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Ishmael: The Dissolution of a Romantic and the Emergence of a Poet

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of English
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of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in English

by
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Archetype

ABSTRACT

Ishmael: The Dissolution of a Romantic and the Emergence of a Poet

by

Allison M. Pepper

Although Ishmael does not appear to be a main character in Moby Dick, his narration is integral to the text. Only through telling the story is Ishmael able to give himself a concrete identity, which is reflected not only through himself, but through the thoughts, speeches, and actions of the other characters, specifically Ahab and the shipmates. Ishmael represents the fragmented Romantic of nineteenth century American society. He is bound by a traditional patriarchal world where he must break away from the father to establish his own identity. He has lost his connection to nature, the primal source of his beginnings—the womb of the mother. Through his hermetic voyage into nature and back to the unconscious, he is able to reconnect to his origins. No longer is he the alienated wanderer, but recreated as the artist, able to create his own myth and identity.

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CHAPTER 1

ISHMAEL'S DIVIDED SELF

By the end of Moby Dick, the reader may have forgotten about the character of Ishmael, wondering who the lone survivor of the *Pequod* could possibly be. After all, Ishmael is presented to the reader as a main character only through about one-third of the novel. Then he seemingly takes a background position to the rest of the characters in the novel, only directly interacting with Queequeg and the other shipmates on occasion. The reader may find himself or herself alone with Ishmael for a few moments of speculation, but after an intrusion of thought in the narrative, Ishmael again fades into the position of silent observer and narrator.

But the reader must never forget that Moby Dick is Ishmael's story; it is his narrative of a journey into the wilderness out of which he is reborn. His identity is established through the telling of Moby Dick. It is not merely the story of a monomaniacal captain on a mission to destroy a white whale; it is a story of rebirth just as much as it is one of destruction. It is the story of a fragmented soul that is reunited with the sources of its beginnings in a quest through nature. Naming himself after the biblical character of Ishmael, he signifies himself as an outcast or an exile from society, specifically 19th century American. He has lost his worldly identity. Ishmael is reborn in the sense that he is made whole again, emerging with a new identity through nature. With the few brief words, "Call me Ishmael," the reader is introduced to the product of the encounter with Moby Dick, and the character of Ishmael is completed only through the telling of the story. He may not be a direct focus of the narrative, but ultimately he is

being created directly in front of the reader through the speeches and interactions of the other characters in the novel. They are his creations, soliloquies, views, thoughts, aspirations, flaws, fears, and observations. He is the novel; he is the storyteller. He is the creation as well as the creator.

Ishmael introduces himself rather urgently in the beginning of the novel. There is not much information given about Ishmael's background prior to sailing with the *Pequod*; instead, Ishmael's identity is made known through the narrative of Moby Dick. He does not have an established identity throughout most of the novel. He has been fragmented and dismembered by society and the world. It is from the novel that he emerges and is made whole again, as all society has done is tear him apart and lead him into the depression which causes his suicidal tendencies. And so he chooses to return to nature, to his origins, in order to escape the world he has become so much a part of and in which he has lost his own individual identity. He is a fragmented soul existing solely within the body; he is unable to transcend this state of incompleteness while he exists on the land. But Ishmael is aware of his own inner division: "Methinks my body is but the lees of my better being. In fact take my body who will, take it I say, it is not me" (41). And he longs to escape a physical existence of the world and body; he searches for a higher state, wishing to leave the body in order to explore the soul. He is alienated from the world. He shares his dark and self-mocking humor with the reader, indicating his isolation within society: "Who aint a slave? Tell me that" (Melville 15). But with his alienation and his self-mocking humor, Ishmael is able to detach himself from his situation. He remains detached throughout the novel, enabling himself to observe from an outer

perspective. It is from this circumambulation that he is able to more fully perceive his situation.

Ishmael is aware that something greater exists within him and out in the wilderness. He looks to escape his entrapment on land as well as within himself, but in order to do so he must leave the comforts of land and look to the dark ocean for answers. As he is incomplete and can only be made whole again by starting over, the darkness within himself must be confronted. He must piece together his dismembered soul and reconcile all the forces within, whether they are good or evil, in order to create a balanced and complete man. He must confront this Dionysian paradox in nature which holds and reveals these opposing forces. Ishmael must leave the world in which he has grown stagnant and search deeper within himself. He has not found the answers in 19th century society; he merely exists, bearing no identity. Whitmont, a Jungian analyst, writes, “When there is an impasse, a sterile time in our lives—despite an adequate ego development—we must look to the dark, hitherto unacceptable side which has not been at our conscious disposal” (164).

Ishmael must look within for the answers that he cannot seem to find in the modern world. He is the estranged and lone wanderer who has sought answers in the world and now is forced to look within. In a sense, Ishmael has been orphaned by the world. He has lost the balance in his life, having been cut off from both the mother and father figures. He does not receive comfort from the world any longer. He has lost the feminine and masculine connections in his life leaving him unbalanced. In the patriarchal and Puritanical society of the 19th century, Ishmael is estranged from the father. There are no answers that he can find in Christianity. Father Mapple comes into the church to

preach his sermon and isolates himself in a pulpit away from the congregation; he even pulls his rope ladder in after him so that there is no way to reach him. How is Ishmael supposed to look to faith for comfort? Father Mapple himself is not even comforted by his own religious beliefs, “He said no more, but slowly waving a benediction, covered his face with his hands, and so remained, kneeling, till all the people had departed, and he was left alone in peace” (Melville 51). There is no spiritual relief for Ishmael; he finds no answers in the church. He even turns to idolatry at one point and worships Yoyo with Queequeg, but he is still steadfastly caught in his religious convictions and later lectures Queequeg on the ignorance of his Ramadan while Queequeg merely looks at him sympathetically. Ishmael rebels against and yet is bound to the father in the patriarchal society of the 19th century.

In a confrontation with the father figure in 19th century society, Ishmael chooses to cut himself off from his patriarchal connection. Not only has he lost contact with the father, but he has been cut off from the mother figure as well. Ishmael lacks a mother. In the monetary and faith-driven cold world of the father, often there is a sense of comfort and security that comes from the mother earth or nature. But Ishmael has existed in the patriarchal society for so long that he is alienated from nature and from the mother. He finds no solace in the world. The journey is based on Ishmael’s rebirth in the ocean at the end of the novel when he has rediscovered the mother. He introduces the reader to the fact that he has been cut off from the mother early in the novel in “The Counterpane.” He is rejected by the only mother figure he knows, ironically it is the stepmother “[. . .] who, somehow or other, was all the time whipping me, or sending me to bed supperless

[. . .]” (Melville 32). She sends Ishmael to bed in the middle of the afternoon during the summer solstice when he is just a boy. He is literally cut off from the mother figure when he goes back to reconcile with her:

[. . .] softly going down in my stockinged feet, [I] sought out my stepmother, and suddenly throwing myself at her feet, beseeching her as a particular favor to give me a good slippering for my misbehavior; anything indeed but condemning me to lie abed such an unendurable length of time. But she was the best and most conscientious of stepmothers, and back I had to go to my room. (Melville 33)

He desires a physical beating from his stepmother as opposed to being isolated from her, and she still sends him away. Thus, he loses contact with the only mother figure he knows.

Ishmael exists on land in this fragmented state. He has lost contact with the mother and father figures in his life, he is estranged from the world, and he even contemplates suicide as an alternative to mere existence. He runs from his depression; he finds no solace on land or within his soul as he has lost contact with the mother. So he escapes to the ocean: “With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship” (Melville 12). He exists in a boundary; he is on the border of life and death, land and sea, the world outside and the world within. He verbalizes this boundary experience when he stands on the boat with Captain Peleg, who forces him to look out over the vast expanse of the waters before he will sign Ishmael to the *Pequod*: “The prospect was unlimited, but exceedingly monotonous and forbidding; not the slightest variety that I could see” (Melville 70). Taking ship is the boundary he must cross from

land to ocean. While in the ocean, Ishmael hovers on the *Pequod*, which exists partially in the known world above as well as in the unknown depths of the world below. He is apprehensive about the formlessness of the sea; there are no solid boundaries such as those that define the land. The ocean is a boundary crossing because Ishmael is no longer attached to the world. He exists in a state of hovering in an unknown realm. Nothing is definable while he is at sea. There exist only fluid boundaries that are not yet discernible to Ishmael. He must leave the comforts of land and penetrate the wilderness of the ocean as well as the wilderness within himself. He is crossing into the unknown. Whitmont defines this as the individuation process when consciousness realizes itself as a split personality and strives toward union with the unknown and unknowable partner, the self (221). He is leaving the land that Brodtkorb refers to as static, familiar, deadly, and too definitely formed and venturing into the world of the sea, which he defines as fluid, changeable, the strange, and the hidden (20). He is moving from the known into the unknown, from an existence outside himself to a search within.

In this boundary-crossing situation, Ishmael must leave the land, symbolic of the state he is in, and cross into the ocean, symbolic of the dark unknown that also exists in Ishmael, although he is not really aware of it at this point. Although he is frightened by the vastness and openness of the sea, which Brodtkorb calls “[. . .] a realm of ferocity, estrangement, and dissolution as well as of interest and even beauty” (113), Ishmael is drawn to the ocean as he has been before in times of distress, but this time he knows that he must take to sea or ultimately perish on land. He speculates:

[. . .] in the port is safety, comfort, hearthstone, supper, warm blankets, friends, all that’s kind to our mortalities. But in that gale, the port, the land,

is that ship's direst jeopardy; she must fly all hospitality; one touch of land, though it but graze the keel, would make her shudder through and through.

(Melville 97)

While on the Pequod Ishmael hovers, aware that the land, or the known, will destroy him as it would take down the ship. He must leave behind all that he has known and travel solely within the fluid world of the ocean. He must seek the unknown to rediscover that which he has lost on land.

In this boundary situation, Ishmael must face nature and reconcile its opposing forces within. He must reconcile the good and the evil within himself and in that which he experiences through nature, specifically in his encounters with Ahab and Moby Dick. Ishmael may only be made whole again by experiencing both sides of a situation while simultaneously embracing these paradoxes within man and nature. There is a tension that exists between the opposites, and Ishmael must learn to live within this tension while applying it to his creative advantage. He realizes that there is no existence for him in the realm of land. He returns repeatedly to the ocean in the elapsed time between the encounter with Moby Dick and the actual writing of the novel. In this traveling between two worlds, he looks for the contrasting experiences to give him definition and make him whole again. He comments on this contrast: "The more so, I say, because truly to enjoy bodily warmth, some small part of you must be cold, for there is no quality in this world that is not what it is merely by contrast. Nothing exists in itself" (Melville 55). His soul yearns for the open sea. His body may be held to earth, but his soul searches for that which will allow him to transcend a mere bodily existence. He knows he must escape in order to find the answers he needs:

Glimpses do ye seem to see of that mortally intolerable truth; that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore? (Melville 97)

During his trip on the *Pequod*, Ishmael encounters Captain Ahab, who is by far the most developed character portrayed in the novel by Ishmael. He is almost a counterpart of Ishmael himself. Both are orphans, both have a division between their bodies and souls, and both have a reason for taking to the sea. Ishmael records private conversations between Ahab and the shipmates, as well as moments of soliloquy at which Ishmael could not have been present. Ahab is Ishmael's creation. Fiedler writes, "Ishmael is, then, but one part of the split epic hero (and surely his splitting is a sign in itself of the divided state of the psyche in modern life), whose other part is Ahab" (547).

There is a sympathetic portrayal of Ahab through Ishmael's eyes. Even though this is the man who leads the entire crew, aside from Ishmael, to their deaths, he is still not judged by Ishmael. The latter shares an affinity for Ahab, as he is a man with divine aspirations who is tragically flawed. Ahab emits a divine depth of thought and exudes an inner royalty like kings of the past; he is intellectual and completely incapable of accepting the demonic in man and nature, portrayed through Moby Dick. Ishmael is explained as the heart of Western civilization that "[. . .] reaches out to the uncorrupted sources of natural life; in Ahab, the head of Western man turns out to the same sources in search of power and fear" (Fiedler 539). Fiedler further comments, "In Moby Dick, the protagonist of the frame-story is Ishmael, who becomes the trapped spectator of the drama of Ahab's fall, experiencing the catharsis of which Ahab is incapable. The heart,

that is to say, witnessing the mad self-destruction of the head is itself purged and redeemed” (549). It is the struggle between the heart and the mind, the spiritual and the intellectual. Ishmael overcomes this struggle by reconciling the opposites; Ahab is unable to do so. Ishmael accepts the fragmentation in life; he accepts the evil that exists outside of man as well as within him. Ahab is unable to accept his own fragmentation and his own dismemberment. He is unable to see that the evil he seeks to destroy in *Moby Dick* exists within himself. Ishmael sees the boundary situation as fluid and able to be crossed, reconciling himself with the unknown. Ahab is trapped in the boundary, in the labyrinth of nature, unable to reconnect to the source. Ultimately Ishmael is reborn, and Ahab is killed.

Both share a dynamic and divinely inspired vision of attaining answers. McSweeney writes, “There are profound affinities between Ishmael’s vision and Ahab’s, the deepest need of both being not human solidarity but psychic wholeness” (98). Both seek to complete themselves as both are dismembered. Ishmael’s dismemberment has taken place within, but Ahab’s is as much physical as internal. They share divine aspirations; this is what ultimately draws Ishmael to Ahab and invokes his sympathetic portrayal of the Captain. But they differ in that Ishmael seeks the gods for answers while Ahab defies the gods. Ishmael seeks the whale for answers from its strange depths; Ahab seeks the whale only to destroy it. Ishmael speculates, “[. . .] with a frigate’s anchors for my bridle-bits and fasces of harpoons for spurs would I could mount that whale and leap the topmost skies, to see whether the fabled heavens with all their countless tents really lie encamped beyond my mortal sight!” (Melville 233). For Ishmael, the whale is the guide into the intuitions that seemingly fall from the heavens as well as the guide into the

dark depths of the sea. But the illuminated heavens are merely “fabled” to Ishmael. He has intuitions that they exist, but the darkness that comes from the depths of the underworld below is quite real. Ishmael has seen the dark forces and must now claim them as his own before he can attain the knowledge of the heavens. Ahab, on the other hand, sees the whale as a demonic and destructive force, one he cannot intellectually reconcile, as existing inside of man as well as in nature. There exists no illumination for him; there is only darkness. He seeks to destroy that darkness that is as much a part of himself as belonging to the whale; he destroys himself in attempting to destroy the whale.

Ishmael, then, is created through his journey into and his interaction with nature. He does not come to any definite conclusions. He only leaves behind the world as he knew it, which had left him alone and estranged, and emerges reborn and renewed in the ocean. It is a difficult journey back to the source, as he must travel through the labyrinth of nature:

Both the spiral and the meander are to be taken as paths on which one involuntarily gets back to the beginning. Thus, the present-day notion of a labyrinth as a place where one can lose one’s way must be set aside. It is a confusing path, hard to follow without a thread, but, provided one is not devoured at the mid-point, it leads surely, despite twists and turns, back to the beginning. (Kerenyi, Dionysos 93)

Ishmael does return to his primal beginnings: “Long exile from Christendom and civilization inevitably restores a man to that condition in which God placed him, *i.e.* what is called savagery [. . .] I myself am a savage, owing no allegiance but to the king of the cannibals; and ready at any moment to rebel against him” (Melville 232). He cannot

remain complacent within the bounds of society anymore. He has broken out of them as he breaks into himself.

Ishmael enters the novel alone, but he leaves it after being picked up by the *Rachel*. He goes to sea as an alternative to death, but he finds that death may be an extension of a journey of life (Brodtkorb 94). Through the physical act of telling the story, Ishmael is able to recreate himself. Brodtkorb explains that Ishmael “[. . .] tells a story, but in telling it he relives its events, making (for us and himself) his personal past into a kind of present” (93). He explores the depths of the whale and of his fellow man through the act of writing, but in the end it is the acceptance of opposite forces that saves him. He never comes truly to know the whale, even though it leads him to life, “Dissect him how I may, then, I but go skin deep; I know him not and never will [. . .] I say again he has no face” (Melville 318). Ishmael knows that he will never attain the divine knowledge that Ahab struggles so uselessly to achieve; he realizes that his book is “but the draught of a draught” (Melville 128). But through his experience he is able to see that which he was unable to see before. Ishmael is content with catching glimmers of truth and simply accepting that which he cannot explain:

And so, through all the thick mists of the dim doubts in my mind, divine intuitions now and then shoot, enkindling my fog with a heavenly ray. And for this I thank God; for all have doubts; many deny; but doubts or denials, few along with them, have intuitions. Doubts of all things earthly, and intuitions of some things heavenly; this combination makes neither believer nor infidel, but makes a man who regards them both with equal eye. (Melville 314)

CHAPTER 2

THE SHIPMATES: OUTWARD PROJECTIONS OF ISHMAEL'S INNER FRAGMENTATION

As the novel creates for Ishmael his own identity, the recreation of the characters in the novel is Ishmael's method of articulating his own fragmentation at this point in his life. Ishmael reveals conversations between characters and inner soliloquies at which he could never have been present. These revelations about the characters are obviously fiction; Ishmael creates them only through writing Moby Dick. But the use of fiction is what makes every character in the book a part of Ishmael; they are his creations (Brodtkorb 87). Paul Brodtkorb points out that in writing the novel Ishmael ultimately becomes the other characters through sharing with the reader the soliloquies. He is no longer writing in first person; rather he is writing with an omniscient knowledge which he would only be capable of if he were writing about that which he knew so well: himself (59). It is through this distancing between the reader and the narrator and between the narrator and the other characters that the reader is able to see that Ishmael is ultimately on the outside looking in. He is distanced from himself; therefore, he is on the outside by writing the novel about himself, perceiving the others within the novel as self (Brodtkorb 58).

At the point in his life when this incident with Moby Dick takes place, Ishmael is a divided person. He is fragmented by the society through which he was formed, and this fragmentation he projects through his portrayal of other characters in the novel. Some portray a wholeness of being which Ishmael is lacking: Queequeg. Others portray an

inner division that Ishmael is struggling to overcome: Ahab. While yet others portray different aspects of the fragmentation that Ishmael has experienced prior to his rebirth at the end of the novel, specifically the officers of the *Pequod*, namely Starbuck, Stubb, and Flask.

The three officers play a major role in Moby Dick. They are the ones who speak most frequently to and about Ahab. Ishmael makes his distant and often enchanted observations about Ahab from afar, but the mates actually have interaction with Ahab. They are often at a loss as to how to classify Ahab and his monomaniacal mission, but Stubb and Flask accept Ahab's fate as their own, whereas Starbuck questions and even at times defies Ahab. Stubb and Flask are the weaker portrayals of Ishmael's own questioning of fate and life. Most frequently they choose acceptance over defiance. Starbuck represents a much stronger force and faith that is based primarily on his Christian views and accepted social conventions, and he is the one who comes into the closest contact with Ahab. His Christian doctrine is the very thing that Ishmael must overcome in order to be reborn into the wildness of his experience with Moby Dick. It is this societal convention that denies the evil within man and within nature. Only through the acceptance of this darkness in man and nature will Ishmael ever be able to become whole again. It is a reconciliation of opposites, of good and evil, that Ishmael completes in order to recreate himself.

The mates are unable to let go of their beliefs and their close-mindedness; therefore, they all perish at the end of the novel. They are stuck in their views, unable and unwilling to transcend their fragmented states. But through their fragmentation, which is only brought together through their submergence and ultimately their death in the water,

is Ishmael able to be reborn through the same water that houses this darkness in man and nature. The characters do not change; rather they are submerged into the very darkness that they deny. Ishmael emerges from this darkness. Henry Murray explains that even though there is the ultimate confrontation with the source of evil in the form of Moby Dick at the end of the novel, the elements of this dismembered society still exist in the forms of Flask, Stubb, and Starbuck: specifically the Puritanism, materialism, commercialism, rationalism, and optimism that were so prevalent in the 19th century (72). Ishmael is even able specifically to define the shipmates as morally enfeebled “by the incompetence of mere unaided virtue or right-mindedness in Starbuck, the invulnerable jollity of indifference and recklessness in Stubb, and the pervading mediocrity in Flask” (Melville 162).

Flask is by far the weakest of the three officers. He does not delve into the mysteries of the deep; rather he is just along for the ride. He offers no valuable insight into life through his thoughts or reflections. Even Stubb, although he is quite humorous, offers some deeper and ultimate truths, perhaps without even realizing exactly what it is he is saying. Flask, on the other hand, is taken at face value, the same way that he views life. He is materialistic and pleasure seeking; he desires no great insight into humanity or into the whale. He approaches and defines everything on the surface, particularly the whales:

[He] seemed to think that the great Leviathans had personally and hereditarily affronted him; and therefore it was a sort of point of honor with him, to destroy them whenever encountered. So utterly lost was he to all sense of reverence for the many marvels of their majestic bulk and mystic ways; and so

dead to anything like an apprehension of any possible danger from encountering them; that in his poor opinion the wondrous whale was but a species of magnified mouse, or at least water-rat [. . .] . (Melville 106)

Flask is unable to comprehend the larger concept of the whale or the consequences of Moby Dick leading the *Pequod*. In no way is Flask comparable to the spiritually pondering and faith-driven Starbuck or to the majestically flawed and worldly entrapped Ahab. Flask lives merely bodily, in and of the world. He searches for the things that fulfill short-lived and pleasure driven satisfaction; mostly he enjoys food and money. Food gives instant gratification, whereas money will guarantee eventual gratification, perhaps in the form of another pleasure of Flask's as evidenced when he looks at the doubloon: "It is worth sixteen dollars, that's true; and at two cents the cigar, that's nine hundred and sixty cigars" (Melville 361). At one point when Flask is trying to bribe his crew to row faster, he offers those things which are most appealing to him, namely food and money: "Oh! my lads, *do* spring—slapjacks and quohogs for supper, you know, my lads—baked clams and muffins—oh, *do, do*, spring [. . .] There goes three thousand dollars, men!—a bank!—a whole bank! The bank of England!" (Melville 297). He searches for nothing that enhances the soul; Ahab seeks to escape the world, Flask merely enjoys it.

Stubb enjoys his whale steak as much as the next man, but he transcends Flask's materialism by experiencing, perhaps without full awareness, the greater answers in life. Flask lets the greater truths slip by. An example of one of Flask's great insights into life is observed when he realizes that he is hungrier as an officer than he was as a mere sailor: "I am an officer; but, how I wish I could fist a bit of old-fashioned beef in the forecastle,

as I used to when I was before the mast. There's the fruits of promotion now; there's the vanity of glory: there's the insanity of life!" (Melville 132). Stubb even reprimands Flask on occasion, even though he is probably the closest person to Flask: "Why don't ye be sensible, Flask? it's easy to be sensible; why don't ye, then? any man with half an eye can be sensible" (Melville 419). But that's the answer that Stubb reveals without realizing it; Flask cannot see beyond the world he is in. Jung writes that the eye is an indicator of the presence of consciousness (Archetypes 33). Obviously Flask's only consciousness exists in the things of the world. He only looks forward to money and material gains, which is obviously a problem that modern man, in the form of Ishmael, must face. There is the temptation to avoid the great confrontations in life and exist mainly for the world; this is Flask. He cannot see the truth because he does not look for it. He defines himself unknowingly when he reacts to Stubb's great dream: "I don't know; it seems a sort of foolish to me tho'" (Melville 116).

Stubb, at least, is able to have grand dreams that are capable of interpretation, even though he may not know how to interpret them himself. Whereas Flask has little or no contact with Ahab, and Starbuck has spiritual and soulful confrontations with Ahab, Stubb remains very much in the body; his first encounter with Ahab is physical. Ahab calls Stubb a dog, and instead of returning to pound Ahab, he has an unlikely reaction that even puzzles himself, "It's very queer. Stop, Stubb; somehow, now, I don't well know whether to go back and strike him, or—what's that?—down here on my knees and pray for him? Yes, that's the thought coming up in me; but it would be the first time I ever *did* pray" (Melville 113). Stubb is not a spiritual man; he does not look for guidance to do the right things in life. He believes in a divine order and predestination that no man

can change. It is quite remarkable that Ahab is able to affect Stubb in this manner.

Stubb, in contrast to Flask, is capable of change and thought, although it might not at first be apparent externally:

What he thought of death itself, there is no telling. Whether he thought of it at all, might be a question; but, if he ever did chance to cast his mind that way after a comfortable dinner, no doubt, like a good sailor, he took it to be a sort of call of the watch to tumble aloft, and bestir themselves there, about something which he would find when he obeyed the order, and not sooner.

(Melville 105)

Stubb may occasionally grasp at a higher level of truth, but ultimately he allows it to escape him, as he believes the answers to belong solely to someone higher than himself. He questions neither reality nor his commander's ultimate intentions. Instead, he, like Flask, contents himself with the pleasures of the world, such as a good meal and a smoke from his pipe. He even offers his own "religious" commandments for himself regarding higher thought: "Damn me, but all things are queer, come to think of 'em. But that's against my principles. Think not, is my eleventh commandment; and sleep when you can, is my twelfth" (Melville 114).

Stubb may be unable to attain higher truth because he has no desire to know, but he is capable of insight, even though he may not be consciously aware of it. He is the modern man who goes to death laughing at the things that were unknowable in life. He turns his back on evil and assumes that events are unchangeable, and he uses laughter to cover up his fear: "I know not all that may be coming, but be it what it will, I'll go to it laughing" (Melville 149). He accepts the fact that life is as unchangeable as the sun

traveling through the signs of the Zodiac: “[...] the sun goes through it every year, and yet comes out of it alive and hearty. Jollily he, aloft there, wheels through toil and trouble; and so, aloft here, does jolly Stubb” (Melville 361). He feels that he is untouchable as long as he believes what he intends to believe, but there is still an underlying fear and questioning. He tells Flask in regard to Fedallah and his shadowy crew, “Damn the devil, Flask; do you suppose I’m afraid of the devil?” (Melville 277). He even soothingly comforts his crew when they are rowing after just having seen Fedallah emerge from below deck, “Why don’t you break your backbones, my boys? What is it you stare at? Those chaps in yonder boat? Tut! They are only five more hands come to help us—never mind from where—the more the merrier. Pull, then, do pull; never mind the brimstone—devils are good fellows enough” (Melville 188). For a man who attempts as little thought as possible, he certainly has some concrete ideas as to the origin of Fedallah and his crew.

Through Stubb, Ishmael portrays a willingness to get through life with as little thought as possible. Perhaps in shielding one’s eyes from the evil in the world, one can maintain that it does not exist. But that does not mean that one is completely free from questioning if it is there or not. Stubb claims not to be scared of the devil, but he recognizes evil for what it is. He simply finds it easier to turn his back on it. McSweeney points out that even though Stubb displays comic relief throughout the novel, he does go deeper at the end to see the premonition of disaster (82-3). He even feels obligated to make an oath to the ocean in order to hide his fear: “I am Stubb, and Stubb has his history; but here Stubb takes oaths that he has always been jolly” (Melville 406). At times it must be easier to believe that nothing is affected by your existence;

instead, Stubb relies on the wheels of fate to spin his life. That way there is no blame, and Stubb can continue to believe that he lives a happy life.

In direct contrast to Stubb's preferred method of looking the other way, Starbuck is thrown into the face of this evil in man and nature. He sees the madness in Ahab and is fearful of a confrontation with Moby Dick. He screams at Stubb, "Madman! look through my eyes if thou hast none of thine own!" (Melville 414). Starbuck is incapable of turning his back on what he has seen. Existing somewhere between the worldliness of Stubb and Flask and the godliness of Ahab, he is caught in the middle, unable to transcend either state because of the conventional views imposed upon him by Christianity. How can he believe in this evil when he only needs to look up to see the greatness of God? He senses, however, that there is another truth that does not come from his God. But he turns his back on the truth as opposed to turning his back on his faith: "If we bend down our eyes, the dark vale shows her mouldy soil; but if we lift them, the bright sun meets our glance half way, to cheer [. . .] This coin speaks wisely, mildly, truly, but still sadly to me. I will quit it, lest truth shake me falsely" (Melville 360). He cannot reconcile the fact that he has come face to face with an evil that cannot be a part of his God or of his conventional belief system. Like Stubb, Starbuck does not acknowledge the demonism of the world, whereas Ishmael and Ahab do. Starbuck keeps trying to change Ahab, which ultimately leads to the only real confrontations that anyone has with Ahab in the entire novel. He sees something great and powerful in Ahab, something in this man that leads him to confront the gods. And even though he sympathizes with Ahab, he still looks to his faith to help him thwart Ahab's insane

mission. Nor can he comprehend Ahab's obsession with a whale. Starbuck may be a good and god-fearing man, but he pales in comparison to Ahab:

And brave as he might be, it was that sort of bravery, chiefly visible in some intrepid men, which, while generally abiding firm in the conflict with the seas, or winds, or whales, or any of the ordinary irrational horrors of the world, yet cannot withstand those more terrific, because more spiritual terrors, which sometimes menace you from the concentrating brow of an enraged and mighty man. (Melville 106)

Starbuck becomes suspended in his state because he is unable to conform Ahab's will to his Christianity; he finds no answers or comprehension from his faith alone. And yet he is still unwilling to accept that there is evil in man, even more so that there is evil within himself. He sees the evil impulse in himself, but he turns away from it, always returning to his faith:

The loaded muskets in the rack were shiningly revealed, as they stood upright against the forward bulkhead. Starbuck was an honest, upright man; but out of Starbuck's heart, at that instant when he saw the muskets, there strangely evolved an evil thought; but so blent with its neutral or good accompaniments that for the instant he hardly knew it for itself. (Melville 421)

It is the paradoxical situation that Starbuck will not acknowledge because his spiritual perceptions do not provide the answers he needs. It is this Dionysian force in man and in nature that Starbuck chooses to ignore, and so he is unable to transcend his conventional Christian outlook. Walter Otto speaks of this Dionysian force, stating that it "is pure confrontation—an antipode, and nothing else. It has no reverse side [. . .] It has nothing

which might transcend this mighty moment of confrontation [. . .] It is the symbol and the manifestation of that which is simultaneously there and not there: that which is excruciatingly near, that which is completely absent—both in one reality” (Otto 91). It is inexplicable in itself; so Starbuck is unable to look to his faith for answers because there are no answers. To what god is Starbuck supposed to look to for answers to the Dionysian except Dionysus himself? But sadly, Starbuck is never able to overcome his conventional outlook in order to acknowledge and go face to face with Moby Dick, until it is his time to be destroyed by the very force he chooses not to acknowledge.

Otto further explains that the water, like Dionysus, “betrays a dual nature: a bright, joyous, and vital side; and one that is dark, mysterious, dangerous, deathly” (162). But Starbuck refuses to believe, and so he denies the darkness when he looks into the ocean: “Loveliness unfathomable, as ever lover saw in his young bride’s eye!—Tell me not of thy teeth-tiered sharks, and thy kidnapping cannibal ways. Let faith oust fact; let fancy oust memory; I look deep down and do believe” (Melville 406). He sees the truth and the darkness that exist below the surface of the world, but he chooses to believe in his own faith as opposed to accepting the darkness. He chooses to forget what he has seen and what he knows to be fact in order to maintain an imaginary security in his religion.

Starbuck denies this darkness in the ocean up to the point it devours him.

Ahab sees the consciousness in Starbuck, which is why he orders Starbuck to stay on the ship when he lowers. Ahab stares into Starbuck’s eye:

Close! Stand close to me, Starbuck; let me look into a human eye; it is better than to gaze into sea or sky; better than to gaze upon God [. . .] I see my wife and child in thine eye. No, no; stay on board, on board!—lower not when I

do, when branded Ahab gives chase to Moby Dick. That hazard shall not be thine. No, no! not with the far away home I see in that eye! (Melville 444)

Ahab sees the humanity and deep faith in Starbuck's eyes, and so he desires him not to lower. Of course, Starbuck is unable to see or confront what Ahab sees in the whale. This is what causes Ahab to sympathize with and yet ultimately defeat Starbuck's will concerning him. Starbuck tells Ahab: "I cannot withstand thee, then, old man" (Melville 422). McSweeney terms Starbuck's weakness "self-inflicted spiritual blindness" (91). He claims, "The reason he cannot stand up to Ahab is not that Starbuck lacks the capacity for spiritual perception [. . .] It is rather he has not known the spiritual terrors in life" (McSweeney 89). Ahab overpowers Starbuck every time because he realizes that the darkness does not simply run alongside man, as Starbuck wants to believe, but rather runs within man (McSweeney 90). But Starbuck does recognize, even if he chooses not to acknowledge, something disturbed within Ahab when the latter pulls a gun on him: "Thou hast outraged, not insulted me, sir; but for that I ask thee not to beware of Starbuck, thou wouldst but laugh; but let Ahab beware of Ahab; beware of thy self, old man" (Melville 394). Starbuck may cast a blind eye, but he is still capable of keen Melvillean insights and of speaking the truth more so than Stubb or Flask.

Because of the shipmates' incompleteness, they all must perish in the very darkness they choose either not to acknowledge or simply to remain ignorant of. Flask is materialistic pleasure; Stubb laughs off life to his belief in predestination, choosing not to believe that there are choices; and Starbuck is spiritual blindness and conformity to faith-driven conventions. Unable to transcend their present states, they all are devoured by that which they continuously deny. Kerry McSweeney explains the mates as "representative

of different states of intellectual and spiritual being” (77). Upon the last charge that Moby Dick makes to take down the *Pequod*, each character remains true to his faults: Starbuck cries, “He turns to meet us! Oh, his unappeasable brow drives on towards one, whose duty tells him he cannot depart. My God, stand by me now!” (Melville 467). Stubb reacts to Starbuck’s statement, remaining funny to the last moment, “Stand not by me, but stand under me, whoever you are that will now help Stubb [. . .]” (Melville 467). And of course there is the ever worldly Flask, “Oh, Stubb, I hope my poor mother is drawn my part-pay ere this; if not, few coppers will now come to her, for the voyage is up” (Melville 467-68). This Dionysian force which ultimately destroys everyone else gives life to Ishmael. No longer is he fragmented; rather he is put back together through a reconciliation of the good and evil within the ocean and within himself. His worldliness must perish because of the unacceptance of greater and darker truths. Ishmael loses his worldly connections symbolically through the deaths of Flask, Stubb, and Starbuck.

CHAPTER 3

QUEEQUEG: ISHMAEL'S CIVILIZED GUIDE INTO THE PRIMAL UNCONSCIOUS

In the flux of Ishmael's divided state of existence, only Queequeg illustrates a wholeness of character, an ability to transcend the levels of fragmentation portrayed by other characters, and an insightfulness that allows him to connect with nature. He is the cannibalistic savage who forms an intimate bond with Ishmael. Covered with indecipherable tattoos, worshipping a pagan deity in the form of Yojo, and acting instinctively in crisis situations when everyone else panics, Queequeg exists outside the realm of modern society; yet he is usually accepted by society. He is seemingly at home in every situation, whether it be peddling heads in the street or attending Father Mapple's sermon on Sunday morning. He is able to cross smoothly over any boundaries that have been instituted by the civilized man and his society. Even though he transcends the Nantucket society and the crew of the *Pequod*, he is also a part of these groups. He exudes vitality and a knowledge from within that separates him from the men who merely exist in and of the world. This savage is a part of the world of Moby Dick, but Queequeg also carries with him an inner knowledge that allows him a deeper understanding and compassion for his fellow man, specifically Ishmael.

Queequeg and Ishmael form an unlikely pair in the beginning of the novel, but they quickly mesh with one another and even enter into a bond of marriage. To Ishmael, Queequeg is indecipherable. He does odd things that exist outside the common bounds and restrictions of society that Ishmael has previously known. He leads Ishmael into

trying alternate paths, such as worshipping Yojo, and ultimately he is responsible for leading Ishmael into the path of the *Pequod*, which changes both of their lives. Queequeg is given a hermetic quality in the novel with his appointment to Ishmael as a guardian of his soul, “The one who leads the souls away and leads them back again” (Kerenyi, Hermes 69). He leads Ishmael away from modern life and its fragmentation and leads him back into a primal state, which involves a connection with his unconscious. And so Ishmael marries Queequeg. This act is referred to by Kerenyi as being symbolic of an opening to the hermetic journey: “Do not today those who wish to be free of the bonds to the community in which they grew up and to which they were intimately bound, who want to be open to each other without reservation or boundary, as two naked souls—do they not go on a wedding journey?” (Hermes 14). Through this act of marriage, Queequeg initially releases Ishmael’s soul from the realm in which it dwells and opens him up to the unconscious world in which Queequeg himself dwells.

Queequeg obviously does not emerge from the same realm as Ishmael. Ishmael even makes references to Queequeg’s otherness in a statement about his “unearthly complexion” (Melville 29). Queequeg does, in fact, exist in a different realm than Ishmael. He exists in a realm ungoverned, untamed, wild, savage, unknowable, indecipherable; yet it is intuitively felt. Kerenyi refers to it as an influx from the underworld, which is not an invasion of death, but rather underworldly life (Hermes 85). Queequeg does not bow to the laws of society and man; in contrast, he accepts and reflects the laws of nature. He is aware that he will not die from some sort of worldly sickness, but rather from that which is beyond his control: “[. . .] nothing but a whale, or a gale, or some violent, ungovernable, unintelligent destroyer of that sort” (Melville 398).

Ishmael is ultimately able to reconstruct himself because he is led by Queequeg into this alternate realm by taking a voyage on the *Pequod*. It is Queequeg whom he meets prior to the *Pequod*, and it is also Queequeg who sends Ishmael out to choose a ship for them to sail upon. Queequeg is the instigator and the navigator for Ishmael throughout the first part of the book. Although in later chapters Ishmael loses focus on Queequeg, it is ultimately Queequeg's coffin that saves Ishmael. In order for Ishmael to put his fragmented self back together, he must connect with the unconscious and travel within. Queequeg is Ishmael's guide into the savage confrontation with the unconscious, represented by the physical journey into the wilderness. He connects Ishmael with the intuitive unconscious, which allows Ishmael to choose the *Pequod*, and he also reconnects him with the suppressed memory of the supernatural hand and the stepmother which reveals Ishmael's deeper need to reconnect with the mother through his unconscious journey. The connection back to the mother will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters; the current focus will be on Ishmael's journey into the unconscious, the path to which is revealed through Queequeg.

As Queequeg has emerged as a product of the unconscious in order to lead Ishmael back, his physical appearance is illustrative of his origin. Aside from his habit of carrying shrunken heads around with him and the fact that his teeth are filed into points in order to better remove the meat from his human victims, Queequeg's appearance is shocking due to the color of his skin, which is covered in tattoos. Ishmael describes him as "purplish yellow" with a "bald purplish head [that] now looked for all the world like a mildewed skull" (Melville 29). His tattoos are indecipherable; Queequeg himself does not even know what they mean:

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 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 he himself could read, though his own live heart beat against them; and these mysteries were therefore destined in the end to moulder away with the living parchment whereon they were inscribed, and so be unsolved to the last.

(Melville 399)

He is the unreadable unconscious that contains the mysteries and suppressions of mankind. That is why Queequeg is so sympathetic to Ishmael's initial inability to look past the societal rules to which he has grown complacent. Richard Chase explains that the savage understands the world of the modern man because "[o]ur deepest experience, needs, and aspirations are the same, as surely as the crucial biological and psychic transitions occur in the life of every human being and force culture to take account of them [. . .]" (111). When Ishmael preaches to Queequeg on the uselessness of his Ramadan, Ishmael states, "He looked at me with a sort of condescending concern and compassion, as though he thought it a great pity that such a sensible young man should be so hopelessly lost to evangelical pagan piety" (Melville 82). But Queequeg sees beyond the world that Ishmael has been accustomed to and trapped by, a world built on the Christian faith. Ishmael has such a difficult time accepting this lifestyle of Queequeg's, specifically in the element of religion, because both men operate on a different level of consciousness. Ishmael's "consciousness struggles in a regular panic against being

swallowed up in the primitivity and unconsciousness of sheer instinctuality on the one hand, but it also resists complete possession by spiritual forces [. . .]” (Stein 101). That is why Ishmael struggles with Queequeg’s religious desires; he is resisting the pull of the unconscious.

Queequeg does not necessarily shun the Christian religion. He is an extremely spiritual person as evidenced by his commitment to worshipping Yojo and his intense Ramadan. He shows up at church for Father Mapple’s sermon, and even though he is still very much an outsider, his presence brings Ishmael comfort. Queequeg is unaffected by the Christian religion that seems to hold so many at Father Mapple’s sermon captive. When Ishmael walks into the church, he is struck by the solemn air of the congregation; Queequeg, on the other hand, appears merely curious. Ishmael describes Queequeg: “Affected by the solemnity of the scene, there was a wondering gaze of incredulous curiosity in his countenance. This savage was the only person present who seemed to notice my entrance; because he was the only one who could not read, and, therefore, was not reading those frigid inscriptions on the wall” (Melville 40). Queequeg is even able to draw Ishmael into worshipping Yojo that same day, an act that Ishmael humorously justifies as doing the will of God by doing what his fellow man would have him do. He claims that he must unite with Queequeg, who is his fellow man, in his form of worship, “[. . .] ergo, I must turn idolator” (Melville 54).

Not only does Queequeg lead Ishmael into breaking the boundaries that he has previously been conformed by, but he also leads him into prior memories which link Ishmael directly with his unconscious. Only when Ishmael awakens with Queequeg’s strange and tattooed arm thrown over him in a loving embrace does he recall the incident

in his childhood with the supernatural hand. Fiedler points out that it is his unconscious which initially calls up “[. . .] the phantom hand that held him powerless, awake but involved still in nightmare terror” (535-6). But Queequeg initiates a revival of this strange experience. Ishmael even claims, “My sensations were strange” (Melville 32). Paul Brodtkorb explains that the parallel between Queequeg’s arm thrown around him and the supernatural hand is a parallel of strangeness (108). It is Queequeg’s strangeness that jolts Ishmael out of his complacent existence and back into contact with his unconscious, even though it is still a labyrinth that Ishmael must fight his way through. This concept of the unconscious as a labyrinth that Ishmael must ultimately emerge from is visible on the body of Queequeg: “[. . .] this arm of his tattooed all over with an interminable Cretan labyrinth of a figure, no two parts of which were at one precise shade [. . .]” (Melville 32). It is the unconscious that has grasped Ishmael once again, only this time it takes the form of Queequeg.

Brodtkorb also recognizes Queequeg as the unconscious. He claims that Queequeg always acts spontaneously and prereflectively according to the demands of the situation to which Queequeg is instinctively and instantly aware (59). Queequeg does not think; he reacts. He rescues the “poor bumpkin” who is knocked in the water on the ferry crossing while the other passengers are wondering what to do. Ishmael even reflects on Queequeg’s instantaneous decision, “Was there ever such unconsciousness?” (Melville 61). Queequeg later jumps into the ocean to rescue Tashtego, who is almost buried alive by falling into the whale’s head in trying to extract the ambergris. Queequeg performs an awkward cesarian delivery under water in order to release Tashtego from his grave. He

does not react with hesitation or anxiety but remains calm and reactive in the most stressful situations.

Queequeg may be portrayed as being calm and peaceful in most situations, unaffected by trivial things in life that affect most people, but he exudes a vitality that is indicative of his powerful life force. He is vivacious and emits an almost animal-like primal drive. He emerges from sleep in the same manner that he emerges from death; he carries an unceasing life force. When he awakens in the morning, Ishmael says that he “[. . .] shook himself all over like a Newfoundland dog just from the water [. . .]” (Melville 34). When he eats breakfast, he spears his beefsteaks toward him with his harpoon; he exists solely on flesh. Even when Queequeg is ill, his eyes reflect “a strange softness of lustre; and mildly but deeply looked out at you there from his sickness, a wondrous testimony to that immortal health in him which could not die, or be weakened” (Melville 395). Later when Queequeg decides that he cannot die just yet, his recovery time is remarkable. Life seems to explode out of him when one day “[. . .] he suddenly leaped to his feet, threw out arms and legs, gave himself a good stretching, yawned a little bit, and then springing into the head of his hoisted boat, and poising a harpoon, pronounced himself fit for a fight” (Melville 399).

This immense vitality symbolizes a healthy connection to the unconscious, to the source of life. This is quite differently portrayed in Queequeg than in Fedallah, who darkly parallels Queequeg’s connection to Ishmael in his own connection to Ahab. Both are portrayed as being connected to nature, but Queequeg’s link is much more life affirming and reflective of the good in Ishmael as opposed to Fedallah, who reflects the darkness in Ahab’s unconscious and in nature. Ishmael’s connection to the unconscious

through Queequeg ultimately leads him into rebirth, whereas Ahab's link to the unconscious through Fedallah destroys and devours him. Leslie Fiedler contrasts Queequeg to Fedallah, claiming that Queequeg represents the "redemptive baptism of water," while Fedallah represents the "destructive baptism of fire" (530). Ishmael emerges from the water hanging on to Queequeg's, coffin that gives him life, while Ahab is consumed by the flames within his soul. Both are primitive links back to the beginning, but Queequeg connects back to the creative and life-giving unconscious while Fedallah leads back to the dark unconscious that Ahab cannot reconcile within the world and himself. Otto recognizes this duality in the water that leads to the journey and to nature, which both Queequeg and Fedallah reflect, "It betrays a dual nature: a bright, joyous, and vital side; and one that is dark, mysterious, dangerous, deathly" (162). This is the link back to the unconscious: one leads to life and the other is attached to death.

It is as if Queequeg and Fedallah are the twins of Ishmael and Ahab. Melville even connects Ishmael and Queequeg with a monkey-rope, which keeps Queequeg from falling into the shark infested waters. Ishmael states, "So, then, an elongated Siamese ligature united us. Queequeg was my own inseparable twin brother [. . .] My own individuality was now merged in a joint stock company of two" (Melville 271). Ahab and Fedallah merge their darkness into one long shadow, "And Ahab chanced so to stand, that the Parsee occupied his shadow; while, if the Parsee's shadow was there at all it seemed only to blend with, and lengthen Ahab's" (Melville 278). Fedallah and Ahab are both symbolically attached to Moby Dick at the end, leading them to their dark fate, "Lashed round and round to the fish's back, pinioned in the turns upon turns [. . .] The whale had reeled the involutions of the lines around him, the half torn body of the Parsee

was seen [. . .] his distended eyes turned full upon old Ahab” (Melville 464). Ahab is taken down by his attachment to his own overwhelming dark unconscious, whereas Ishmael is eventually saved due to his connection with Queequeg.

Queequeg’s life force is so strong that he pulls Ishmael along in his wake. Not only does he pull Tashtego and the greenhorn to a symbolic rebirth, but he also enters into Ishmael’s life just when Ishmael is contemplating suicide. He resurrects Ishmael from that point. Leslie Fiedler discusses these symbolic acts of resurrection and calls Queequeg the “controller of life and death” (54). He pulls Tashtego and the greenhorn from the water, which Fiedler attributes again to Queequeg and his attachment to the “redemptive baptism of water” (530). He himself determines one day that he is not going to die even after his coffin has been built and outfitted to his specifications: “At a critical moment, he had just recalled a little duty ashore, which he was leaving undone; and therefore had changed his mind about dying: he could not die yet, he averred” (Melville 398). And once again I will point out that it is Queequeg’s coffin that saves Ishmael at the end of the novel; through Queequeg’s death, Ishmael is granted life. Only by Queequeg’s self-sacrifice is Ishmael snatched from death (Fiedler 537). Ishmael specifically notices this element of control that Queequeg exerts over his life in “The Mat-Maker.” Queequeg is referred to by Ishmael as the mat-maker, symbolic of the weaver of fates as Ishmael’s “ball of free will dropped from my hand” (Melville 186). Ishmael describes the scene:

Meantime, Queequeg’s impulsive, indifferent sword, sometimes hitting the woof slantingly, or crookedly, or strongly, or weakly, as the case might be; and by this difference in the concluding blow producing a corresponding

contrast in the final aspect of the completed fabric; this savage's sword, thought I, which thus finally shapes and fashions both warp and woof; this easy, indifferent sword must be chance. (Melville 185)

Ultimately, it is Ishmael's unconscious that grasped his hand as a child and now holds his mat of fate in the form of Queequeg. It refuses to let him go, and Queequeg is the guide that leads Ishmael into this world of the unconscious.

Ishmael, of course, does not recognize Queequeg for what he is, but he does realize that there is something unearthly and non-human about him. He is perplexed by and yet soothingly drawn to Queequeg:

No more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world. This soothing savage had redeemed it. There he sat, his very indifference speaking a nature in which there lurked no civilized hypocrisies and bland deceits. Wild he was, a very sight of sights to see; yet I began to feel myself mysteriously drawn towards him. (Melville 53)

Queequeg is unreadable and inexplicable to Ishmael as well as himself, and yet simultaneously he seems to hold within himself an inner knowledge and tranquility about life, specifically Ishmael's. He also has a union with nature, which is the external reflection of Ishmael's unconscious. Both nature and Queequeg are dark, savage, and inexplicable; Queequeg is the guardian at the threshold of Ishmael's dark unconscious. He travels freely between body and soul; he is confined by neither. He is unable to be categorized as fragmented because he is whole in his existence between two realms: the conscious and the unconscious, the civilized world of society and the savage world of the cannibal.

But Queequeg, do you see, was a creature in the transition state—neither caterpillar nor butterfly [. . .] If he had not been a small degree civilized, he very probably would not have troubled himself with boots at all; but then, if he had not been a savage, he never would have dreamt of getting under the bed to put them on. (Melville 34)

It is not necessarily the element of transition that makes Queequeg the most complete character in the novel. It is the ability he has to exist and be comfortable in any state, whether savage or civilized, conscious or unconscious.

The only person who really sees Queequeg for who he is is Elijah, the prophet seer. He speaks of the lack of souls in other men, but points out Queequeg, “*He’s got enough, though, to make up for all deficiencies of that sort in other chaps*” (Melville 86). This is ultimately what Queequeg does for Ishmael’s deficient nature; he bridges the gap and leads Ishmael into his unconscious which is the only thing that could possibly make Ishmael whole again. Queequeg is the boundary dweller who simultaneously holds Ishmael’s hand in this world as well as connects to life through the unconscious in the world within Ishmael. When the ship sinks at the end of the novel, Queequeg returns to the symbolic unconscious. His primal savagery must be included in the pool of water from which Ishmael emerges. The other crew members sink due to their rigidity; Queequeg sinks to send Ishmael back to life.

CHAPTER 4

AHAB: THE SCORCHED AND DIVINE SOUL

Ahab is not comparable to most of the other characters in the novel. He does not represent Ishmael's outward projections of his inner self, such as the shipmates, nor is he a link to the unconscious, as is Queequeg. He parallels Ishmael in many ways, however, through his own orphanhood and through his own confrontation with the darkness and Dionysian elements in nature. Yet, whereas Ishmael ultimately emerges from the encounter with Moby Dick prepared to tell his story, Ahab is devoured by the same force that ultimately creates Ishmael. Ahab seeks to defy the forces that introduce him to this dark and destructive side of nature, and yet he remains unable to reconcile this demonism within his own soul. It scorches him from within, and he is consumed by the same fire that drives him to a confrontation with Moby Dick. Ishmael sees this divine aspiration to attain godlike stature and defeat the dark force that Ahab sees embodied in the whale. He sympathizes with Ahab's inconsolable spirit and divine madness. For Ishmael, Ahab represents the truth that exudes from his divine soul and majestic reflections, but he is ultimately devoured because he is unable to reconcile the forces of light with the forces of darkness. Fiedler states that he is projected inwardness (541). He is a divine soul that struggles to free itself from an earth bound body.

Ishmael sees a grand figure in Ahab; in fact most men share the same view in the novel. Peleg calls Ahab a "grand, ungodly, god-like man" (Melville 76). Ishmael foreshadows his tragic hero when he describes the *Pequod* upon first seeing it, "A noble craft, but somehow a most melancholy! All noble things are touched with that" (Melville

68). Starbuck interacts most directly with Ahab, but Ahab still overpowers him with his grand views, “But come closer, Starbuck; thou requirest a little lower layer. If money’s to be the measure, man [. . .] let me tell thee, that my vengeance will fetch a great premium *here!*” (Melville 144). He then smites his chest. Ahab has obviously transcended many earthly desires, such as money, happiness, or respect. He seeks a higher attainment, an apotheosis. His nobility is evident to those around him, but he is able to achieve the position only of demigod. He is destroyed in his pursuit; he is confined to the earthly realm by his body. His soul explodes in divine rapture, but his body is dismembered in the face of that he seeks.

Ahab has, to an extent, surpassed his earthly body with his divine soul. Others see the majesty trapped within, and if he were to be judged solely on the appearance of his body, he would not retain the sense of awe that the crew shares. While watching Ahab pace the deck, Stubb tells Flask, “D’ye mark him, Flask? [. . .] the chick that’s in him pecks the shell. ‘Twill soon be out” (Melville 141). Ishmael has a sense of awe even before he first sees Ahab, “And somehow, at the time, I felt a strange sympathy and a sorrow for him, but for I don’t know what, unless it was the cruel loss of his leg. And yet I also felt a strange awe of him [. . .]” (Melville 77). Ahab’s physical body reflects that of the self (Bordtkorb 41). He is divided physically down the middle of his body, which is reflective of the division of between his heavenly soul and his earthly body:

Threading its way out from among his grey hairs, and continuing right down one side of his tawny scorched face and neck, till it disappeared in his clothing, you saw a slender rod-like mark, lividly whitish. It resembled that perpendicular seam sometimes made in the straight, lofty truck of a great

tree, when the upper lightning tearingly darts down it, and without wrenching a single twig, peels and grooves out the bark from top to bottom, ere running off into the soil, leaving the tree still greenly alive, but branded. Whether that mark was born with him, or whether it was the scar left by some desperate wound, no one could certainly say. (Melville 110)

Ahab's soul does transcend his body, even though he is bound to it. Bordtkorb explains that even though the body is reflective of the condition that the soul is in, Ahab's body is different from his soul. He claims that there is a much deeper inner mystery that the body, though reflective, will not reveal. Ishmael in trying to explain what the whale is to Ahab states, "This is much; yet Ahab's larger, darker, deeper part remains unhinted" (Melville 161). Within his soul dwells that driving burning desire to smite the whale, to destroy the evil that the gods have created. Comparing Ahab to a bear, Ishmael writes: "[. . .] that wild Logan of the woods, burying himself in the hollow of a tree, lived out the winter there, sucking his own paws; so, in his inclement, howling old age, Ahab's soul, shut up in the caved trunk of his body, there fed upon the sullen paws of its gloom" (Melville 134). The longer Ahab is entrapped within his body, unable to escape this earthly existence, unable to attain a divine status in order to retaliate against the gods, the madder he becomes. It burns him from within, and the madness begins with the dismemberment of his leg in the mighty jaws of Moby Dick: "[. . .] then it was that his torn body and gnashed soul bled into one another; and so interfusing, made him mad" (Melville 160).

But there is a nobility within Ahab's majestic soul that is evident in his pursuit of the whale. Ishmael sees this nobility and portrays it in his creation of Captain Ahab. He

is sympathetic to his fate. Ahab struggles defiantly in the face of the gods and the darkness within nature before he is ultimately consumed by it. But Ishmael sees the trapped and majestic soul not only of a mere mortal, but of the noble kings throughout times past. Ishmael calls him a “Khan of the plank, and a King of the sea, and a great lord of Leviathans [. . .]” (Melville 114). Within Ahab’s tattered body, Ishmael senses royal truths and noble seekings:

But Ahab, my Captain, still moves before me in all his Nantucket grimness and shagginess; and in this episode touching Emperors and Kings, I must not conceal that I have only to do with a poor old whale-hunter like him; and, therefore, all outward majestic trappings and housings are denied me. Oh, Ahab! What shall be grand in thee, it must needs be plucked at from the skies, and dived for in the deep, and featured in the unbodied air! (Melville 130)

His body, however, does not reflect the origins of his noble soul. This grand nature that Ishmael sees within the soul of Ahab is neither derived from a royal scepter that has descended into his hands nor from an ancient title: it exists solely within Ahab.

It is from nature that Ahab’s divine soul has been formed, and it is nature that denies him the answers that would extinguish the fire that burns within himself. Peleg comments on Ahab’s insight into nature: “[. . .] receiving all nature’s sweet or savage impressions fresh from her own virgin, voluntary, and confiding breast, and thereby chiefly, but with some help from accidental advantages, [learning] a bold and nervous lofty language—that man makes one in a whole nation’s census—a mighty pageant creature, formed for noble tragedies” (Melville 71). Brodtkorb points out that Ahab has

learned all he knows from nature (68), but he is unable to reconcile the contrasting views he has seen. It is, after all, Moby Dick who has risen from the depths of the sea to take Ahab's leg. It is this darkness in nature that Ahab cannot reconcile: "[. . .] the tiger heart that pants beneath [. . .] this velvet paw but conceals a remorseless fang" (Melville 405).

This dark reflection of nature is embodied for Ahab in Moby Dick. The whale is the one thing that Ahab cannot leave alone; he cannot intellectually reconcile such an evil force within nature. The whale creates an inner plague that drives and devours Ahab: "Ahab had cherished a wild vindictiveness against the whale, all the more fell for that in his frantic morbidness he at last came to identify with him, not only all his bodily woes, but all his intellectual and spiritual exasperations" (Melville 160). It is a force that is not intellectually reconcilable. The whale is representative of this Dionysian force that has emerged from the depths of the underworld: "He is the mad ecstasy which hovers over every conception and birth and whose wildness is always ready to move on to destruction and death" (Otto 141). The whale is described as "All that maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby Dick" (Melville 160). The whale is a divine and earthly paradox. To Ahab, Moby Dick cannot be reconciled spiritually or intellectually because he encompasses all that is good with all that is evil; he holds life and death simultaneously within: "Thus all earthly powers are united in the god: the generating, nourishing, intoxicating rapture; the life-giving inexhaustibility; and the tearing pain, the deathly pallor, the speechless night of having been" (Otto 140-1). Kerenyi further elaborates on this god of the underworld: "Speaking mythologically,

each God is the source of a world that without him remains invisible, but with him reveals itself in its own light, and this world passes beyond the world-picture of natural science” (Hermes 55). This dark world is revealed through the whale, and Ahab pursues obsessively in order to destroy it.

But Ahab is unable to see the futility of his pursuit and recognize that the madness is inherent in nature. He cannot understand that the darkness simply *is*. He views the whale as a mask that hides the distinct features of this evilness. Ahab longs to believe that “in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask” (Melville 144). But it is the ultimate formlessness of the sea and of the whale that drive Ahab mad. Brodtkorb states that this formlessness brings horror because the mind’s very basis of being, to logically interpret and attribute meaning to, is denied by the formlessness of that which Ahab faces (24). Ishmael faces the same dilemma. “I say again he has no face,” he writes of the whale, and so he sympathizes with Ahab’s plight. There is an ultimate fear that the world is blankness behind the mask, and this is what links Ahab to Ishmael: “The primal mystery is itself mad—the matrix of the duality and the unity of disunity” (Otto 137). *Moby Dick* physically embodies this natural paradox. It is a thing that *is*, and yet simultaneously is not graspable and cannot be conceived. Otto explains the Dionysian monster, “He, himself, is the monstrous creature which lives in the depths. From its mask it looks out at man and sends him reeling with the ambiguity of nearness and remoteness, of life and death in one” (140). Ishmael accepts this ambiguity while Ahab continues to question, defy, and pursue.

Ahab keeps looking below the vortex of the ocean, believing the deeper truths must lie with the whales (Brodtkorb 40). For him, Moby Dick holds the answer to his monomaniacal pursuit. Ahab even questions a whale head as it hangs suspended from the ship, “Speak, thou vast and venerable head [. . .] and tell us the secret thing that is in thee. Of all divers, thou hast dived the deepest” (Melville 264). Brodtkorb explains, “The head, of course, does not speak. Such deep, static truth is not knowable by a living man, for the whale’s truth can be humanly experienced only in the stasis of death [. . .]” (40). But Ahab strives to know the answers in life, to transcend a mere earthly existence in order to know the secrets that nature holds within. Nature, after all, stimulated his pursuit of the whale by devouring his leg, causing him to lose balanced, solid contact with the earth. Now he exists in the realm of the gods, seeking to defy, seeking to understand. Moby Dick becomes his focus of despair, and he burns from within.

Of course Ahab ultimately becomes the very thing that he pursues. Kerenyi argues that “The hero is not tricked or seduced by an unfamiliar death-daimon. The power that lures him to his death is originally in him [. . .]” (Hermes 6). It is the darkness in nature; it is the madness in Ahab. Both hold this demonic force within; Ahab cannot accept this, and so he forces a face off with Moby Dick. Otto explains:

The elemental depths gape open and out of them a monstrous creature raises its head before which all the limits that the normal day has set must disappear. There, man stands on the threshold of madness—in fact, he is already part of it even if his wildness which wishes to pass on into destructiveness still remains mercifully hidden. (140)

Ahab ultimately falls into the depths of his despair and madness and is devoured by the whale. He divinely aspires to defeat Moby Dick, but he dies attached to the whale, attached to the blankness that he defies. He eventually leaves his own mortal body to join that which he strives to destroy: “Therefore, the tormented spirit that glared out of bodily eyes, when what seemed Ahab rushed from his room, was for the time but a vacated thing, a formless somnambulistic being, a ray of living light, to be sure, but without an object to color, and therefore a blankness in itself” (Melville 175).

Ahab is “a ray of living light” (Melville 175), but he is also consumed by the light he emits. He maintains a strange connection to fire throughout the novel. The fire has dual purposes, as Jung explains, to give light and to cause combustion (Archetypes 101). The fire that burns within Ahab seems to do both. It illuminates him, allowing him to transcend the worldly existence of most of the crew on the *Pequod*. He sees into the heavens and confronts the gods and nature. He has divine aspirations, and he worships the flames that drive him on:

Light though thou be, thou leapest out of darkness; but I am darkness leaping out of light, leaping out of thee! [. . .] There is some unsuffusing thing beyond thee, thou clear spirit, to whom all thy eternity is but time, all thy creativeness mechanical. Through thee, thy flaming self, my scorched eyes do dimly see it. Oh, thou foundling fire, thou hermit immemorial, thou too hast thy incommunicable riddle, thy unparticipated grief [. . .] I leap with thee; I burn with thee; would fain be welded with thee; defyingly I worship thee! (Melville 417)

Initially the fire fuels Ahab, but eventually it begins to consume his soul. Physically, he is described as “Gnawed within and scorched without [. . .]” (Melville 162). Starbuck warns him, “Old man of oceans! Of all this fiery life of thine, what will at length remain but one little heap of ashes!” (Melville 412). The fire is what drives Ahab; he exists on that alone, “For a long time now, the circus-running sun has raced within his fiery ring, and needs no sustenance but what’s in himself. So Ahab” (Melville 319). He is surrounded by fire in most descriptions Ishmael gives of him. A fiery hell burns within him:

[. . .] these spiritual throes in him heaved his being up from its base, and a chasm seemed opening in him, from which forked flames and lightnings shot up, and accursed fiends beckoned him to leap down among them; when this hell in himself yawned beneath him, a wild cry would be heard through the ship; and with glaring eyes Ahab would burst from his state room, as though escaping from a bed that was on fire. (Melville 174)

Ahab, however, allows the fire to consume him; it does not merely give him the answers that he seeks. Unlike Ishmael, who looks to the fire for answers and then turns away knowing that there are aspects of nature that must remain paradoxical and inexplicable, Ahab stares the fire directly in the face just as he seeks to directly confront the Dionysian force of nature through Moby Dick. Ishmael warns him:

Look not too long in the face of the fire, O man! [. . .] believe not the artificial fire, when its redness makes all things look ghastly. To-morrow, in the natural sun, the skies will be bright; those who glared like devils in the forking flames, the morn will show in far other, at least gentler, relief; the

glorious, golden, glad sun, the only true lamp—all others but liars! (Melville 354)

Ishmael realizes that there is a point at which one must break away and accept without divine knowledge. He accepts the knowledge imparted him by the fire; Ahab becomes enveloped and perishes in the flames. Ishmael tells him: “Give not thyself up, then, to fire, lest it invert thee, deaden thee; as for the time it did me. There is a wisdom that is woe; but there is a woe that is madness” (Melville 355).

What ultimately separates Ahab from Ishmael is the fact that Ahab will never be reconciled. He aspires to reach divine heights and know the mystical depths, but he is still a mortal man who houses a heavenly soul. Throughout the novel he maintains a perseverance, inflexibility, and a toughness of will. Jung refers to “[. . .] a curiosity that does not shrink even from the riddles of the universe; and finally, a revolutionary spirit which strives to put a new face upon the world” (Encountering 87). But Ahab fails because he cannot reconcile the opposite forces within man and within nature. He is “[. . .] the spirit that dared all heights and all depths [who] must [. . .] suffer the divine punishment” (Jung, Encountering 96). Ahab is devoured because man cannot exist without opposing forces. No matter how high his aspirations take him or how many mysteries he is allowed to see into, he will ultimately be destroyed because he cannot intellectually justify the opposing forces of dark and light, good and evil. But Ahab himself is aware of his own inability to unify the opposites. He tells Pip, “So far gone am I in the dark side of earth, that its other side, the theoretic bright one, seems but uncertain twilight to me” (433). This is Ahab’s tragic consciousness of his own failure.

CHAPTER 5

THE RETURN TO THE MOTHER

In Ishmael's fragmented state, his ultimate goal must be to recreate himself. Through writing Moby Dick, he projects himself onto other characters, relives his depression through the character of Ahab, and becomes the product of the encounter with Moby Dick. Ishmael emerges from the ocean and completes himself through the production of the novel. No longer is Ishmael fragmented or existing in an abstract state. He develops a concrete identity through telling his story. But he is only made whole again by returning to the source of his unconscious which he discovers in nature. He travels through the labyrinth in nature to arrive back to the beginning, to the unconscious from which he has been estranged. He has lived for so long in the conscious world that he has lost his identity. In order to be complete, however, Ishmael must merge his feminine side with his masculine side. He cannot exist if he does not have both. But Ishmael has been cut off from the mother, as seen in "The Counterpane." He exists solely in the patriarchal culture of the 19th century, in which he has found no comfort and no answers. In his journey into the ocean and into nature, he reconnects with the symbolic mother. He must return to his beginnings, to the womb of the mother, and be reborn. He is reborn from the womb symbolically when he is the lone survivor left floating in the ocean after the final encounter with Moby Dick. The symbolic mother, *Rachel*, picks him up and he is reunited with the image of the mother. Throughout the chapter, I will interchangeably use the terms "mother" and "father" with "feminine" and

“masculine,” respectively. This is in reference to the archetypal concept of the mother and father, the masculine and feminine within.

Ishmael’s loss of connection with the mother is made apparent early in the novel in “The Counterpane.” Ishmael is literally cut off from the mother in the memory of the stepmother sending him to bed on the day of the summer solstice. He is orphaned and punished by the image of the mother. But the unconscious mother does not leave Ishmael; instead, the feminine force grasps his hand while he is in an unconscious state:

At last I must have fallen into a troubled nightmare of a doze; and slowly waking from it—half steeped in dreams—I opened my eyes, and the before sunlit room was now wrapped in outer darkness. Instantly I felt a shock running through all my frame; nothing was to be seen, and nothing was to be heard; but a supernatural hand seemed placed in mine. (Melville 33)

The hand must grasp his while he is “half steeped in dreams” because the mother is the dark unconscious which pulls him from his conscious world. He is only receptive to the pull of the unconscious while he is in an altered state of consciousness. It is the pull from the mother and from the unconscious that initially causes Ishmael to realize that he must journey to sea. He must leave behind the land as he knows it in order to explore his unconscious, which he symbolically does in his journey into nature, into the unknown. If he is not reunited with his unconscious where he will find the source of his primal beginnings, the womb of the mother, then he will never be made complete. His depression will never be cured because he cannot exist solely in the world of the father, the conscious world. He must retain contact with the mother, with the initial grasp of the supernatural hand.

The fact that Ishmael has lost contact with the feminine or with the mother is also evident in his attitudes he portrays throughout the novel. He is depressed, but he chooses to run from it instead of facing it: “With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to ship” (Melville 12). He is alienated from the world; he is the lone wanderer who does not speak of the past or of family. Ishmael’s depression can be explained by his mere existence in the patriarchal world and loss of contact with the mother, his life source:

If we wish to stay on the heights we have reached, we must struggle all the time to consolidate our consciousness and its attitude. But we soon discover that this praiseworthy and apparently unavoidable battle with the years leads to stagnation and desiccation of soul. Our convictions become platitudes ground out on a barrel-organ, our ideals become starchy habits, enthusiasm stiffens into automatic gestures. The source of the water of life seeps away. (Jung, Encountering 163)

Thus, he becomes suicidal because he exists only in a conscious state; he does not explore the unconscious within him until he voyages on the ship. Jung explains, “The development of consciousness inevitably leads not only to separation from the mother, but to separation from the parents and the whole family circle and thus to a relative degree of detachment from the unconscious and the world of instinct” (Encountering 154). Queequeg, his link back to the unconscious, redevelops in Ishmael a sense of instinctivity when he forces Ishmael to choose the ship. The *Pequod* is deliberately chosen by Ishmael, but the unconscious is a driving force in this choice. The reason for the choice is symbolically important as the ship represents a connection back to the

wildness and the savage unconscious: “She was a thing of trophies. A cannibal of a craft, tricking herself forth in the chased bones of her enemies. All round, her unpanelled, open bulwarks were garnished like one continuous jaw, with the long sharp teeth of the sperm whale, inserted there for pins, to fasten her old hempen thews and tendons to” (Melville 67). Through the choosing of the *Pequod*, Ishmael is symbolically reestablishing a connection with the unconscious, with which he needs to reconnect in order to be born again.

He is depressed in the conscious state in which he lives because he is cut off from the mother; he receives no spiritual nourishment. Ishmael refers to this maternal and spiritual nourishment when he describes a scene involving infant whales nursing:

The lake, as I have hinted, was to a considerable depth exceedingly transparent; and as human infants while suckling will calmly and fixedly gaze away from the breast, as if leading two different lives at the same time; and while yet drawing mortal nourishment, be still spiritually feasting upon some unearthly reminiscence [. . .]. (Melville 325)

There is no spiritual nourishment for Ishmael that lies strictly within the realm of the father. There is no comfort for Ishmael in the church, nor in Father Mapple’s sermon. Father Mapple himself is isolated from his congregation, just as Ishmael is isolated from the world when he is a sailor. He is cut off from all known connections within the world. This is the same world that denies the feminine. Ishmael, however, acknowledges the feminine in spirituality when he describes a picture of Jesus:

And whatever they may reveal of the divine love in the Son, the soft, curled, hermaphroditical Italian pictures, is which his idea has been most

successfully embodied; these pictures, so destitute as they are of all brawniness, hint nothing of any power, but the mere negative, feminine one of submission and endurance, which on all hands it is conceded, form the peculiar practical virtues of his teachings. (Melville 315)

It is a strictly patriarchal society with its masculine views that leaves Ishmael alone and depressed. Nineteenth century society turned its back on the feminine and looked strictly to the father for strength, but the image of the mother still thrived in nature. And it waited for the opportunity to lure Ishmael back into his unconscious to reconnect. Jung explains, “The anima image, which lends the mother such superhuman glamour in the eyes of the son, gradually becomes tarnished by commonplace reality and sinks back into the unconscious, but without in any way losing its original tension and instinctivity. It is ready to spring out and project itself at the first opportunity” (Archetypes 69). It reached out to grasp his hand as a child and pulled him into his voyage. It led Ishmael into nature so that he might return to the womb.

But the patriarchal society still maintains its hold over Ishmael and his thinking. In order to return to the mother, he must first confront the father and the patriarchal society that failed him. He confronts the failed father through Ahab, who is for Ishmael the father figure. Ahab is referred to by Ishmael on numerous occasions as “king,” “emperor,” and “czar.” They are all references to royalty, which is symbolic of the king or the father figure. He is the royal father to Ishmael, who describes him:

So with a broken throne, the great gods mock that captive king; so like a Caryatid he patient sits, upholding on his frozen brow the piled entablatures of ages. Wind ye down there, ye prouder, sadder souls! question that proud,

sad king! A family likeness! aye, he did beget ye, ye young exiled royalties;
and from your grim sire only will the old State-secret come. (Melville 161)

It is representative of the failed father, the patriarchal world that has left Ahab and Ishmael estranged and disconnected. It is the “broken throne” of the patriarchal world; it no longer satisfies the deeper and unconscious needs of society. It is a fatherly world that is strictly light and dark, good and evil (Brodtkorb 68). There is no feminine or motherly love; there is no reconciliation or need for the union of the opposites. It is a strictly defined black and white world which drives Ahab to his need for intellectual reconciliation, which in turn drives him to madness because of the impossibility of intellectual satisfaction concerning the questions of nature. But this patriarchal world from which Ishmael and Ahab come eventually loses its power over Ishmael, though never Ahab. He is too bound by order and intellect. Ishmael accepts the Dionysian truth when they confront Moby Dick: “All tradition, all order must be shattered” (Otto 78).

Ahab is too cut off from the mother to loosen the patriarchal hold. He has lost partial contact with the earth and with nature, as the loss of his leg suggests. Symbolically he is no longer connected to the earth, and he is fragmented as Ishmael is. Ahab has lost contact with the mother figure and confronts the father figure that has forsaken him in the world: “Oh, thou magnanimous! now I do glory in my genealogy. But thou art but my fiery father; my sweet mother, I know not. Oh, cruel! what hast thou done with her?” (Melville 417). It is the “fiery father” that keeps Ahab from reconnecting with the mother, who finally devours him. Whitmont points out that psychologically, when one such as Ahab is living regressively, he is “seeking his childhood and his mother, fleeing from a cold cruel world which denies him

understanding” (187). The father, however, denies him this return to the mother. The fire which Ahab cries into does not allow the regression: “Fire-making is a pre-eminently conscious act and therefore ‘kills’ the dark state of union with the mother” (Encountering 151). Jung also writes, “[. . .] the danger comes from both parents: from the father, because he apparently makes regression impossible, and from the mother, because she absorbs the regressing libido and keeps it to herself, so that he who sought rebirth finds only death” (Encountering 158). Ahab longs for the mother, but he cannot reconcile the fact that she is the dark force in nature, the essence of the thing that took his leg. He becomes obsessed in his pursuit of the whale, which ultimately leads him down into the depths of the waters and the mother: “This longing can easily turn into a consuming passion which threatens all that has been won. The mother then appears on the one hand as the supreme goal, and on the other hand as the most frightful danger—the ‘Terrible Mother’” (Jung Encountering 155).

It is the inability of Ahab to reconcile within himself this dark mother that eventually destroys him. He has lost contact with the mother and with the suppressed unconscious within, and so he is delivered over to his conscious side. Jung writes that in the conscious mind, “Reason becomes the arbiter of right and wrong, of good and evil” (Archetypes 94). It is this reasoning, and this intellectual need for reconciliation that comes from the patriarchal world. He exists only in the realm of the father, and he finds no meaning in the opposing forces within nature and within himself. Jung writes:

Man would do well to heed the wise counsel of the mother and obey the inexorable law of nature which sets limits to every being. He ought never to forget that the world exists only because the opposing forces are held in

equilibrium. So, too, the rational is counterbalanced by the irrational, and what is planned and purposed by what *is*. (Archetypes 94)

But Ahab cannot reconcile the opposing forces within man and nature. He is unable to realize that he will never be complete without the opposing forces, without both the masculine and the feminine. Kerenyi writes, “The life-source, understood four dimensionally (physical and temporal) as procreation, has several aspects: a masculine and a feminine, a creative and a lethal” (Hermes 73). It is finally the lethal and devouring side of the mother that Ahab comes into contact with.

But the mother does not just represent the dark side of nature and the unconscious, even though that is what Ishmael and Ahab must both face in order to reconnect with the mother figure. The mother is also found in the home and in the hearth, in the very world that both men are estranged from as both are orphans of the world. This is the world that Starbuck uses in an attempt to appeal to Ahab in an effort to make him turn the ship toward Nantucket. It is the world of the wife and child that Starbuck longs for and that Ahab has turned his back upon. Starbuck says, “Away with me! let us fly these deadly waters! let us home! Wife and child, too, are Starbuck’s—wife and child of his brotherly, sisterly, play-fellow youth; even as thine, sir, are the wife and child of thy loving, longing, paternal old age!” (Melville 444). But Ahab refuses to thwart the mission, as he has been estranged from the feminine world of the hearth and home for too long, claiming, “Aye, I widowed that poor girl when I married her, Starbuck” (Melville 443). Ishmael, too, describes the world of the hearth and home, which he realizes he needs to return to, in effect returning to the world of the mother: “[. . .] I have perceived that in all cases man must eventually lower, or at least shift, his conceit of attainable

felicity; not placing it anywhere in the intellect or the fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side, the country [. . .]” (Melville 349). This is the world Starbuck yearns for and Ahab has lost contact with. Starbuck tries to force Ahab to look toward this world of the home, but Ahab is unable to see: “But Ahab’s glance was averted; like a blighted fruit tree he shook, and cast he last, cindered apple to the soil” (Melville 444). This world of the hearth and home, the fruit of his life, is quite dried up. He has nothing to return home; there is no nourishment for him in Starbuck’s world.

Ultimately, Ahab is unable to return to the mother, and he is devoured by her. He cannot reconcile the duality of the mother, the creative and lethal aspects. Whitmont refers to the “mother’s sustaining-devouringly destructive aspect” (176). Neumann comments, “The Great Mother is the giver not only of life but also of death” (67). It is the devouring mother that pulls Ahab into death, the only place that he may ever achieve clarity and a complete reunion with the secret world of the mother. Ahab is an orphan of the cruel world: he questions the ocean, “Where is the foundling’s father hidden? Our souls are like those orphans whose unwedded mothers die in bearing them: the secret of our paternity lies in their grave, and we must there to learn it” (Melville 406). Nothing satisfies Ahab any longer. He even finds no comfort in his pipe that he casts into the ocean in “The Sunset.” Nothing human or of the world comforts him any longer; he is alienated from the deepest depths of his own being and receives no nourishing contact (Brodtkorb 71). So the devouring mother drags him below when he dies attached to Moby Dick. The devouring mother is portrayed in a description of the ocean:

Like a savage tigress that tossing in the jungle overlays her own cubs, so the sea dashes even the mightiest whales against the rocks, and leaves them there side by side with the split wrecks of ships. No mercy, no power but its own controls it. Panting and snorting like a mad battle steed that has lost its rider, the masterless ocean overruns the globe. (Melville 235)

Ahab looks to this wild sea for answers, but due to his confrontational spirit, she claims him for her own. He cannot accept the paradox of the savage and gentle sea. It is the lethal he cannot understand, and it is the lethal that devours him.

Ahab's inability to relate back to the mother that composes half of his being isolates him from this "cruel world." Ahab's futile search may be summed up by Jung, "It seems as if only through an experience of symbolic reality that man, vainly seeking his own 'existence' and making a philosophy out of it, can find his way back to a world in which he is no longer a stranger" (Archetypes 110). But it seems in "The Symphony" that Ahab is briefly reunited with the mother, and it allows him a moment of emotion. This is the point that Starbuck almost reaches him, convincing him to return home before it is too late. Ahab sheds but a single tear:

But the lovely aromas in that enchanted air did at last seem to dispel, for a moment that cankerous thing in his soul. That glad, happy air, that winsome sky, did at last stoke and caress him; the step-mother world, so long cruel— forbidding—now threw affectionate arms around his stubborn neck, and did seem to joyously sob over him, as if over one, that however wilful and erring, she could yet find it in her heart to save and to bless. From beneath his

slouched hat Ahab dropped a tear into the sea; nor did all the Pacific contain such wealth as that one wee drop. (Melville 443)

Ahab is the divinely inspired and yet tragically flawed king and father figure. He represents the failed patriarchal system that has overtaken his soul. The feminine is unattainable to him. He is a divine soul, but he cannot transcend because he is incomplete. His incomplete body is symbolic of his incomplete being.

Ishmael, on the other hand, allows the inexplicable in nature and man, the dark forces of the unknowable unconscious to become resolved within his own soul. Through Ahab, he confronts the flawed and desecrating patriarchal system that lacks wholeness because it denies the feminine. He explores the depths of the ocean and his unconscious journey into the unknown, and he discovers the qualities of the mother which allow him a union of the mother and father, the masculine and feminine. This union in turn makes him whole again. He recognizes the duality of the mother; he accepts the inexplicable. The qualities he realizes in the mother archetype are wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend the reason of the patriarchal world. The mother creates a place of magic transformation and rebirth, together with the underworld and its inhabitants, which are clearly identifiable in the descriptions of the ocean. But he also sees that the mother presides over anything that is terrifying and inescapable like death (Jung, Archetypes 82). But it is only through this reconciliation of opposites and acceptance of that which lies below the ocean's surface that Ishmael can be reborn.

But whereas Ahab comes face to face with the devouring aspect of the mother, Ishmael is united with the creative aspect of the mother. Ahab is united in death; Ishmael is united through life. He looks into the same fire that Ahab worships and is eventually

consumed by, but Ishmael does not stare into it lest it consume him as well. In order to transcend and reconnect to the mother, Ishmael must look into the fire to see into the dark depths, but he, too, almost ventures too far and capsizes the boat while he is at the helm. He realizes Ahab's flaw and his own departure from the tragic hero in Ahab: "Look not too long in the face of the fire, O man! Never dream with thy hand on the helm! Turn not thy back to the compass; accept the first hint of the hitching tiller [. . .] (Melville 354).

Ishmael, through his encounters with Ahab and with the whale, is able to confront the father figure and ultimately return to the mother. The creative force that he finds in the mother allows him to write the story of Moby Dick. It is a return to the womb, to the beginning, and he is recreated. The masculine and feminine are rejoined within him, and Ishmael is the product of this union. He takes the masculine penetrative journey into nature, which is the feminine. It is the energy of the father which drives him further into the world of the mother. The energy is the penetrative force of the journey. Jung refers to the father as the dynamism of the archetype while the mother is the matrix, the form into which all experience is poured (Archetypes 101). This is the novel; this is the identity of Ishmael. It is the concreteness of his experience which he is able to produce only through his reconnection to the mother. Ahab is devoured and Ishmael is reborn. It is nature, in the world of the mother, that man is reconciled to "[. . .] nature which has become alienated, hostile, or subjugated, celebrates once more her reconciliation with her lost son, man" (Kerenyi, Dionysus 135). Ishmael is reborn to nature, left floating in the ocean for a day, when he is finally picked up from the waters by the mother figure: "It

was the devious-cruising *Rachel*, that in her retracing search after her missing children, only found another orphan” (Melville 470).

CHAPTER 6

ISHMAEL: THE COMPLETED POET

After Ishmael's passage into nature, he is made whole again. He is now a seer into the forces that revolve within nature and mankind. He succeeds where Ahab fails, as he is reconciled to the opposite forces that must co-exist in order for man to be complete: the masculine and feminine, the good and evil. It is not merely that Ishmael reconciles these forces within his mind; he is made whole again by the fact that he can accept the will of the universe within his own life. He has been given the "freedom to live," as Joseph Campbell would put it. Ishmael tried to escape his depression by journeying to sea, but he now holds the freedom and the insight to live within the world and be acceptant without running from or aggressively confronting the inexplicable. Ishmael is the boundary crosser within the novel because he thinks and reconciles without directly opposing the forces within nature and the universe; Ahab perishes within the boundary, unable to pass through because of his incompleteness. Ishmael gains the ability to see within nature, and he becomes the poet who sings the universal myth of nature through Moby Dick.

The entire novel is a boundary-crossing experience for the crew of the *Pequod*; Ishmael is the only one who crosses over to the other side. It is not only a journey into nature, but it is a journey within man. The novel reveals many instances of boundary situations, but there are specific references to boundaries involving only Ishmael. The first instance takes place on the masthead during Ishmael's whale watch. Like "The Counterpane," he exists in a state between consciousness and unconsciousness, lulled

into this dreamlike trance by the ocean: “The tranced ship indolently rolls; the drowsy trade winds blow; everything resolves you into languor” (Melville 137). But only in this boundary state is Ishmael able to receive his “divine intuitions” that give him insight into the depths of nature (Melville 314). He describes his meditative state:

[. . .] but lulled into such an opium-like listlessness of vacant, unconscious reverie is his absent-minded youth by the blending cadence of waves with thoughts, that at last he loses his identity; takes the mystic ocean at his feet for the visible image of that deep, blue, bottomless soul, pervading mankind and nature; and every strange, half-seen, gliding, beautiful thing that eludes him; every dimly-discovered, uprising fin of some indiscernible form, seems to him the embodiment of those elusive thoughts that only people the soul by continually flitting through it. In this enchanted mood, they spirit ebbs away to whence it came [. . .]. (Melville 140)

It is only in this moment of lost contact with the physical present world that the knowledge of something greater lurking below is acknowledged by Ishmael. He recognizes a fullness of life swimming below the surface of reality. He is guided into a spiritual reality in this altered state, and higher truths are more easily recognizable.

He has a much darker boundary crossing in “The Try-Works” when he is at the midnight helm. It does not represent the same situation that takes place at the masthead. It illuminates a darker and deeper glimpse into the dark side of man and nature; the incident nearly capsizes the entire ship, as Ishmael has been staring at the try-works for too long. There exists within nature secrets that are able to overpower man if he looks too long in the face of darkness:

The continual sight of the fiend shapes before me, capering half in smoke and half in fire, these at last begat kindred visions in my soul as soon as I began to yield to that unaccountable drowsiness which ever would come over me at midnight helm [. . .] I thought my eyes were open; I was half conscious of putting my fingers to the lids and mechanically stretching them still further apart [. . .] Convulsively my hands grasped the tiller, but with the crazy conceit that the tiller, was, somehow, in some enchanted way, inverted. My God! what is the matter with me? thought I. Lo! in my brief sleep I had turned myself about, and was fronting the ship's stern, with my back to her prow and compass. In an instant I faced back, just in time to prevent the vessel from flying up into the wind, and very probably capsizing her.

(Melville 354)

It is the inversion and the existence between sleeping and waking that hints of a boundary situation. Nothing is clearly defined; altered perceptions give glimpses into the truth.

This experience gives Ishmael the ability to see Ahab's mistake of staring into the face of the fire, into the face of nature for too long. Ishmael is able to cross over the boundary, whereas Ahab is enveloped by it, staring directly in the face of Moby Dick. Kerényi refers to the boundary existence, "Man is always on the edge of this epiphany of the spirit—the spirit or spirits of life and nature—if not face to face with it" (Dionysos 11).

This transitioning within the boundaries is where Ishmael achieves clarity, whereas Ahab fails to reconcile the opposing forces in life. Ishmael comes very close to losing himself within the boundary; he is but mortal. He allows himself to get caught up within the situation and very nearly plummets into the depths. Ishmael reveals this near fatality

while he is the masthead: “But while this sleep, this dream is on ye, move your foot or hand an inch; slip your hold at all; and your identity comes back in horror” (Melville 140). For a brief period, he transcends his present state, but if he loses himself in the boundary, he will surely perish. Almost falling asleep at one point, he comes back to himself with a jolt: “Suddenly bubbles seemed bursting beneath my eyes; like vices my hands grasped the shrouds; some invisible, gracious agency preserved me; with a shock I came back to life” (Melville 242). It is the same force, the same instinctive grasping that pulls Ishmael back from the edge in “The Try-Works.” Richard Chase claims that this is where the difference lies between Ishmael’s salvation and Ahab’s destruction. He states that Ahab is like Narcissus who plunges into the sea, while Ishmael is at the last moment able to save himself from falling off the masthead or capsizing the boat (Chase 59).

Ishmael does not lose himself within the boundary.

It is the ability of Ishmael to accept the paradox of nature, to embrace the darkness, and to live within the negative forces of the universe that separates him from Ahab.

Alfred Kazin refers to Ishmael and his “endlessly turning spool of thought” (40). He claims the reason Ishmael is able to reconcile the paradoxes within nature is because he is driven by thought; Ahab is driven by forceful action (Kazin 42). Ishmael resolves the opposite forces within himself with thought and with the concrete writing of Moby Dick. He actually gives a name to the experience; he transcends mere thought at this point by providing a concrete form of the experience. Ahab tries to resolve by defeating the gods, the universe, and the whale. He is pure confrontation, and it kills him when he comes face to face with that which he seeks to destroy. Fiedler comments that “Ishmael’s sole weapon is the pen, which is to say, intuition; and only with that weapon does he seek to

penetrate the leviathanic mysteries. Ahab, on the other hand, takes up the spear, magically welded and tempered in blood, to strike the mysterious to the heart” (547). Ishmael gently ponders, waiting for the “ [. . .] divine intuitions [that] now and then shoot, enkindling my fog with a heavenly ray” (Melville 314). Ahab is not receptive to the divine intuitions that will allow him acceptance and peace with all that he strives to answer. He violently opposes the gods with a harpoon: “Tempered in blood and tempered by lightning are these barbs; and I swear to temper them triply in that hot place behind the fin, where the White Whale most feels his accursed life!” (Melville 441).

Ishmael listens while Ahab opposes; thus, the secrets are revealed to Ishmael. He hears the universe and is guided into a reconciliation with his own existence in the world. He listens to the gods instead of confronting them: “The weaver-god, he weaves; and by that weaving is he deafened, that he hears no mortal voice; and by that humming, we, too, who look on the loom are deafened; and only when we escape it shall we hear the thousand voices that speak through it” (Melville 374). He resolves that which Ahab cannot, and he is able to live within the world: “ [. . .] nor is he fearful of the next moment [. . .] Thus the next moment is permitted to come to pass” (Campbell 243). Campbell refers to this passage as a “reconciliation of the individual consciousness with the universal will” (238). Ishmael does not fight it; instead, he speaks the divinely imparted knowledge through the text of Moby Dick.

Through the repetitive journeying back to sea after the encounter with Moby Dick, Ishmael is able to listen to the voices within nature and relay them to the reader. He is the guide; he is the poet who speaks the eternal myth:

Rather, this is the myth which deals with living images of reality as it presented itself to mortals who had not yet willfully severed their connections with the world and set themselves up in opposition to it. Our modern way of thinking has made this alienation complete. But the poet is a diver who constantly re-enters the eternal depths. (Otto 161)

Ishmael is the guide who has looked into the depths and has become “[. . .] the sayer, the namer [. . .]” (Emerson 315). He has, in fact, become the poet for whom Emerson was searching. Ishmael “[. . .] stands among partial men for the complete man” (Emerson 314). This wholeness is achieved through his encounter with nature and his ability to report the conversations that occurred between himself and nature. Emerson writes, “The poet is the one in whom these powers are in balance, the man without impediment, who sees and handles that which others dream of, traverses the whole scale of experience, and is representative of man, in virtue of being the largest power to receive and to impart” (315). Ishmael becomes the poet who receives and imparts his concrete poem in the form of Moby Dick. Adrienne Rich describes the relationship of a poet to his poetry as having a twofold nature:

Poetic language—the poem on paper—is a concretization of the poetry of the world at large, the self, and the forces within the self; and those forces are rescued from formlessness, lucidified, and integrated in the act of writing poems. But there is a more ancient concept of the poet, which is that s[he] is endowed to speak for those who—for whatever reasons—are less conscious of what they are living through. (194)

Of course, Ishmael delivers no final answers. He merely reveals that which he has seen in nature. It is still mysterious; it is still unknown. But he allows himself to be reconciled to that fact. He crosses the boundary in the sense that he explores the depths of nature, only to find that there is no resolution. Through this physical act of writing, he resolves the paradox of witnessing this act within nature and still not being able to explain why it so. It simply *is*. Ishmael succeeds in revealing God as the trickster, the creator of paradox, confronting man with this inexplicable dark force within nature and himself. As Pip simply explains it, “God goes ‘mong the world blackberrying” (Melville 363). The poets or Ishmaels of the world see this and accept it, while the Ahabs of the world plunge into the depths of their own inexplicable darkness, never to be seen again.

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