master-apprentice relationships propelled rural inhabitants toward the metropolitan marketplace as a means of economic survival"(Dimock 11). While such a breakdown of traditional ties forced the working class into new social relations, employers claimed "that their social institutions reproduced among strangers those shattered familial and communal bonds" (Rogin 196). In this way, Ishmael and Queequeg share a common bond, one which overwrites the racial hierarchy perpetuated by imperialistic discourse in favor of the lowest denominator of capitalism--the laborer. Within this framework, individuals are judged neither by the color of their skins, nor by their religious or cultural affiliations, but by their ability to

produce. Ishmael, in signing aboard the Pequod, is afforded only the three- hundredth lay of the profits, owing both to his greenness as a whaleman and the shrewdness of the Quaker owners, Bildad and Peleg. Queequeg, on the other hand, after an exhibition of his skills as a harpooner, is quickly entreated to sign for the ninetieth lay, and any concerns which were initially shown toward his cannibal propensities are immediately disregarded in favor of his potential to make the owners money. For these Quakers, religious faith has become secondary to their more pressing allegiance to capitalism; as Ishmael ruminates on the character of Bildad, "very probably he had long since come to the sage and sensible conclusion that a man's religion is one thing, and this practical world quite another. This world pays dividends" (MD 873).

In "Knights and Squires" Ishmael abandons his introduction to the character of Starbuck to proclaim:

> If, then, to meanest mariners, and renegades and castaways, I shall hereafter ascribe high qualities, though dark; weave round them tragic graces; if even the most mournful, perchance the most abased, among them all, shall at times lift himself to exalted mounts; 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! (MD 916)

Clearly the voice of Ishmael, with its oratorical presentation, is an ironic invocation to a society that effects only the pretence of equality. While Ishmael's conviction in the "just Spirit of equality" is sincere, there

is a sense of futility that this equality can only be fully realized within the confines of his narrative. Mimicking a politician with the force and rhetoric of his speech, Ishmael manages to lay bare the discrepancy between what is actually promised by the dominant voices of society, and that which is actually delivered. He rejects the society who "pick[s] up Andrew Jackson from the pebbles" and "hurl[s] him upon a war-horse" (MD 917), since the example of Jackson illustrates that "the principles which determine places within a hierarchy have been changed, but the hierarchical structure has remained intact" (Bersani 72-3).

Within the crew some of these same issues are manifest in the despotic rule of Ahab, and the chain of command down through the officers and harpooners to deck swabs and green hands like Ishmael. Ishmael, as the narrator, appropriates diverse voices and languages in order to realize the heteroglot discourse of the ship's crew and better conceive the way in which these voices shape the character of human relations. With the ability to mediate between the pagan rites of Queequeg, the broken colloquialisms of Stubb, and the pathos of Pip, Ishmael's voice never becomes exclusionary, like Ahab's, but remains malleable. By exposing the character of Ahab and displaying the effects that society exerts upon him, Ishmael allows for a testing of the limitations of such a society and invites a reworking of its precepts through the production of a multi-voiced narrative.

It is Ishmael's narration that provides the context for Ahab's monologic purpose. Only by inserting Ahab's quest into the larger framework of voices that comprise the narrative may we gauge the tragedy of Ahab's vision, and understand how it exposes social and political injustices. Whereas Ishmael argues for fundamental human equality, Ahab's despotic command demonstrates the ideological barriers which prevent this equality from being realized. Ishmael's critique of capitalism is highly philosophical, and it depends upon the actions of Ahab to illustrate the contradictions at the heart of this ideology. In effect, Ahab's command of the Pequod puts Ishmael's theorizing to the test. It is not so much Ahab's quest for Moby Dick that constitutes a critique of capitalism, but how Ahab orders this quest and manipulates his crew. His chase of the whale is, in many respects, a measure of personal advancement, and his egotism exposes the impossibility of realizing a true democracy in a society that operates under the narrative of individualism.

Of all the crewmembers aboard the Pequod, or in any of Melville's works, the character of Ahab is surely the most captivating. "A grand, ungodly, god-like man" (MD 878), Captain Peleg's description of Ahab is a fitting one, the paradox of "god-like" and "ungodly" matching the ambivalent nature of his character. Ahab rejects capitalism in favor of a personal quest, one which, given his authoritative position, unites the hands in the hunt for Moby-Dick. He refuses to respect the commercial underpinning of the voyage, sacrificing

the interests of the Quaker owners, and to some extent those of his crew, in favor of his monomaniac hunt for the white whale. In "The Quarter-Deck," Ahab alerts the crew to the true purpose of the voyage, rallying them together in a quasi-satanic communion: "And this is what ye have shipped for, men! to chase that white whale on both sides of land, and over all sides of earth, till he spouts black blood and rolls fin out" (MD 966). The "inscrutable malice" of the white whale, to which Ahab attributes the loss of his limb, is interpreted as a personal affront, and along this line many have read Moby-Dick as a story of personal revenge. Yet the extent of his hatred, the degree to which he transfers his entire energy to the destruction of an animal, hints at a psychological affliction which is socially rooted. Monomania, writes Rogin, "began attracting notice early in the nineteenth century; it was the disease specific to a society of uprooted and driven men" (Rogin 118). A descendant of the Puritan fathers, Ahab disregards the commercialism of the Nantucket market, and instead "carries to extreme the egotistic, bourgeois desire for power, to be alone in the world and possess it" (Rogin 120). Ahab is testing the limits of freedom, exhibiting political masterlessness even as he enslaves his crew.

The collapse of traditional familial ties and migration from rural outposts to metropolitan centers produced a radical individual, an "orphan-like" person who claimed the right "to be unattached, unindebted, unbegotten--to be oneself, to own

oneself, to make oneself" (Dimock 142); like Jay Gatsby, who abandons his family and his name, springing from his own "Platonic conception of himself," Ahab is self-incarnated; he refuses the fraternity of his crew, his domestic ties at home, and the tenets of society, as he weds his dream, not to Daisy Buchanan, but to the white whale. In his desire to break free from fraternal and filiopietal obligations, and in his renunciation of "mortal-interdebtedness," Ahab represents the desire to be a self-made man; to recapitulate Rogin, he personifies the desire to "be alone in the world and possess it." In testing the limits of this ideology, he has projected his right to self-sovereignty onto the physical world that surrounds him.

Ahab's tragedy, however, lies not in the degree to which he "makes it" as a self-made man, but in the degree to which he is subject to the complementary punitive logic of American individualism. For the tautological nature of self-sovereignty implies that the individual is also defined by its power to undo itself. The sovereign must have a subject, the created a creator; if Ahab is to fashion his own destiny, and that destiny is death at the jaws of the white whale, Ahab, and Ahab alone, is to be held accountable. As he somewhat despairingly implores: "Who's to doom when the judge himself is dragged to the bar?" (MD 1375). Operating as both judge and judged, the self occupies a circular orbit that serves more as a measure of containment than it does as a means to personal freedom. To locate this even more specifically

within the framework of the labor narrative, we may understand the individual's "self-government" as a promise of "personified property" (Dimock 40). In this sense, the self is a commodity, an entity which must be both bought and sold by the same self; the marketplace of the self, then, the gateway to purchasing greater freedom and opportunity, was "an orbit of reflexive exchange" wherein "buying his own future, [the self] always got what he bargained for" (Dimock 40). Nothing exhibits this tautological and self-consuming enterprise better than Ahab's imperative: "Now, then, be the prophet and the fulfiller one. That's more than ye, ye great gods, ever were" (MD 971-2). Being both the sovereign and the subject, the prophesier and the prophesied, Ahab is condemned by none other than himself. He is locked in a circular path of self-victimization, each attempt to transfer accountability being but a further remove into the self-perpetuating cycle. As a reader, Ahab fixes a determinate meaning on the text of the white whale, allegorizing it as either agent or instrument of "inscrutable malice." Searching for some form of justice by exacting his own retribution, Ahab is looking for that "lower layer," striking through the "pasteboard mask" in an effort to locate some invisible, malicious agent. Of course, by deliberately misreading the whale, by appropriating him as the target of his personal vengeance, Ahab becomes the self-victimizer; he is to blame for seeking justice through the chase of Moby-Dick. The significance of such an act exemplifies precisely this lack of societal obligation or

accountability; as long as the individual must be accountable to himself, the genealogy of Ahabs will continue, as more of these "monomaniacs," the "socially uprooted" men chasing the dream of personal freedom and self-sovereignty, fall victim to such a limiting ideology.

The motif of the journey is especially fundamental to Ahab's quest, in that it allows him to separate himself from social constraints. The limitless ocean, the mysteries of the sea, most closely approximate Ahab's unbounded wish to act free of restraint, to pursue his vengeance and bring to fruition his egotistical self-reliance. Ishmael's narrative aside, Ahab's quest is posited in some relation to the land from which he has departed, and such is the nature of his narrative that we would expect no return. His is a desire to forego the land, and the societal restraints which it symbolizes, in favor of the sea; like Bulkington, who embodies the maxim "that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish, shore" (MD 906), Ahab must keep to the sea, for he would rather "perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety" (MD 906). In a literal sense, this "slavish shore" raises the question of slavery that was threatening to destroy American democracy. In another sense, however, the northern abolitionists were advocating a less overt form of slavery, "wage labor" in industrial factories. Ahab's search

for truth, that entity which resides "in landlessness alone," is contingent upon leaving this society behind and physically removing himself as a subject to its limitations and exploitations.

The paradox of Ahab's quest, read in this light, is that he embodies, rather than transcends these social constraints, and proceeds to exercise them upon the crew. On the most basic level, following our discussion of self-government, we may say that his quest must necessarily be a self-defeating one, since the strategy of individual accountability would imply the need for an escape from the self. On a more interesting level, perhaps, in terms of his relationship with the remainder of the crew, we may perceive in Ahab that most crucial of paradoxes underlying the dream of self-reliance, or the "self-made man." For just as Lincoln's "next year" (Dimock, 26) promised the laborer that he would one day become a capitalist employer, with the resultant subordination of other laborers, so Ahab's quest for absolute self-reliance depends upon the enslavement of his crew; he must make his quest, his "dream," theirs, just as the capitalist must goad his workers by offering them the possibility of personal advancement. To this end, Ahab uses both the power of his own personality, his "magnetic ascendancy," along with the instruments of capitalism, the promise of money, and manipulates each to unify the crew and mobilize them in the hunt for the white whale.

The doubloon has long been a symbol central to Moby-Dick criticism, in some cases serving as a metaphor for the entire novel; Pip's "I look, you look, he looks; we look, ye look, they look" (MD 1258) has been read as an exercise in symbolic flexibility, epitomizing the different methods and means of reading text, both for the readers who attempt to understand the novel, and the characters who interpret signs within the actual boundaries of the narrative. All too often, the common signification of the doubloon is neglected in favor of discovering the symbolic etchings that adorn it, or what it portends for the superstitious crew. Its basic function in society, one of the primary, if often forgotten reasons why Ahab nails it to the mainmast, is that it is cash currency--it offers the bearer power to buy. In "The Quarter-Deck," as Ahab summons the crew to join him in his quest for Moby-Dick, it is the presence of the doubloon which ignites the initial frenzy. The Spanish ounce of gold, the equivalent of sixteen American dollars, draws the cry of "Huzza! huzza!" from the seamen, "as with swinging tarpaulins they hailed the act of nailing the gold to the mast" (MD 965). Thus, the act which prefigures the communion of the harpooners and the crossing of lances resides in the promise of cash.

Though most of the sailors rejoice at the presentation of the doubloon, there remains one officer, first mate Starbuck, who is unwilling to "splice hands" in Ahab's monomaniacal pursuit. Starbuck, who may be regarded as a representative of capitalism in Moby-Dick, a man persistent in his obligation to

the Quaker owners of the Pequod, queries Ahab: "How many barrels will thy vengeance yield thee even if thou gettest it, Captain Ahab? it will not fetch thee much in our Nantucket market" (MD 966). Starbuck's situation is such that he is blinded by the ideology of capitalism, and cannot perceive the exploitation which it propagates; like the owners, he too is ostensibly a religious man, and partially disagrees with Ahab's quest in that it is blasphemous, yet also like the owners, the practicality of commercialism has taken precedence over his religious faith, so that his primary concern becomes whether Ahab's quest will hamper the ship's productivity. A component of the sympathy which the character of Ahab garners becomes visible in his reply to Starbuck:

> Nantucket market! Hoot! But come closer, Starbuck; thou requirest a little lower layer. If money's to be the measurer, man, and the accountants have computed their great counting-house the globe, by girdling it with guineas, one to every three parts of an inch; then, let me tell thee, that my vengeance will fetch a great premium here! (MD 967)

Striking his chest, Ahab is imploring that Starbuck look beneath the superficial layer of the market, beneath the tenets of capitalism, and examine his spirit, an entity which is sacrificed to the overriding concerns of production.

Ahab's harpoon, imbued with the prophetic power to slay Moby-Dick, is metaphorically hurled against the capitalist ideology; yet somewhat paradoxically, his hunt for the whale may also be interpreted as an attempt to wrest the power of the capitalist employer for himself. As a figure whose obsession exposes the political contradictions that underlie

the myth of the self-made man, and whose failure portends the calamity of all who similarly attempt to challenge the system, Ahab is in many ways comparable to Bartleby. In "Bartleby the Scrivener" Melville creates a character who is profoundly alienated and dehumanized by the capitalist ideology. The subtitle of this work, "A Story of Wall Street," situates Bartleby in the heart of American capitalism, and invites a metaphoric consideration of the "walls" in the legal office, which literally and figuratively isolate the scriveners. The lawyer-narrator of "Bartleby" comments on the "lofty brick wall" which commands his view from the window, and describes the "high green folding screen" which he buys to "isolate Bartleby from [his] sight" (100). Bartleby's work as a scrivener is the most sterile of occupations, as he is required only to reproduce documents in a fast and efficient manner; in the narrator's words, "it is a very dull, wearisome, and lethargic affair"(100). The sheer insipidity of the profession, in which Bartleby works "silently, palely, mechanically" mirrors a working class who are only valued as units of production, and the capitalist promise that the factory would reknit severed family ties is summarily rebuked by a workplace which "is entirely unhallowed by humanizing domestic associations" ("Bart" 120). Yet Bartleby, unlike his choleric and dyspeptic co-workers, gradually refuses to submit to the narrator's requests, offering him a curt "I prefer not to" when he is asked to perform his copying duties. As Bartleby refuses to work, he increasingly withdrawals to his

"dead-wall reveries," yet the image of the wall, which initially served to illustrate the alienation of the worker, has been adopted by Bartleby as a kind of safeguard. His unwillingness to write, to speak, or to acknowledge his employer, represents a wall of his own construction, as he effectively "shuts out" the capitalist ideology. Even when he is imprisoned for refusing to quit the premises of the Chancery's office, he makes no attempt to escape and offers no angry reprisals; instead, he refuses to eat and dies "strangely huddled at the base of the [prison] wall" ("Bart" 130). For Bartleby, the only effective rebellion is silence and inaction; perhaps he was aware of the lawyer's notion that "nothing so aggravates an earnest person as passive resistance" ("Bart" 104). Mistakenly, the lawyer believes that by helping Bartleby, by "befriending" him, he can "cheaply purchase a delicious self-approval" ("Bart" 105, emphasis added); his attempt to "buy" self-approval, and soothe his conscience by providing Bartleby with money, is a powerful reminder of market-driven ideologies. In such a system, everything--souls, people, peace of mind--is treated as a commodity. The narrator fails to understand that Bartleby is a type, that as a representative of the alienated worker he can only be "saved" by a systematic redress of the capitalist society, not by individual acts of pacification.

In many ways Bartleby's tacit rebukes mirror Ahab's quest for the white whale. Ahab's reckless defiance, however, illustrates how aspirations of individualism facilitate

inequality and subordination. We may say, indeed, that the narratives of capitalism and individualism are so neatly interwoven that Ahab's desire to transcend them only produces that same sort of mechanization and inhumanity that is characteristic of an industrial society. Like the scrivener, Ahab too is constrained by walls, only the "white wall of the interior" in Bartleby's office has given over to the white "wall" of Moby Dick. In "The Quarter-Deck," Ahab alludes to this metaphysical confinement: "How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall shoved near to me...and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him" (MD 967). Bartleby seems to consciously rebel against the social and economic infrastructure, but aside from pricking the narrator's conscience, his passive revolt and subsequent death afford little hope of challenging the system. Like Bartleby, Ahab considers himself a "prisoner" hemmed in by walls, yet he refuses to passively linger at its base; for Ahab, the only resistance is an active retribution. Ahab does not so much challenge the capitalist ideology inasmuch as he internalizes it; he becomes an apotheosis of the industrial employer, and his active tyranny affords an apocalyptic vision of what capitalism portends for American society.

The measures that Ahab invokes to challenge his metaphysical affliction mirror the exploitation and abuse produced by industrial capitalism. Even as he decries the

Nantucket market and the unimportance of money in the wake of his personal vendetta, he uses this very instrument to manipulate the crew. Ahab's knowing aside, "Starbuck now is mine; cannot oppose me now, without rebellion" (MD 968), bespeaks the egotism of his revenge, as he does not so much include the crew in his challenging of divine or social authority as exploit them to achieve his personal end. Ahab does not exist as some form of literary messiah who delivers the crew (and perhaps the reader) from an overbearing ideology; rather he illustrates the limitations of such a system, and personifies the destructive tendencies of radical individualism in a capitalist economy.

After his baptism of the harpooners, Ahab sits alone, wearing his "Iron Crown of Lombardy," and reflects, "Twas not so hard a task. I thought to find one stubborn, at least; but my one cogged circle fits into all their various wheels, and they revolve" (MD 971). Likening himself to a machine, Ahab constructs a mechanical metaphor, one that simultaneously hierarchizes his command and positions himself as a victim of the same institution. Though the crew are compared to small wheels in a machine, each moving with the impetus of Ahab's volition, Ahab himself remains part of this machine. Despite prioritizing his role as the "cogged wheel," he neglects to include the fuel of capitalism and the forces of production in his metaphor, and forgets that he, too, is a victim pushed by the society around him. Yet Ahab's desire to liberate himself from the manacles of capitalism serves to dehumanize him, and

he becomes much like the industrial machine which generates him; his inarticulate humming is likened to "the mechanical humming of the wheels of his vitality" (965), his brain "seems to beat against solid metal," and "the path to [his] fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon [his] soul is grooved to run" (972). Rather than transcend the society that constrains him, Ahab epitomizes it, personifying the mechanization of production, and implementing a similarly hierarchical model to propel his quest.

In "The Hat," Ahab's ability to subdue the crew to his purpose is registered in their accompanying lack of humanity. Subordinated to Ahab's mechanical monomania, their spirits and energies are diverted to his demoniac chase of the white whale, and their "joy and sorrow, hope and fear, seemed ground to finest dust, and powdered, for the time, in the clamped mortar of Ahab's iron soul" (MD 1365). Like a capitalist employer, Ahab's success depends upon knitting the crew into a single mechanized entity, subordinating fundamental human emotions and responses to production, or in this case, the killing of Moby-Dick. Ishmael compares the crew, now under the power of Ahab's domineering gaze, to "machines [who] dumbly moved about the deck" (MD 130), and the accompanying loss of individuality which they suffer, being "one man, not thirty" (MD 1389), figures the cost of the capitalist ideology; Ahab's attempt to subvert the restrictions of society fails precisely because he appropriates, rather than transcends its dictates. The fact that the crew are "welded

into oneness" evinces the inherent paradox of such a system, that one man's advancement depends upon the subjugation of others. Ahab makes himself the head, and views his crew as mere appendages to his will: "Ye are not other men, but my arms and my legs; and so obey me" (MD 1402).

Milton R. Stern writes that "for Melville, the other side of the coin of democracy is that individuals in the organized mass cannot resist the charismatic leader of the great crusade" (Bryant 456). Though Ahab does not flog his crew, his rule is nevertheless a despotic one, and despite the shrewdness he displays in coercing them, there must be some better explanation as to why the crew only manages "a half-mutinous cry" than simply his "magnetic ascendancy." Ishmael possesses a similar inability to account for the welding of the crew's passions and desires with Ahab's murderous quest: "How it was that they so aboundingly responded to the old man's ire--by what evil magic their souls were possessed, that at times his hate seemed almost theirs...all this to explain, would be to dive deeper than Ishmael can go" (162). Ishmael's failure or refusal to account for the crew's obedience simultaneously invokes the reader's active participation. Like Ahab, the reader must "look beneath the little lower layer" to discover the social inequities which reside precisely in these narrative gaps. Stern's argument casts the cloak of a herd mentality over the sailors, and displays their malleability at the hands of a "charismatic leader." While this may be partially true, it neglects the special qualities

of Ahab that distinguish him from his industrial counterparts on shore. Straining against the very society that generated him, Ahab does not so much bend the crew to his will as much as he harnesses a potential which is already latent in them. Like Ahab, they too are victimized by the tenets of capitalism, the promise of the self-made man, and the paradoxical inequality that is a direct offshoot of American democracy. Quite possibly, as Ishmael may already suspect, "his hate [is] theirs" (emphasis added), the irony being that Ahab may be the most democratic of rulers, the true representative of government by the people. This is not to discount the anti-democratic authoritarianism of Ahab's posturing, or his equally manipulative exploitation of the crew, but it does offer some reasons as to why the crew of the Pequod can mount no forcible rebellion against Ahab's despotism. Even Starbuck's soliloquy in "the Musket," in which he contemplates the murder of Ahab, hints at a resignation to the pervasiveness of Ahab's desire. Though Starbuck ostensibly desists from murdering his captain because of a range of obligations, (his Christianity, his subordination to the Captain under traditional sea-usages, etc.), his acquiescing to Ahab's power contradicts the very ideology that he has attempted to uphold throughout the voyage--that of capitalism. Starbuck realizes that allowing Ahab to continue his hunt for the white whale not only jeopardizes the commercial success of the voyage but also endangers the lives of all the crew. In light of this, his

decision not to kill Ahab hints at a subtler motivation, one that actually links Ahab with his crew. The unifying nature of Ahab's search for Moby-Dick, long regarded as imposing a manifest harmony on the various narrative strands that run through the novel, may be extended to include the unification of the crew's subconscious wishes. Part of what the crew recognizes in Ahab's boundless egotism, in his ability to subdue nature and technology to his disposal and be the fulfiller of his own prophecy, is an amplified version of themselves, a visible manifestation of their own desires to cast off the shackles of a constraining society and fashion their own destiny. It is not so much a case of their knowingly appropriating Ahab's vengeance as it is an unconscious alignment with a rebellion against an oppressive system.

The crew's seemingly unconscious gravitation toward the desires of Ahab recalls a similar such instance in "Bartleby." After Bartleby iterates his "I would prefer not to" a number of times, the word "prefer" begins to embed itself in the language of his fellow scriveners. Even the narrator confides that he "had got into the way of involuntarily using this word 'prefer' upon all sorts of not exactly suitable occasions" ("Bart" 112-3). Turkey asks if Bartleby "would but prefer to take a good quart of ale," and shortly thereafter, Nippers asks the narrator if he would "prefer to have a certain paper copied"("Bart" 114). Increasingly concerned by this addition to their vocabulary, the narrator ruminates:

> He [Nippers] did not in the least roguishly accent the word prefer. It was plain that it involuntarily rolled from his tongue. I thought to myself, surely I must get rid of a demented man, who already has in some degree turned the tongues, if not the heads of myself and clerks. ("Bart" 114)

The narrator is not vexed merely by Bartleby's influence on the other scriveners, but by the word they choose to repeat; "prefer," of course, denotes choice, something which workers of the lower class were usually denied. In this manner the scriveners' unconscious adoption of Bartleby's language seems analogous to the crew's suspicious alignment with Ahab's motivations; Turkey and Nipper display the seeds of that passive revolt in much the same way that the Pequod's crew respond to Ahab's desire to be masterless.

If Moby-Dick effectively critiques the ideologies of capitalism and imperialism, it also suggests that the possibility of freedom and equality resides in the redemptive grace of fraternity. Ishmael's introduction to Queequeg marks the emergence of a conviviality and friendship that transcends the arbitrariness of racial hierarchies, and that continually attempts to reclaim the relationships shattered by capitalism. In "A Bosom Friend," Ishmael remarks: "I felt a melting in me. No more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world. This soothing savage had redeemed it" (MD 848). Even after Queequeg has sunk with the Pequod, it is his coffin which emerges from the frothing waters and provides Ishmael with the most ironic of life-preservers.

The interdependency of working men is discussed at some length in "The Monkey Rope." Ishmael is lowering Queequeg over the side of the ship for the purpose of inserting a blubber hook into the head of the whale. Joined by the "elongated Siamese ligature" of a canvas belt, Ishmael realizes that his own "individuality was now merged in a joint stock company of two" (MD 1135), owing to the fact that a mistake by either party could end in disaster for both. Ishmael's capitalistic metaphor captures the danger of his situation, yet he survives precisely because he realizes that all men are similarly affected, though usually one "has this Siamese connexion with a plurality of other mortals" (MD 1135). Ishmael's new-found philosophy betrays his belief that the surest method of preserving one's free will depends not on acting independently, but on recognizing that cooperation provides the only path to freedom and equality. Ahab's failure lies in his refusal to acknowledge his interdependency with the crew, his renunciation of "mortal-interdebtedness" in favor of a supreme individual power that begets inequality and disaster.

The redemptive nature of fellowship finds its most crucial articulation in "A Squeeze of the Hand," a chapter which details the manual refinement of the sperm by the hands of the crewmembers. Squeezing the globules of sperm and basking in its odiferous qualities, Ishmael is overcome by an "abounding, affectionate, loving feeling," and exclaims: "Come; let us squeeze hands all round; nay, let us squeeze

ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness" (MD 1239). Ishmael's invocation is to "human nobility and the dream of the just, democratic, egalitarian society of brotherly love" (Stern 455), and though the possibilities for such a society are evident, Ishmael remains vigilant in his reminders that it is a long way from being realized. The racism of Stubb, particularly his comments to Pip and the black cook, Fleece, evince the impediments which threaten American democracy; the "diddling" of the French whaleship to procure the precious ambergris is a poignant reminder of the greed which the capitalist ideology fosters; the cruel torture of the old bull by Flask displays the pillaging of nature sanctioned by a burgeoning consumerism; and of course the character of Ahab, manipulating his crew, refusing to aid fellow whaleships, and foregoing the camaraderie of his fellow sailors, remains the largest threat to the equality of human beings.

There can be no question that Melville had an intimate understanding of the ideological mechanisms that regulated 19th century American travel writing. Moby-Dick represents the culmination of his literary and critical abilities, as he refines and reshapes the social commentary of his earlier works to expose the stultifying narratives of capitalism and imperialism. In spite of this, the question remains as to whether Moby-Dick can move beyond an exposition of the imperialist subtexts of travel writing to offer some sort of

solution to social problems. Artistically, we may argue that it does; Ishmael's progressive sense of cultural relativism and fraternal obligation is an eloquent plea for human equality. His itinerant and all-encompassing narrative vision manages to contain Ahab's monomaniacal pursuit of Moby Dick and provide a context within which we can understand the "guinea coast slavery" of Ahab's command. To a certain degree, given the lukewarm reception of the novel, Melville must have resigned himself to the futility of realizing social change. Much like Tommo, many 19th century readers could not conceive of abandoning their imperial posturing and reevaluating how they constructed and perceived the world; to do so would shake the very foundations of what it meant to be a member of a "civilized" society. Yet if Melville was disheartened by this rejection from his readers, he displays a cautious optimism in Moby-Dick that future generations will eventually bear out his testimony: "For small erections may be finished by their first architects; grand ones, true ones, ever leave the copestone to posterity. God keep me from ever completing anything. This whole book is but a draught--nay, but the draught of a draught" (MD 946). The universality of the issues which are confronted in Moby-Dick, Melville seems to imply, cannot be resolved within the confines of the narrative, much less without the active participation of readers. Moby-Dick, as Melville suggests, is a "draught," and we, as readers, must continue the project and see it through its completion.

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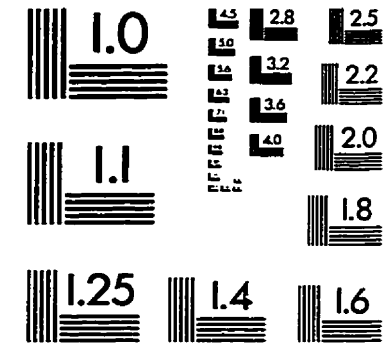

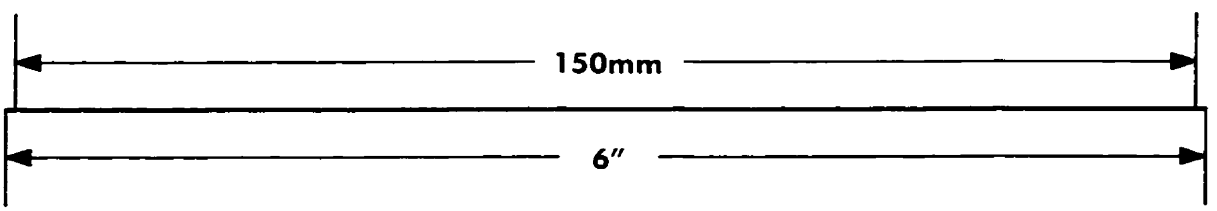

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