Ahab's Humanities

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ARAB'S HUMANITIES

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
Western Kentucky University
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in Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree
specialist in College Teaching in English

by
Marian Dean Barger
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Dean of the Graduate College
In Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, Captain Peleg declares, "Ahab has his humanities." Although many facets of Ahab's character have been explored, his humanities have not been discussed at length. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "humanities" as "human attributes; traits or touches of human nature or feeling; points that concern man, or appeal to the human sensibilities." This definition is vague; the specific qualities which should be included must be enumerated, since the humanities of one culture may not be the same as those of another. Ahab has been associated with two cultures—the Western, Christian tradition and the Near Eastern, Zoroastrian tradition. Ahab has been a Quaker associated with Calvinists, groups which hold different views of human actions. Further, Ahab has been in an authoritative position for many years. Out of these five strands of his background, the old man's humanities must be drawn.

First, a workable definition of "humanities" can be developed through an exploration of positive attributes in Zoroastrianism and Christianity in general; qualities of particular merit in Quakerism and Calvinism can also be described. Of special interest is Father Kaple's ser-
non listing a series of "woes" and "delights." In addition, certain qualities necessary in a good leader must be examined.

Second, to get some perspective on Ahab's character on the final voyage, one must attempt to piece together the old man's life prior to the final voyage to see what, if any, "humanities" were present. This discussion will offer some thoughts on the relations of Ahab's name to his stance toward God, men, and nature.

Third, Ahab's humanities during the final voyage may be seen in his relationships with three significant characters: Starbuck, Pip, and Fedallah. In each discussion four points are noteworthy: (1) the similarities and differences in the individual's and Ahab's backgrounds, (2) the motivation for Ahab's actions toward the individual, (3) the actions of Ahab, and (4) the results of the relationship upon Ahab and the other individual.

Fourth, Ahab's humanistic feelings are often expressed when he is alone. Nature acts upon the old man, and he responds. Thus the sea and sky offer him a chance to express some of his humane ideas.

This study, then, attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Did Ahab at any time possess attributes which might be termed "humanities"?

2. Did Ahab's humanities partly derive from specific strands of his background?

3. Did Ahab retain all, some, or none of his humanities until his death?
Table of Contents

Preface ........................................ iv

Chapters

I. Bases for Ahab's Humanities ........... 7
II. Ahab before the Final Voyage ....... 31
III. Ahab's Three Influences ............. 46
IV. Ahab Alone .............................. 74
V. Ahab Has His Humanities ............. 91

Notes ....................................... 101

Bibliography .............................. 105
Preface

While most critics see Ahab as a destructive monomaniac, there is another side to his story, a heroic stance, a virtuous aspect, a cluster of humane affections and moral interests. In discussing Ahab's humanities, I have first explored Ahab's personality as that of a Nantucketer following the whaling profession during the early nineteenth century. Second, I have considered that no man is totally evil, just as no man is entirely good. Upon first reading Moby-Dick I was struck by Peleg's statement to Ishmael that "Ahab has his humanities." Since Peleg had known Ahab many more years than did Ishmael, I assumed he could see more of the deeper layers of Ahab's personalities than this new crew member. Third, I have pondered the fact that the old squaw Tistig of Gayhead states that Ahab's name would somehow prove prophetic, and typical critics mentioning this point seem to have the cart before the horse. Too often we say that a person looks like some Jane, or Edward, or Dolores. But what if a man's name influences his actions rather than, as Ishmael puts it, the actions influencing his name? Fourth, I wanted to see how Ahab would stand in comparison to other whaling captains of the period. Could I discern anything good,
worthy, and heroic in the old man's thoughts, words, and actions? And fifth, I have thought it wise to explore philosophic and religious elements in Ahab's background.

This study, therefore, delves into the religions to which Ahab has been exposed: Zoroastrianism, Quakerism, and Calvinism. It explores the world of Nantucket just prior to this period, as seen through the eyes of Hector Crevecoeur. It seeks the actual situations prevalent on board whaling vessels during the period. It searches the relationship of names and their owners. In doing so it poses this question: Considering Ahab's background (especially those elements of deliberate choice and of imposed conditions), does he actually have the admirable humanities which Peleg claims for him?

This question poses an additional problem. How does one choose incidents relating to the above question? I have attempted to watch Ahab's life unfold up to the final voyage, because I wanted to see if he had been a man of humanities before the fated journey. Moreover, I wanted this early history laid out so that I might compare it with his last year. I probed into his relationships with three characters Kelville critics always consider: Starbuck, Pip, and Fedallah. I explored the man's thoughts and actions when he is alone—when he is below in his cabin, on deck, and aloft. In these ways I believed I would be able to see Ahab in all his moods. I believed
in 1970 as I believe now; Ahab's humanities need to be ferreted out, for too many of his vices have been publicized.

There are several individuals who have helped make this study a reality. Professors William McKeen, Nancy Davis, and Roy Miller (the chairman and members of my specialist project committee) have offered classes that have challenged me, advice that has enlightened me, suggestions that have made me ponder, and encouragement that has kept me going. Professor James Heldman, through granting me an assistantship, has given me the opportunity to continue my studies and to write this paper. To these individuals, as well other members of the English faculty and the members of the library staff at Western, I would like to offer my sincere thanks.
Chapter I
Bases for Ahab's Humanities

Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* has been considered a study of the gothic hero Ahab. Like all heroes, Ahab is not totally evil, for Aristotle declares that the hero must be "a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty. He must be one who is highly renowned and prosperous." If this be the case, then Ahab, despite his rigid purpose to destroy Moby Dick, certainly may be seen as genuine tragic hero.

Such being the case, one must decide the bases for determining his positive attributes. If a child's behavior is judged unacceptable or an adult's behavior is determined disgraceful, the judge draws these conclusions from his own moral and ethical background, a background which has been a part of his culture. Yet is this just? A member of Western culture would consider it proper to bury the dead and would condemn a Parsi of India for not doing so; however, the Parsi would be repulsed by this idea, for he believes this act would defile the earth and offend God. In this instance, the Parsi must be judged in relation to his culture, his moral and ethical back-
ground. Applying the same logic to Captain Ahab's behavior, one agrees with Captain Peleg, who declares, "stricken, blasted if he be, Ahab has his humanities."² These "humanities" are defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "human attributes; traits or touches of human nature or feeling; points that concern man or appeal to the human sensibilities."³ This definition, unfortunately, is nebulous. To analyze Ahab's words and actions, more specific qualities must be enumerated; to do this two questions must be answered. First, what are the specific qualities which may be termed "humanities"? The qualities which are regarded as virtues in an applicable moral and ethical system may be labeled in this manner. Second, on what basis may this list be drawn up? Since the moral and ethical structure of a society is founded on its religious principles, the virtues indicated in the sacred writings are crucial. Ahab of course is a part of the Western tradition; born in Nantucket, he was a Quaker closely associated with Calvinistic doctrine; this fact is made plausible by J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur who, in describing his 1782 visit to Nantucket, remarked that on the island there were "two places of worship, one for the society of Friends, the other for that of Presbyterians."⁴ Thus Ahab's behavior can be viewed against the background of Quaker and Calvinist teachings. But the old man, according to his own testi-
mony, "as Persian once did worship" the "clear spirit of clear fire," indicating his shift to Zoroastrianism (p. 497). Therefore, his behavior must also be judged in light of the morals and ethics of this Near Eastern religion. He has sailed the oceans of the East, and might well have explored its religions.

Although Zoroastrianism and Christianity appear totally different, several aspects of these faiths are similar. In Man's Religions John B. Noss, noting the similarities in Near Eastern religions (which include Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity), states that God is "more or less anthropomorphically conceived"; He has a "very pronounced interest in good moral behavior"; and He, "the creator and sustainer of the universe, joins with the spiritual host of good men and angels in forming a community of beings devoted ... to the realization of the Good." Moreover, in all these systems man has free will. Each group--Calvinist, Quaker, and Zoroastrian--offers its concept of the good man.

Zoroastrianism is described as a dualistic religion because Ahura Mazda--the good and constructive God--and Ahriman--the evil and destructive Satan--are in continual strife. Both Mazda and Ahriman have helpers: the Holy Spirit, numerous angels (patrons of various qualities, life forms, and natural forces), men, and certain natural
elements are allied with God; numerous demons (associated with certain qualities, life forms, and natural forces), men, and certain natural elements are allied with Satan. Although, according to Noss, Mazda and Ahriman are "co-equal in length of years," Good will "outlast and outwit evil" because Mazda is considered the supreme deity (p. 346). By using "outwit" the author intimates that Zoroastrians believe that the mental faculties are as valuable as the sensitive qualities. If man allies himself with God, he must choose between good and evil—which are not clearly defined—and settle the war between these elements in his soul. Thus Noss indicates that Zoroastrians are truthful husbandmen who "till the soil, raise grain, grow fruits, root out weeds, reclaim wasteland, irrigate the barren ground, and treat kindly the animals ... that are of service to farmers" (p. 342). Since Maneckji Nusservinji Dhalla describes the paramount virtues as "active work, hard labour, and strenuous effort," a man finds "no stigma ... attached to labour, but on the contrary, labour of every description is extolled and sanctified." Yet to Zoroastrians, improving daily life and raising children are not the chief concerns, for the believer must struggle and suffer because he is entrusted with redeeming the world through active service. Dhalla notes that this type of service is both "patriotic and heroic," and any man who however faintly furthers the
will of God or however insignificantly retards wickedness, has achieved a "supreme accomplishment" (pp. 15, 17). Dhalla indicates that

the individual who surrenders himself to the unseen powers, who kneels down in humility at the altar, who with uplifted hands pays homage to the hidden forces behind the rising sun or the waxing moon or the roaring ocean, and who carries an offering to the fire or a libation to the waters is psychologically greatly affected. (p. 39)

This sacred fire he describes as feeding upon "dry wood, fat, and oil," and at time "some portions . . . of the sacrificed animal" (p. 135). Concerning the sacred fire, Noss mentions that Zoroaster considered it

to be a gift from Ahura Mazda to mankind. But Zoroaster did not worship the fire, as his ancestors had done, or as some of his followers later did, it was to him a precious symbol of Ahura Mazda, and no more, through which he could realize the nature and essence of the Wise Lord. (p. 343)

Irach J. S. Taraporewala perceives the sacred fire not as physical fire but as "the inner Fire of the Supreme . . . found in the heart of every human being. . . . The fire in the Fire-Temples represents . . . the Divine Spark in each human being, a Spark of the Great Fire, who is God Himself." Dhalla supports this view, for he emphasizes that above all things the sacred fire of the heart must be kept alive through self-sacrifice (the high-
est virtue) and through the quest for Truth, which is a means of approaching God. He indicates that the man who offers the sacrifice of devotion "receives endurance and vigor of body in this world and immortality in the next" (pp. 22, 40). This strength and vigor are set in opposition to "everything that harms man and decimates population," because a "ban is put on everything in the universe that is opposed to the realm of righteousness, even to the detail of noxious creatures which belong to the vile creation." All moral wrongs and physical obstacles are evil and are assigned their own demons (p. 155). According to the Fatalist Sect in Zoroastrianism, certain men are under the influence of Fate (which is written on their foreheads and fetters them from birth), and moreover under its influence "the hero becomes a coward, and . . . the industrious turn out to be indolent" (p. 207). Yet, as Taraporewala contends, all believers assert that

the Soul at last learns the great lesson that Hatred is conquered by Love alone. Once that lesson is learnt the upward progress towards the realm of Light is assured. Thus even the worst sinner must, and ultimately does, attain Perfection and Immortality. There is hope for all; none shall be left out. (p. 28)

In contrast to Zoroastrianism's Gathas, Christianity has a more systematic enumeration of virtues and vices. While the Zoroastrian must peruse countless pages to discover the basic tenets of his beliefs, the Christian may
select three small excerpts from the Bible for this information. The synopsis of the long listing of Jewish laws, found in Deuteronomy (5:7-21), provides an index of virtues given in terms of specific vices. These Ten Commandments are primarily concerned with man's actions. The synopsis of the new law is found in two places: Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount (5:3-11), and Mark's condensation of all the laws (12:29-31). Jesus elaborates on some specific aspects of the new law (according to Matthew's account); he asserts that the old law condemns man's actions; the new law condemns the attitudes which are the stimuli for the actions. These are the true sins. Jesus asserts that man should not flaunt his piety, but should pray in private (6:1-6) and that man should not acquire riches, for they distract him from his true goal (6:19, 21). In Mark's discussion, Jesus's condensation of the law, both old and new, declares: "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" and "love your neighbor as yourself" (12:29-31). Although these keystones to Christianity appear to be easily comprehended, there have been various interpretations, two of which--those of the Quakers and the Calvinists--are of significance to the study of Ahab.

The Quakers believe in the direct manifestation of God to man through the "Inner Light," the bit of God with-
in every man. Through an encounter with the Inner Light, Richard K. Ullman relates, individual persons and the community "are directed toward the same values: truth, love, purity, goodness."\(^6\) In discussing truth, he observes that man cannot discern if events are good or evil because such a judgment is "very much a matter of selections and interpretation, and it seems illegitimate to trace unexpected results in ordinary historical events to the intervention of Providence" (p. 101). Thus man can never know what is good or evil, and he must be true to himself if he wishes to prove himself responsible (p. 101). Yet Ullman later comments that for Quakers "the courage to act wrongly may be more in God's will than not to act at all"; that "the courage to wait while evil things happen may be more in his will than to act in panic" (p. 107).

To ascertain truth Quakers do not rely on biblical teachings; Delight Ansley states that

Quakers often study the Bible, emphasizing the value of its teachings rather than the necessity of belief in miracles. Many believe that it is not the final word of God to man but a part of the "continuing revelation" of the Divine Spirit.\(^7\)

Quakers have the option to believe or not to believe in the divine nature of Jesus. Like many other groups, however, they display their community involvement through "moral, social, and material" means. As Ullman comments,
because of their contention that man cannot distinguish between good and evil, their moral choices are those of the lesser evil (p. 101). They believe that spiritual attainments are "impossible outside the social nexus," and because of this belief, they diligently worked for the abolition of slavery. The writer points out that "spiritual ends can be achieved only by the use of material means"; moreover, at one time Quakers considered bankruptcy sufficient grounds for disowning an unrepentant member (pp. 101-2). Ullman observes that "'being the will of God' depends on 'having' the means for one's fellows" (p. 102). Virtuous conduct thus includes plain speech and dress; the refusal of titles, oaths, and worldly courtesies; and the renunciation of participation in war. Serious faults include marriage out of the faith, smuggling, and dealing in or owning slaves. Since simplicity ruled Quakers' lives, painting, music, and the theater were proscribed. These "earnest-hearted seekers after truth," as William C. Braithwaite terms them, were a dominant force in late eighteenth-century Nantucket. 10

In describing the residents of Nantucket in 1782, Crevecoeur comments that

the easiest way of becoming acquainted with the modes of thinking, the rules of conduct, and the prevailing manners of any people, is to examine what sort of education they give their children; how they treat them at home,
and what they are taught in their places of public worship. (p. 119).

His description of Nantucket life extolls the Quaker virtues; according to his statement, they are "frugal, sober, orderly parents, attached to their business, constantly following some useful occupation, never guilty of riot, dissipation, or other irregularities" (pp. 119-20). He notes that if they amass fortunes, they use their money "with moderation and decency; if they have none, they know how to venture, how to work and toil as their fathers have done before them" (p. 120). In his consideration of Quaker religion he indicates:

At their meetings they are taught the few simple tenets of their sect; tenets as fit to render men sober, industrious, just, and merciful; . . . . they are instructed in the most essential duties of Christianity, so as not to offend the Divinity by the commission of evil deeds; to dread his wrath and the punishments he has denounced; they are taught at the same time to have a proper confidence in his mercy while they deprecate his justice. As every sect, from their different modes of worship, and their different interpretations of some parts of the Scriptures, necessarily have various opinions and prejudices, which contribute something in forming their characters in society; so those of the Friends are well known: obedience to the laws, even to non-resistance, justice, good-will to all, benevolence at home, sobriety, meekness, neatness, love of order, fondness and appetite for commerce, (p. 120)

These Nantucketers, he continues,
are so tenacious of their ancient habits of industry and frugality, that if any of them were to be seen with a long coat made of English cloth, on any other than the first-day he would be greatly ridiculed and censured; he would be looked upon as a careless spendthrift, whom it would be unsafe to trust, and in vain to relieve. (p. 149)

In 1782 idleness was "the most heinous sin to be committed in Nantucket" (p. 150). Thus even a Nantucketer who "is near ending his career, drudges on as well as he who has just begun it; no body stands still" (p. 141). At their deaths, Crevecoeur continues, their memorials are not gravestones but "their former industry, their kindness, their charity, or else their most conspicuous faults" (p. 147).

In contrast to Quakerism is Calvinism's view of mankind, for Calvin's view of his relation to God, set forth in The Institutes of the Christian Religion, is summarized in the famous Five Points (as Ron W. Horton and Herbert W. Edwards note in Backgrounds of American Literary Thought):

1. Total depravity. This asserts the sinfulness of man through the fall of Adam, and the utter inability of man to work out his own salvation. God is all; man is nothing, and is the source of all evil. God meant all things to be in harmony; man by his sinful nature, creates disharmony, and deserves nothing but to be cast away.

2. Unconditional election. God, under no obligation to save anyone, saves, or "elects" whom he will, with no reference to faith or good works. Since all things are present in the
mind of God at once, He knows beforehand who will be saved; and thus election or reparation is predestined. But no man can share in this foreknowledge, and all must assent to the Divine Will.

3. Limited atonement. Christ did not die for all, but only for those who are to be saved. If He had not died on the cross, none could be saved; and thus we have another evidence of God's love toward mankind.

4. Irresistible grace. God's grace is freely given and can neither be earned nor refused. Grace is defined as the saving and transfiguring power of God, offering newness of life, forgiveness of sins, the power to resist temptation, and a wonderful peace of mind and heart. It is Augustine's concept of the "restless soul having found rest in God," and is akin to Luther's insistence on a sense of spiritual union with Christ as the prime requisite to salvation.

5. Perseverance of the Saints. Those whom God has chosen have thenceforth full power to do the will of God, and to live uprightly to the end. It is the logical and necessary conclusion to the absolute Sovereignty of God. If man could later reject the gift of grace after having once felt its power in his life, he would be asserting his power over that of God, and in Calvinism this is impossible.

In the fifth point, since man cannot assert his power over that of God, he cannot do evil. Rather, evil is a passive, not an active, quality. Horton continues that laymen were enjoined to read and study their Bibles. With these tenets of faith Calvinists "regard life with more than usual gravity and seriousness," as Noss indicates. They agree with the Quakers that "trivial people who spent their hours in worldly pleasures, lightheartedly preferring card-playing, dancing, and masquerades to sober reflection, reading the Bible, and doing God's will, might fear the
worst." Noss describes the righteous as "earnest, industrious, and thrifty" (p. 481). Thus both forms of Christianity value similar qualities in man: thrift, industry, seriousness, and self-discipline.

Still another important source of religious backgrounds for Moby-Dick is included within the text, for Melville has three chapters devoted to the only house of worship and the major sermon in the work. Before leaving New Bedford, Ishmael attends services at a Whaleman's Chapel, noting that "few are the moody fishermen, shortly bound for the Indian Ocean or Pacific, who fail to make a Sunday visit to the spot; (p. 35). Father Mapple's sermon, the text of which is the story of Jonah, offers further insights into acceptable and unacceptable conduct. He contends that one must face the consequences for one's actions because "Jonah still further flouts at God, by seeking to flee from Him." Further, Jonah "skulks about the wharves" attempting to hide himself amidst the confusion of the dockworkers. Mapple's description of Jonah in some ways tallies with Ishmael's description of Ahab:

Miserable man! Oh! most contemptible and worthy of all scorn; with slouched hat and guilty eye, skulking from his God; prowling among the shipping like a vile burgler hastening to cross the seas. So disordered, self-condemning is his look, that had there been policemen in those days, Jonah, on the mere suspicion of something wrong, had been arrested ere he touched a deck. (p. 43)
However, must of this description cannot apply to Ahab. Ahab does not skulk or prowl. Ahab is not disordered or self-condemning in his look. Instead the captain has the air of authority, and his purpose is not worked out in a disorderly fashion. Ahab does not condemn himself for his nonacceptance of the doctrines of organized religion. According to Father Mapple, upon Jonah's arrival on board, his "prodigy of ponderous misery drags him drowning down to sleep." Not so for Ahab. His misery, resulting from his encounter with the White Whale, produces a state of mental and physical invigoration. Yet both tales revolve about the man who has "terror upon terrors shouting through his soul" (pp. 45-6). But in the midst of the greatest turmoil Ahab continues his fight against the forces which try to overwhelm him while his crew attempt to dissuade him. Father Mapple indicates that a similar situation occurred with Jonah:

wretched Jonah cries out to them to take him and cast him into the sea, for he knew that for his sake this great tempest was upon them; they mercifully turn from him, and seek by other means to save the ship. (p. 47)

Both men, in attempting to accomplish what their situations necessitate, are hampered by others who fear for the heroes rather than for themselves. Jonah, upon experiencing his punishment,
does not weep and wail for direct deliverance. He feels that his dreadful punishment is just. He leaves all his deliverance to God, contenting himself with this, that spite of all his pains and pangs, he will still look towards His holy temple. And here, shipmates, is true and faithful repentance. (p. 47)

Ahab despite his misery still looks toward that which is beyond the physical realm. Mapple's application of his text includes a list of woes and another of delights. By listing these Melville indicates some of the vices and virtues against which Ahab should be judged, for as Mapple declares:

Jonah did the Almighty's bidding. And what was that, shipmates? To preach the Truth to the face of Falsehood? That was it! This, shipmates, this is that other lesson; and woe to that pilot of the living God who sights it. Woe to him whom this world charms from Gospel duty! Woe to him who seeks to pour oil upon the waters when God has brewed them into a gale! Woe to him who seeks to please rather than to appall! Woe to him whose good name is more to him than goodness! Woe to him who, in this world, courts not dishonor! Woe to him who would not be true, even though to be false were salvation! Yea, woe to him who, as the great Pilot Paul has it, while preaching to others is himself a castaway! (pp. 48-9)

Critics are very wrong not to see how these precepts put Ahab in a most heroic light. According to Father Mapple, a man should do his "Gospel duty" and should be true to his vision even if this action leads to dishonor in the public eye. Curious is the statement that man must "be true, even though to be false were salvation." Mapple
indicates that man should do what is right even if such action brings about destruction. Finally man must practice what he preaches. Man must always do what is right in spite of any perils.

The former sailor continues:

But oh! shipmates! on the starboard hand of every woe, there is a sure delight; and higher the top of that delight, than the bottom of the woe is deep. Is not the main-truck higher than the keelson is low? Delight is to him—a far, far upward, and inward delight—who against the proud gods and commodores of this earth, ever stands forth his own inexorable self. Delight is to him whose strong arms yet support him, when the ship of this base treacherous world has gone down beneath him. Delight is to him, who gives no quarter in the truth, and kills, burns, and destroys all sin though he pluck it out from under the robes of Senators and Judges. Delight,—top-gallant delight is to him, who acknowledges no law or lord, but the Lord his God, and is only a patriot to heaven. Delight is to him, whom all the waves of the billows of the seas of the boisterous mob can never shake from this sure Keel of the Ages. And eternal delight and deliciousness will be his, who coming to lay him down, can say with his final breath—O Father!—chiefly known to me by Thy rod—mortal or immortal, here I die, I have striven to be Thine, more than to be this world's, or mine own. (p. 49)

Father Mapple's series of delights challenge man to stand firm in his beliefs despite opposition from one's superiors, to destroy all sin from the earth, to honor only his God (not necessarily the Christian God), to fight for the cause he considers right, and to accept his final reward from the God for whom he has sought throughout a
lifetime. The sermon focuses on four specific aspects of religion: ascertaining what is Truth, fighting for beliefs, preserving inexorable selfhood, and accepting the consequences of those actions both in this life and the next. The fair reader must see in these lines potent justification of Ahab's conduct.

There is still another aspect of Ahab's background that is important to consider, the role of a whaler's captain. Although by typical religious standards some of the captain's attitudes would be abhorrent, as a sailing ship commander the old Quaker must perform certain duties. For the virtues and vices of such a position, the statements of Richard Henry Dana, Jr., and John Ross Browne—contemporaries of Melville—and Alan Villiers—a modern sailing ship captain—prove valuable. According to Dana "the captain . . . is lord paramount. He stands no watch, comes and goes when he pleases, and is accountable to no one, and must be obeyed in everything, without a question, even from his chief officer." 12 Although this seems a desirable situation since a captain can demote an officer to the status of a sailor in the forecastle, Dana declares it to be a lonely life for the captain "has no companion but his own dignity, and no pleasures . . . but the consciousness of possessing supreme power, and, occasionally, the exercise of it" (p. 16). Villiers, looking back on the era, remarks that a sailing ship's command
was a lonely job, and exhausting. Many a captain never slept in his bunk from beginning to end of a voyage. To sleep below was "too far from the ship." So he would lash himself in a deck chair and catnap for an hour or so. The rest of the time he hung with a hand in the weather shrouds or in the shelter of a canvas dodger by the wheel, watching, listening, forever weighing the odds.

This writer continues: "the captain inevitably keeps to himself. The two mates alternate watches, so when one has the deck the other is below. They must find companionship in their own minds" (p. 229). Therefore, criticism of Ahab's self-imposed isolation is not justifiable. As Ishmael notes, all whaling men are moody (see p. 19 above), and any ship captain has good reason to be. As Dana explains: "He has great cares and responsibilities; is answerable for everything; and is subject to emergencies which perhaps no other man exercising authority among civilized people is subject to" (p. 375). Because of these circumstances Dana--a man who saw a commander's abuse of power--declares, "I would not wish to have the power of the captain diminished an iota. It is absolutely necessary that there should be one head and one voice, to control everything, and be responsible for everything."

To take away such powers he asserts "would be an injustice, as well as bad policy" (pp. 374, 375). Such is the situation of command; as Ahab declares to Starbuck: "There is one God that is Lord over the earth, and one Captain
that is lord over the Pequod" (p. 465).

But what sort of man is a good captain? John Ross Browne, in Etchings of a Whaling Cruise, states of one commander:

He was kind to his crew, respected their feelings, and did all in his power to promote their comfort. At the same time, he preserved discipline, and made every man know his place. A better sailor never walked a ship's planks. He understood his duty from beginning to end, kept within the bounds of his authority, and, while faithful to the interest of the owners, gave the crew their full complement of provisions, and encouraged them in all their enjoyments. The consequence was that they respected him, and made themselves active and useful. Brave, energetic, and liberal, he set an example that excited the emulation of all on board. No man flinched from danger, avoided work, or refused to share the best he had with his shipmates. (p. 476)

Dana gives a similar description of a good commander, noting that in conducting the ship's business, the captain gave most of his directions "to the mate in private, and . . . seldom appeared in person. This is the proper state of things, and while this lasts, and there is a good understanding of things aft, everything will go on well" (pp. 193-4). Later he asserts that the good which a single religious captain may do can hardly be calculated. . . . As I have said, a kinder state of feeling exists on board the ship. There is no profanity allowed, and the men are not called by any opprobrious names, which is a great thing with sailors. (p. 389)
Another virtue of the commanding officer which Browne mentions is "his devotion to his wife and children" (p. 478).

Of vices, Browne states that on board the *Styx*

the officers, eager after promotion, cringe to the captain, and are ever ready to win a word of approbation by bestowing upon their inferiors in rank the choicest epithets in the calendar of vulgarity and blasphemy, and to show by word and deed that they are qualified, by every heartless and brutal attribute, for the discharge of their duty. (p. 506)

Dana and Browne record incidents of the captain's finding fault with the first mate in front of the crew, while Dana records that a mate was reduced to a mere sailor and moved to the forecastle. In both works floggings appear as one of the more strenuous methods of disciplining crew members, and, according to Browne, "it is made the medium of gratifying the basest of passions: malice of heart, cruelty, and a domineering and arbitrary spirit." Also Browne declares that whaling captains "as a rule . . . are incapable of making a proper use of a discretionary power" (p. 497). At the end of his work he selects seven specific offenses of the *Styx*’s captain—offenses that show Ahab indeed a merciful commander because he did not commit any of the following: (1) brutally assault any ill crew member for refusing to perform another’s duties; (2) flog any man for failing to understand the English language; (3) flog his men for scuffling in the forecastle; (4)
drive his men to desert and later die in a strange land; (5) leave his first mate stranded on a desert island ten thousand miles from home; (6) put any man below decks without light, room to move, fresh air, or food other than bread and water for seven months; and (7) abuse his crew by "harsh and insulting language," by "months of starvation," by "unwholesome food," and by "every species of degradation that malice could devise" (pp. 492-4). From this list it can be concluded, as Browne aptly does, that in the nineteenth century, America had "a whaling marine in which cruelty and despotism were fostered with special care" (p. 504). At least by comparison with other whaling captains of the period, Ahab is a good commander, and his sense of supreme power is quite normative.

In all of the situations listed, certain characteristics appear as humanities. Faith in a Divine Being is important from all viewpoints; the whaling ship's captain, too, should have a faith that dictates decency with his officers and crew. Love of the beneficial aspects of life is lauded. Prudence is essential, for all groups honor the individual who, in using his mental faculties and his physical stamina, performs worthy acts. Justice and willingness to deter evil are worthy traits. Fortitude, when making and upholding decisions, is highly desirable, especially when the individual must differ with popular opinion or must strive against natural ob-
stacles. Temperance, too, is praised, for the individual must humbly perform his duties. In addition, several characteristics are regarded as supreme vices: envy which leads a man to injure another, wrath which leads to disruptive conduct, sloth which places hardships on others, avarice which leads to deprivation of necessities, gluttony which produces physical and mental strain, and lust which leads to violence. One quality—pride—is both good and evil, for a man should have pride in himself, his family, and his accomplishments, yet should not be so proud of himself that he becomes obnoxious to his family, associates, and acquaintances.

Thus specific attributes may be enumerated for each basis of Ahab's humanities. For the Zoroastrian, industry, humane treatment of beneficial living things, reverence and search for God, self-sacrifice, self-discipline, and the destruction of evil are most important. In Christianity in general the behavior patterns enumerated in the Ten Commandments, the personality types listed in the Sermon on the Mount, and the qualities described in the two Great Commandments act as background for more numerous virtues specified by the several denominations and sects. One of these, the Quaker sect, considers many qualities to be virtuous. According to this group, a man should be good, pure, moderate, neat, just, sober, orderly, lawful, truthful, loving, benevolent, frugal, indus-
trious, and self-disciplined. Further, he is virtuous who may act wrongly rather than not acting at all, who chooses the lesser evil, who is plain of speech and dress, who refuses oaths and titles, who does not smuggle or deal in slaves, who seeks Truth, and who has good will towards his fellows. Another denomination, the Calvinists, has a somewhat different list of virtuous characteristics. Members of this group believe that a good man is serious, meditative, earnest, industrious, thrifty, and self-disciplined. Still another basis of Ahab's humanities is that of Father Wapple's sermon; the former whaling man considers the following qualities desirable: responsibility, orderliness, bravery, industry, and self-acceptance. Also he believes that a good man should support himself when all else fails, should be true to his beliefs in spite of peer reactions, should "stand forth his own inexorable self," should destroy evil, and should search for Truth. A sixth basis for the humanities is that of the good qualities of nineteenth century whaling captains: responsibility, aloofness, authority, kindness, bravery, energy, liberality, respect for others, concern for his crew, faithfulness to the owners' interests, and dedication to family. Final considerations for the humanities are the Seven Cardinal Virtues: faith, hope, love, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. While this
list of virtues is not always supportive of Ahab, much of it is. His domination of his crew, his lordly mein, his fearless integrity, his respect for his crew—all these are traits then thought praiseworthy in sea captains.
Chapter II
Ahab before the Final Voyage

Because no man's personality is the sum of the tenets of the religion or religions he embraces, Ahab is greater than the Zoroastrianism, Quaker Christianity, and Calvinism (in part represented by Father Mapple's sermon) discussed in the previous chapter. He is a multi-faceted individual uncertain of his own character; in "The Symphony" he queries, "Is Ahab, Ahab?" On the second day of the chase, he declares, "I am the Fates' lieutenant" (pp. 530, 549). Earlier on his last day, the old man summarizes his actual position, "Ahab is forever Ahab;" for in the face of the gods and societal pressures, the captain retains his individuality, a position Feleg somewhat understands, for he informs Ishmael, "he ain't Captain Bildad; no, and he ain't Captain Peleg, he's Ahab" (pp. 546, 79). His uniqueness results from the extraordinary circumstances of his life, the details of which may be gleaned from various conversations in the text.

Feleg's account of Ahab's childhood partially explains the captain's position outside society; his father had died before Ahab's birth, leaving his "crazy, widowed mother" to name the child for the vile Biblical king,
a choice Feleg terms "foolish, ignorant" (p. 80). Concerning this name choice, several critics agree with Milton Percival, who perceives Ahab's mother as seeing that

something in his behavior, something not mentioned but easily imagined, revealed to his mother's anxious eye the fatal dower. The man she foresaw would be both kingly and blasphemous; he would be an Ahab. And so, to his fatal inheritance she added the fatal increment of a wicked name.¹

This argument appears to be substantiated by Feleg's statement, "the old squaw Tistig, at Gay-head said that the name would somehow prove prophetic" (p. 80). However, Ahab's mother perhaps lacked the acumen attributed to her by Percival--she was after all crazy. Further, the usual interpretation concerning the prophetic nature of the name has reversed cause and effect. According to William Albott and James Bruning, in their summary of psychological studies on the effects of given names, "the given name has a molding influence on the personality because the child learns to identify himself with the name."² Psychology furthers this assertion by stating that the given name "achieves this imposing power because it is an ever-present cue for identity"; Therefore, Ahab would associate himself with the evil ancient king. The study continues by stating that children, particularly male
children, having peculiar names have a "greater association with emotional disturbances" than children having non-peculiar names (pp. 530, 531). As a "social adjustment factor," they state, males having unique names have a greater frequency of "functional psychosis," defined as "a psychosis for which no known organic basis has been discovered." In addition, "names further seem to be related to lifestyle, personality, and behavior problems in both children and adults" (p. 532). Ahab thus entered life with one significant stroke against him. The repercussions of his mother's name choice for him evidently influenced the remainder of his life. Ahab did identify (to a certain extent) with the Biblical Ahab, about whom he must have heard and read in his formative years; Ahab did have an "emotional disturbance" of significant proportions, as is evidenced by his fanatical search for Truth; and Ahab did have difficulty with social adjustment, procuring a position which would exclude him from the society of his fellow men. This data correlates with that of Robert J. Blanch, who indicates five characteristics Ahab shares with the Outsider, a personality type noted by Colin Watson: "(1) capacity to endure intense loneliness; (2) desire for spiritual freedom; (3) presence of divided personality and extreme egotism; (4) rejection of organized religion; and (5) beliefs in the conquest of matter by the spirit." Blanch notes two
virtues of the Outsider: "a keen sensitivity toward and an appreciation of life" and an ability "to awaken his less sensitive contemporaries to these matters." Each of these characteristics is observed in Ahab during the final voyage. Because his mother "died when he was only a twelvemonth old," she left him with little more than his prophetic name (p. 80). Thus as Martin L. Pops observes, "the tragedy of Ahab is that he is doomed regardless of what he does."5

Ahab's youthful life is unknown. However, he probably grew up in the home of close relatives who offered him unusual advantages, for the Pequod's owner notes, "Ahab's been in colleges," (p. 79) a highly unusual opportunity for a Nantucketer, according to Crevecoeur, who notes, "at schools they learn to read, and to write a good hand, until they are twelve years old" at which age they are usually "put apprentices to the cooper's trade, which is the second essential branch of business followed here" (p. 120). Ahab's intellectual prowess and model behavior must have been equal motivating factors in his guardians' decision to send him to a mainland college, an expensive decision for industrious and frugal Nantucketers who, despite their business successes in general, were not always prosperous. Crèvecoeur notes, "their island supplies the town with little or nothing; (a few families excepted) every one must procure what they want from the
main" (p. 142). Since higher education was a precious commodity, his guardians expected success; to assimilate knowledge unrelated to everyday life in addition to more practical studies, Ahab would have had to develop self-discipline, for mainland life offered distracting activities alien to those of the island.

Upon returning to the island, Ahab continued his training; the normal training for Nantucket's young men during this period was practical:

at fourteen they are sent to sea [according to Crèvecoeur], where in their leisure hours their companions teach them the art of navigation, which they have the opportunity of practicing on the spot. They learn the great and useful art of working the ship in all the different situations which the sea and wind so often require; and surely there cannot be a better or more useful school of that kind in the world. Then they go gradually through every station of rowers, steersmen, and harpooneers. (pp. 120-1)

Ahab evidently had reached this point in his practical education while in his teens, for in "The Symphony" he opens his conversation with Starbuck by declaring, "on such a day as today . . . I struck my first whale--a boy harpooneer of eighteen" (p. 529). By this time Ahab had learned all the vital activities of the profession, for the eighteenth-century visitor notes that, by this stage in their training, the young men learn "to attack, to pursue, to overtake, to cut, to dress their huge game:
and after having performed several such voyages, and perfected themselves in this business, they are fit either for the counting house or the chase" (p. 121). Ahab chose the chase.

Peleg's brief description of Ahab's married life is complemented by the captain's own account to Starbuck in "The Symphony." According to Peleg, Ahab "has a wife--not three voyages wedded--a sweet resigned girl. Think of that; by that sweet girl that old man has a child" (p. 80). Although most critics would not interpret "resigned" to Ahab's credit, Peleg does not paint a negative picture of the marriage; the more probable meaning is "to yield up (oneself, etc.) with confidence to another for care and guidance" (OED). In his conversation with Starbuck, Ahab--for the moment rising above his purpose--remembers home, wife, and child with fondness. Attempting to persuade his captain to turn for home instead of challenging the White Whale, Starbuck assures the old man, "they have such mild blue days, even as this, in Nantucket," to which Ahab replies, "they have, they have, I have seen them--some summer days in the morning" (p. 530). There is in this conversation a sense of longing for the landsman's life, longing for home, loving the bare sand dunes of the island, delighting in the companionship of friends, relatives, and immediate family. Ahab has a strong attachment
(one might even term it love) for Nantucket, which is illustrated as the wakes of the Pequod and the Bachelor cross:

as Ahab, leaning over the taffrail, eyed the homeward-bound craft, he took from his pocket a small vial of sand, and then looking from the ship to the vial, seemed thereby bringing two remote associations together, for that vial was filled with Nantucket soundings. (p. 484)

The vial and the conversation with Starbuck dredge up regrets of having lived away from home, and these in turn bring back other regrets: the widowing of his wife and orpaning of his son. Ahab is melancholy because he is "whole oceans away from that young girl-wife I wedded past fifty, and sailed for Cape Horn the next day, leaving but one dent in my marriage pillow--wife? rather a widow with her husband alive" (p. 529). In remembering the few days he has spent at home since his marriage, he recalls with great fondness the daily occasion of his sons's afternoon nap:

About this time--yes, it is his noon nap now--the boy vivaciously wakes; sits up in bed; and his mother tells him of me, of cannibal old me; how I am abroad upon the deep, but will yet come back to dance his again. (p. 520)

The picture could only be presented by a concerned, loving father who, with his wife, awaited his child's waking from a nap. Evidently Ahab has shared in this experience on
several occasions, and the father-son romp afterwards indicates a joy-filled, love-filled relationship. The young girl-wife was evidently attracted to the older man by his admirable qualities, for in Nantucket there were many eligible young men. Considering that she would remain in Nantucket for her entire life, she would search for a virtuous man, a man admired by her neighbors. According to Crevecoeur, virtuous characteristics of Nantucket Quakers were "obedience to the laws, . . . justice, goodwill to all, benevolence at home, sobriety, meekness, neatness, love of order, fondness and appetite for commerce" (p. 120). Although his wife and child are mentioned merely twice, these conversations (appearing at the first mention of the captain's character and at the last chapter prior to the three days of the chase) provide spotlights on Ahab's capacities for love and family joy.

The accounts of Ahab's seafaring life--offered by Peleg, Elijah, and Ahab himself--are more detailed than those of the captain's other life. As Peleg talks with Ishmael upon the Pequod's deck, he assures the future crew member, "Oh, thou'lt like him well enough; no fear, no fear," but Ishmael's face, betraying his uncertainty prompts the owner to state,

I know Captain Ahab well; I've sailed with him as mate years ago; I know what he is--a good
man—not a pious, good man, like Biltad; but a swearing good man—something like me—only there's a good deal more of him. (pp. 79, 80)

Although Ahab is "a queer man . . . so some think," Feleg describes him as "a grand, god-like man" who "was never very jolly," a possibly admirable quality for "it's better to sail with a moody good captain than a laughing bad one" (pp. 79, 80). And Feleg lauds the captain further:

Ahab's above the common; Ahab's been in colleges, as well as 'mong the cannibals; been used to deeper wonders than the waves; fixed his fiery lance in mightier, stranger foes than whales. His lance! aye, the keenest and surest that, out of all our islet! (p. 79)

It is extremely important to note Feleg's awareness that the prey Ahab stalks is greater than the whales. Here Ahab seems like a Renaissance man; he has plumbed the depths of the academic world, delved into the wonders of the natural order, and developed his hunting techniques until he is hailed as the best whaling man from an island noted for its whaling men.

If Feleg has indicated some of Ahab's finer qualities, Elijah, the mad prophet (or so Melville hints, for his chapter is entitled "The Prophet") of the Nantucket wharves, looks at the mysterious, sinister aspect of the old man's life. He questions Ishmael,
Nothing about that thing that happened to him off Cape Horn, long ago, when he lay like dead for three days and nights; nothing about that deadly scrimmage with the Spaniard afore the altar in Santa?--heard nothing about that, eh? Nothing about the silver calabash he spat into? And nothing about him losing his leg last voyage according to the prophesy? Didn't ye hear a word about them matters and something more, eh? No, I don't thing ye did; how could ye? Who knows it? Not all Nantucket, I guess. (p. 92)

Not all the above-mentioned escapades are explained. The incident off Cape Horn may have been the after-effect of the initiation into Zoroastrianism, for it was superstitiously asserted that "not till he was full forty years old did Ahab become that way branded, and then it came upon him, not in the fury of any mortal fray, but in an elemental strife at sea." In addressing the St. Elmo's fire, Ahab settles this point: "Oh, thou clear spirit of clear fire, whom on these seas I as Persian once did worship, till in the sacramental act [I was] burned by thee, that to this hour I bear the scar." (pp. 122, 497). The next two items in Elijah's series are not explained; however, Lawrance Thompson speculates that the silver calabash was before the altar, making the two items merely two aspects of one escapade. The final reference alludes to the association of Ahab and the Parsee Fedallah (which had been a lengthy one, probably dating to the time of Ahab's initiation into Zoroastrianism, supposedly eighteen years previous) and links their
fates through the six prophesies: (1) Ahab would be dismembered; (2) Ahab would die on the voyage following his dismemberment; (3) Ahab would have "neither hearse nor coffin"; (4) Ahab would see two hearses riding upon the sea (the first would not be made by mortal hands and the second's visible wood would be American); (5) Ahab would see the dead Parsee acting as his pilot; and (6) Ahab would be killed by hemp (pp. 486-7). After these ominous hints, Elijah's remark about there being something more emphasizes the nebulousness of Ahab's seafaring activities. Yet Elijah can agree with Ishmael that Ahab is "a good whale-hunter, and a good captain to his crew," though the man who serves under him "must jump when he gives an order. Step and growl; growl and go--that's the word with Captain Ahab" (p. 92).

The final portion of Ahab's biography prior to the last voyage is again narrated by Peleg, who urges Ishmael to "clap an eye on Captain Ahab . . . and thou wilt find that he has only one leg"; the other "was devoured, chewed up, crunched by the monstrousest parmacetty that ever chipped a boat" (p. 71). Yet this incident, as later related by Ishmael, illustrates Ahab's courage in the face of overwhelming odds:

His three boats stoved around him . . . one captain, seizing the line-knife from his broken prow, had dashed at the whale, as an
Arkansas duelist at his foe, blindly seeking with a six inch blade to reach the fathom-deep life of the whale. That captain was Ahab. And then it was, that suddenly sweeping his sickle-shaped lower jaw beneath, Moby Dick had reaped away Ahab's leg.

As Percival so succinctly states, "the dismemberment drove him frantic" (p. 15). Ahab "was a little out of his mind for a spell" on the return voyage and continues to be "desperate moody, and savage sometimes," a feeling which has been intensified during the present shore leave because of another accident that has produced an addition wound which never heals:

It had not been very long prior to the Pequod's sailing from Nantucket, that he had been found one night lying prone upon the ground, and insensible; by some unknown, and seemingly inexplicable, unimaginable casualty, his ivory limb having been so violently displaced, that it had stake-wise smitten, and all but pierced his groin; nor was it without extreme difficulty that the agonizing wound was entirely healed.

Nor, at the time, had it failed to enter his monomaniac mind, that all the anguish of that then present suffering was but the direct issue of a former woe; and he too plainly seemed to see, that as the most poisonous reptile of the marsh perpetuates his kind as inevitably as the sweetest songster of the grove; so, equally with every felicity, all miserable events do naturally beget their like. Yea, more than equally, thought Ahab; since both the ancestry and posterity of Grief go further than the ancestry and posterity of Joy. (p. 455)

Therefore, Moby Dick had inflicted Ahab with not one but two wounds. Since these woes appeared to be multiplying,
Ahab decided that the way to stop the chain of events was to destroy the evil which produced all this and other miseries. At the same time Ahab concluded that

while even the highest earthly felicities ever have a certain unsignifying pettiness lurking in them, but, at bottom, all heart-woes, a mystic significance, and, in some men, an arch-angelic grandeur; so do their diligent tracings-out not belie the obvious deduction. To trail the genealogies of these high mortal miseries, carries us at last among the sourceless primogenitures of the gods; so that, in the face of all the glad, hay-making suns, and soft-cymballing, round harvest-moons, we must needs give in to this; that the gods themselves are not for ever glad. The ineffaceable, sad birth-mark in the brow of man, is but the stamp of sorrow in the signers. (p. 455)

Ahab, in viewing woe to be greater than joy, decides that he must fulfill a tragic role. Further, in believing that there are "primogenitures of the gods," Ahab is striving to find Truth, trying to "strike through the mask" of religion to find what actually lies at the heart of reality (p. 164). Since the gods themselves have suffered in attempting to preserve good while driving away evil, man can do no better; he too must suffer to obtain the good and the true.

In his woeful state Ahab must have pitied himself; and because he perceives himself to be "reduced to a clumsy landsman," he seeks revenge on Moby Dick (whom his Zoroastrian associates would describe as an evil
water animal) and thus attempts to locate Truth through Zoroastrian means. Percival believes the old man's thought ran in the following manner: "What I was: a proud and courageous whaling captain, sound in every limb. What I am now: a humiliated cripple, 'dismasted' of one leg by a whale" (p. 6). Even now, shorn of his leg and his enjoying powers, "as a captain he is as Nathalia Wright notes able and courageous; as a whale-man he is successful, for forty years temporizing with the great dangers of the deep for the wealth which it yields." Although Ahab believes himself to be in a pitiable state, he has the courage to try again, unwilling to accept defeat. He begins his final voyage in the hope of destroying the most evil thing he knows: Moby Dick. His obsession with the whale, linked with Zoroastrian beliefs, appears as a religious quest. To Ahab this quest is as holy as Sir Galahad's for the Holy Grail; because by destroying the whale considered by most whaling men to be "that unexampled, intelligent malignity" associated with "supernatural agencies," Ahab would greatly aid the cause of the God of love (pp. 153, 160). Thus the mutilated old man sets out to chase a Job's whale--the whale described by Isaiah as an evil that God in the fullness of time would destroy--round the world until one or the other would be destroyed (27:1).
Thus as we ponder Ahab's state before the final voyage, several items greatly to his credit must be kept in view. As a youth he has been obedient, truthful, loving, respectful, and industrious. As a husband and father he is kind and loving; as a citizen of Nantucket he is just, good-natured, benevolent, sober, meek, neat, orderly, and hard working. Elijah, the "mad prophet of the Nantucket wharves," calls Ahab "a good whale hunter," both he and Peleg describe Ahab as a "good captain to his crew." These statements indicate Ahab is persevering, prudent, responsible, kind, brave, and energetic. Furthermore, he respects his crew, is concerned about their welfare, and is liberal in his policies regarding food allowances and off duty pursuits of his crewmen. Because he is hard working and courageous, he expects industry and obedience from the men. As an individual Ahab (after his Nantucket accident) actively searches for Truth behind the facades of organized religions and the natural order. Through his search, Ahab attempts to preserve the good and destroy the evil in his watery world. Thus prior to his final voyage, Ahab exemplifies certain humane characteristics.
Chapter III
Ahab's Three Influences

To understand Captain Ahab's behavior during the final voyage of the Pequod, one must consider his relationships with the three characters who hover about him during his last days. Starbuck, Pip, and Fedallah attempt to persuade, touch, and manipulate the "grand, ungodly, god-like man" who holds the destinies of them all (p. 79). Each succeeds to a greater or lesser extent in moving Ahab along the path which the individual considers right for the salvation of himself, his captain, the crew, and the whole of mankind. As each character stretches forth his influence, these relationships must be viewed in regard to four aspects: (1) the individual's background, (2) his motivation, (3) his actions, and (4) the effect of the relationship on Ahab.

Starbuck, the first mate, is a Quaker from Nantucket who, like his captain, has a wife and a young son at home. Although he had not shipped with Ahab on the previous voyage (the voyage on which the old man was "dismasted"),
Starbuck has made numerous whaling voyages and knows the perils of the deep and the terrors of whaling. Ishmael remarks that by "looking into his eyes, you seemed to see there the yet lingering images of those thousand-fold perils he had calmly confronted through life" (pp. 111-12). Like his superior, Starbuck has endured "years of privation, and storm-time! . . . years on the pitiless sea" (p. 529). As Paul Brodtkorb notes, Starbuck and Ahab "both experience a struggle within their minds or wills or spirits" as well. Yet Starbuck is different from Ahab. Robert Shulman states the situation well: "Starbuck is there to kill, not to be killed; Ahab is there to kill or to be killed." Shulman describes the mate as "an ordinary, reasonable, conscientious, God-fearing man, a man strong and courageous up to a point but not beyond" (p. 344). Shulman adds, the officer "is 'endued with a deep natural reverence,' and his reliance on God, perhaps his most distinguishing trait," is both his greatest virtue and his greatest fault. Starbuck expects God to save him, yet the mate will not act to save himself. Like Hamlet, he ponders the alternatives. He does not act; rather he is acted upon. Because he is superstitious (as most sailors tend to be) Starbuck sees the voyage as lost when the Pequod encounters the great squid "which, they say, few whale-ships ever beheld, and
returned to their ports to tell of it" (p. 270). Despite his superstition, he attempts to stop Ahab from chasing Moby Dick.

During the voyage Starbuck considers various methods of averting the impending disaster. On one occasion, at least, Starbuck succeeds. As Nilda Rimonte remarks, "Alone among the crew, Starbuck succeeds in altering Ahab's decision over the raising of the burtons to stop the oil leak in the hold. A minor scene, undoubtedly, yet nevertheless highly revealing. . . ." On another occasion, the mate contemplates using force, only to conclude that mutiny was impossible:

Shall this crazed old man be tamely suffered to drag a whole ship's company down to doom with him?—Yes, it would make him the willful murderer of thirty men and more, if this ship come to any deadly harm; and come to deadly harm, my soul swears this ship will, if Ahab have his way. (p. 503)

However, this great weight of responsibility for the company does not lead the officer to act but to consider possible methods of stopping his commander:

Not reasoning, not remonstrance; not entreaty wilt thou harken to; all this thou scornest. Flat obedience to thy own commands, this is all thou breathest. . . . But is there no other way?—Make him a prisoner to be taken home? What! Hope to wrest this old man's living power from his own living hands? Only a fool would try it. Say he were pinioned even; knotted all over with ropes and hawsers;
chained down to ring-bolts on this cabin floor; he would be more hideous than a caged tiger, then. I could not endure the sight; could not possibly fly his howlings; all comfort, sleep itself, inestimable reason would leave me on the long intolerable voyage. What, then, remains? (p. 503)

This possible solution is cast aside, Starbuck looks for still another answer:

I stand alone here upon an open sea, with two oceans and a whole continent between me and law... Is heaven a murderer when its lightning strikes a would-be murderer in his bed, tending sheets and skin together?—
And would I be a murderer, then, if— (p. 503)

At the end of his long soliloquy the mate does nothing. Thus as Charles Olson observes, "Starbuck, in his 'mere unaided virtue,' is revealed to have no abiding faith; he retreats before 'Truth,' fearing to lose his 'righteousness.'"4

Throughout the journey Starbuck relies on persuasion to turn aside the juggernaut of Ahab's revenge. Upon learning Ahab's purpose for the voyage (in "The Quarter-Deck" scene), the mate confronts the old man with practicalities: "I came here to hunt whales, not my commander's vengeance. How many barrels will thy vengeance yield thee even if thou gettest it, Captain Ahab? it will not fetch thee much in our Nantucket market" (p. 163). When Ahab hoots at the financial aspects of the voyage, Starbuck
(as Ahab remarks) "criticizes in no uncertain terms the seeming absurdity of his master's defiance" and his inhumanity in seeking revenge on a dumb animal: "Vengeance on a dumb brute! . . . that simply smote thee from blindest instinct! Madness! To be enraged with a dumb thing, Captain Ahab, seems blasphemous" (p. 164). Yet as Ahab describes his concept of Moby Dick, Starbuck's soul is "more than matched; she's overmanned; and by a madman" (p. 169). As the corporals cast their pallid light upon the Pequod's deck, Starbuck more urgently pleads, 

God, God is against thee, old man; forbear! 'tis an ill voyage! ill begun, ill continued; let me square the yards, while we may, old man, and make a fair wind of it homewards, to go on a better voyage than this. (p. 497)

Although the mate's words frighten the crew to do his bidding, Ahab confronts their superstitious fear by wielding the fiery harpoon, dominating them effectively (p. 497). Starbuck's greatest chance for dissuading Ahab from the chase is recorded in "The Symphony," because for a moment the old man is free of the "cankerous thing in his soul" (p. 528). Again the chief officer urges that the orders be given to sail for home:

Oh, my Captain! my Captain! noble soul! grand old heart, after all! why should any one give chase to that hated fish! let us fly these deadly waters! let us home! . . . Away! let us away!—this instant let me alter the course!
How cheerily, how hilariously, O my Captain could we bowl on our way to see old Nantucket again! (p. 530)

Yet for all the mate's enthusiasm about the homeward voyage, Ahab again ponders about that power which forces him toward disaster rather than toward home and family (p. 530). After the first hunt for Moby Dick, Starbuck declares that Ahab's broken whaleboat is an ill omen (p. 539). The captain ignores him. After the second chase, the officer's conversation becomes more of a cry of despair and an appeal for sanity:

Great God! but for one single instant show thyself; . . . never, never wilt thou capture him, old man—in Jesus' name no more of this, that worse than devil's madness. Two days chased; twice stove to splinters; thy very leg once more snatched from under thee; thy evil shadow gone—all good angels mobbing thee with warnings:—what more wouldst thou have?—Shall we keep chasing this murderous fish till he swamps the last man? Shall we be dragged by him to the bottom of the sea? Shall we be towed by him to the infernal world? Oh, oh,—impiety and blasphemy to hunt him more! (p. 548)

For all his argument, Starbuck receives little but the right to remain on board the Pequod during the third day of the chase. Ahab acclaims the whole voyage to be "immutably decreed. "Twas rehearsed by thee and me a billion years before this ocean rolled" (pp. 458-9). As Ahab descends from the ship on the third day of the great chase, Starbuck desperately tries to stop the disaster: "Oh,
my captain, my captain!—noble heart—go not—go not!—see, it's a brave man that weeps; how great the agony of the persuasion then." Yet Ahab orders his boat lowered, "tossing the mate's arm from him" (p. 553). Ahab and all the crew save one are destroyed.

Although the disaster takes place, both Ahab and Starbuck are affected by their relationship. As Starbuck argues with his commander about seeking revenge on the whale, Ahab apologizes for getting angry: "But look ye, Starbuck, what is said in heat, that thing unsays itself. There are men from whom warm words are small indignity. I meant not to incense thee" (p. 164). This kind remark no whaling captain of the period need have made. When Starbuck reports leakage in the cargo Ahab threatens him with the musket, only to apologize and agree with the chief mate's suggestion. Ishmael believes that this

may have been a flash of honesty in him; or mere prudential policy which, under the circumstances, imperiously forbade the slightest symptom of open disaffection, however transient, in the important chief officer of his ship. (p. 466)

Again, no typical whaling captain of the period would have been so greatly concerned about the approval of the first mate. Certainly the honesty or prudence, whichever prompted Ahab's decision to follow Starbuck's suggestion, may be
regarded as humane and virtuous. During the typhoon Ahab never threatens Starbuck; in fact the flaming harpoon is pointed toward the crew, not at the mate who has almost precipitated a mutiny (p. 497). Most whaling captains of the early nineteenth century would have severely punished the mate and threatened the crew (probably through food rationing). Ahab did neither; after stating his case, he did not make any threatening moves toward the crew. Because of the crew’s terror of the corpses, he attempts to show them the irrationality of their fears by extinguishing the pallid fire of the harpoon (p. 497). Ahab must have discipline; he does not need frightened men.

The great momentary transformation of Ahab occurs in "The Symphony," in which the old man shows he does have human feelings submerged in his private sea of zeal and despair. The captain can appreciate the mild sweetness of the day and the weighty isolation of his office. He can realize that he has deprived himself of the landsman’s good life and has made his wife a widow even while he lives. During this period in American history thousands of men went to sea, yet many did not ponder the injustice they had inflicted on their wives. Starbuck, though he longs to see his wife, never considers that he too has widowed the woman he loves. Melville critics often overlook such details as they paint a black picture of Ahab. As Himonte remarks,
in that rare, rare moment in which Ahab allows himself the luxury of human tears, just before the fatal chase, Starbuck receives the greatest tribute of witnessing his master drop a silent tear into the ocean . . . and of hearing a wrenching confession of bankruptcy: "But do I look very old, so very, very old Starbuck?" (p. 422)

Melville must have good reasons for making so graphically clear the power of Ahab's humanity. Ahab feels the weight of the years of toil piling upon him as though he "were Adam, staggering beneath the piled centuries since Paradise" (p. 530). The old man admits he sees the reflection of human love in Starbuck's eye, and because of this he implores the mate to "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, not with the far away home I see in that eye" (p. 530). When Ahab looks into Starbuck's eyes, according to Percival, this is

the culmination of one element of the neurosis—the humanities. Previously, when they have tried to put their case, they have addressed a mind beclouded with passion and hardened with pride; but now as by an act of grace, Ahab's mind is as calm and as clear as his environment. (p. 109)

Although Ahab feels that he must sacrifice himself to destroy evil and find Truth, he cannot unfeelingly allow a good man to risk his life. At this point the captain recalls the activities of home with his wife and child
for whom he longs. Even as something drives him forward, he knows he must save Starbuck, the good man who might guide the crew to the safety of Nantucket. It is as Percival indicates: "In Starbuck alone does he retain a certain restricted degree of faith" (p. 106). For as Percival notes, when "towards the last days, Ahab prepares a basket lookout for himself to be hoisted up the mast to sight Moby Dick, he trusts his 'lifeline' to Starbuck's hands" (p. 61). On the first day of the chase he once again invests Starbuck with his safety while he is hoisted to the masthead (p. 533). Once more he reminds his chief mate to "stay on board, and keep the ship" (p. 533). The second day of the chase provides Ahab the opportunity to show his willingness to humbly accept assistance from another, because the encounter with Moby Dick shattered his ivory leg. He not only "half-hung upon the shoulder of Starbuck," but admits, "'tis nice to lean sometimes, be the leaner who he will; and would old Ahab had leaned oftener than he has" (p. 547). Further, Ahab admits, "Starbuck, of late I've felt strangely moved to thee; ever since that hour we both saw--thou know'st what, in one another's eyes" (p. 548). On the final day he again trusts the mate to hoist him aloft. As Ahab leaves the Pequod the final time, he meets Starbuck, not as an inferior whose sole purpose is to take orders, but as an equal. He tells his companion that he feels "like a bil-
low that's all one crested comb. . . . Shake hands with me, man" (p. 553). Finally Ahab can admit his emotions have run their course, and he is empty. He can admit he wants and needs another individual to understand him, to touch him, and to remember him. Melville has gone against sailing tradition by having Ahab treat his mate with such deference, and in such a spirit of equality. Critics forget too easily that Ahab has loved a great Democratic God, but the God behind Moby Dick is an autocratic one.

Thus through his association with Starbuck, Ahab has shown that he is not as "proud as Lucifer"; Ahab admits he is wrong in angering the mate and apologizes for ranting at him (p. 424). Despite his violent temper, Ahab desires to have good-will with Starbuck and treats the officer as Ahab himself would like to be treated. During "The Symphony" Ahab yields to Starbuck's enthusiasm about seeing Nantucket again; he longs to be with his family. There is the feeling that Ahab might yield to the love and longings for home, for he realizes that Starbuck and others respect him and care about him. Ahab shows that he does love home and family. He confesses his faults to Starbuck: staying from wife and child, enduring privations without need, and hating the very aspects of life he should love. According to Alan Lebowitz,

Once he is entirely committed to the sea, the hero's longing turns instantly landwards, and
the yearning, occasional as it is, is ... to be like other men, to live quietly without terror and to die without rage and be buried in the familiar earth.\footnote{2}

On the second day of the chase as Starbuck lifts up his cry of despair, Ahab silently despairs for himself. Knowing that (the Parsee gone) he is sacrificing himself is horror enough; Ahab must want the others to live in a watery world not haunted by Moby Dick. For what other reason would he require Starbuck to avoid the chase? On the final day, the old man—believing he alone must diesends the other whaleboat crews back to the ship: "Away, mates, to the ship! those boats are useless now; repair them if ye can in time, and return to me; if not, Ahab is enough to die" (p. 556; italics are mine). In this moment Ahab rises to heroic heights, for he cares no longer for himself but for the others in his command. His humanity shines clear and strong to those who read the novel carefully.

Indeed in these few scenes, Ahab (the supposedly vengeful, hate-filled, insane man) shows that despite his dread of the doom awaiting him, he can exhibit love, respect, humility, self-sacrifice, and responsibility. His righteous revenge on a source of evil in his watery world is justified, for he sacrifices himself so that others may go about their lives without fear of this vicious maiming and murdering whale. He lets his human-
ities gleam through the clouds of his fear and obsession. It is not unreasonable to insist that he dies so that others may live.

Another character attempting to alter Ahab's behavior is Pip, the black cabin boy. Described as "over tenderhearted, ... at bottom very bright, ... pleasant, genial, and jolly," the boy "loved life and all life's peaceable securities," yet whaling "had most sadly blurred his brightness" (p. 406). Because of an injury to a member of Stubb's boat crew, this talented tambourinist was assigned as the mate's after-oarsman (p. 407). Not long after, Pip meets with two tragic occurrences that make him capable of communicating with Ahab. Upon his first contact with a whale, Pip in "involuntary consternation" leapt out of the boat; and in such a way, that part of the slack whale line coming against his chest, he breasted it overboard with him, so as to become entangled in it, when at last plumping into the water. . . . Pip came all foaming up to the chocks of the boat, remorselessly dragged there by the line, which had taken several turns around his chest and neck. (p. 407)

Stubb, looking upon "Pip's blue, choked face," cut the line and lost the whale (p. 407). Despite curses from
the crew as well as curses, advice, and commands from
Stubb. Pip jumped again; this time to be left until the
**Pequod** luckily espied him. This long period of floating
in the lonesome sea produced the great change in the boy:

The sea had jeeringly kept his finite body up,
but drowned the infinite of his soul. Not
drowned entirely, though. Rather carried down
alive to wondrous depths, where strange shapes
of the unwarped primal world glided to and fro
before his passive eyes; and the miser-merman,
wisdom, revealed his hoarded heaps; and among
the joyous, heartless, ever-juvenile eternities,
Pip saw the multitudinous, God-omnipresent,
coral insects, that out of the firmament of
waters heaved the colossal orbs. He saw God's
foot upon the treadle of the loom, and spoke
it; and therefore his shipmates called him
mad. (p. 409)

This "madness" in the helpless boy brought about his con-
tact with Ahab—a learned man with a philosophic center.

Unlike Starbuck—who planned, plotted, and propounded
ways to avert disaster—Pip's personality attracts him to
Ahab, whom he had earlier called "that anaconda of an
old man" (p. 178). The lad associates himself with heroic
men, despising the cowardly. As he says farewell to the
dying Queequeg (whom he considers a noble man), the child
states, "Shame upon all cowards—shame upon them! Let
'em all drown like Pip, that jumped from a whaleboat" (p.
471). As the sailors draw in the line, Pip—thinking that
cowardly Pip is being dragged on board—declares, "Jerk
him off; we haul in no cowards here" (p. 509). The boy
finds his hero; and in being "over tenderhearted," he can appeal to Ahab to "use poor me for your one lost leg; only tread upon me, sir; I ask no more, so I remain a part of ye" (p. 519). Another of Pip's characteristics which draws Ahab to him is that he admits his loyalty to his captain:

They tell me, sir, that Stubb did once desert poor little Pip, whose drowned bones now show white, for all the blackness of his living skin. But I will never desert ye, sir, as Stubb did him. Sir, I must go with ye. (p. 519)

It is as John Parke explains: Pip is "the piteous embodiment of warmly instinctive human nature, of all that Ahab must tread on in himself... the unwitting touchstone of that humanity." The child's humanity and his self-giving nature allow him to embody (as Howard Vincent asserts) "the lack of self-identity" which can move "Ahab's... excess of selfhood."7

Because Pip has a unique personality, Ahab reacts to him most readily when the need arises. Until the lad has undergone the maddening isolation of the sea, Ahab treats him simply as one of the crew. Yet after the boy is brought low but gains a visionary depth, Ahab comes to his assistance when the old Manxman scolds him: "Peace, thou crazy loon... Away from the quarter-deck" (p. 509). Ahab reprimands the seaman, "The greater idiot ever scolds the lesser... Hands off from that holi-
ness" (p. 509). Pip--without thinking about Ahab--has struck a note of protective sympathy from his commander. Perhaps Ahab hopes for some protective figure to come to his aid as he, too, faces a foe of overwhelming strength. In this scene, William Evans notes that Ahab "does not fully recognize Pip at first, because he believes the castaway was never rescued from the sea." Evidently, Evans has missed one essential detail: only two whaleboats besides Stubb's were in the water, leaving Ahab on board the Pequod, which later plucked Pip from the sea. Had Ahab been in one of the other whaleboats, he would have received word through a mate that the man overboard had been recovered (p. 409). Ahab did know who Pip was. His reason for asking the lad's identity was to find out who Pip considered himself to be; Pip does not answer. It is after the lad offers the "one hundred pounds of clay reward for Pip; five feet high--looks cowardly--quickest known by that," that Ahab has pity on him. The captain declares, "There can be no hearts above the snow-line. On ye frozen heavens! look down here. Ye did beget this luckless child, and have abandoned him, ye creative libertines" (p. 509). If Pip is insane with divine madness, as P. O. Kattheissen suggests, then the boy can discern good from evil, and Pip--in gazing at and touching Ahab's hand--declares:
What's this? here's velvet shark-skin. .. .
Ah, now, had poor Pip but felt so kind a thing as this, perhaps he had ne'er been lost. This seems to me, sir, as a man-rove; something that weak souls may hold by! Oh, sir, let old Perth now come and rivet these two hands together; the black one with the white, for I will not let this go. (p. 509)

Pip sees Ahab as having kindness, gentleness, loyalty, and strength; and in response to Ahab's protection, the mad-dened boy attempts to touch his captain's soul. As Olson observes,

in a very few hours the change sets in and Pip--the shadow of Pip--is the agent of the change. Like a reminder of Ahab's soul he calls to Ahab and Ahab, advancing to help, cries to the sailor who has seized Pip: "Hands off that holiness!" It is a crucial act: for the first time [on this voyage] Ahab has offered to help another human being. (p. 60)

Olson apparently is blind to all that Ahab thinks he is doing for his crew. Ahab's first act in this new-found friendship is to declare that "Ahab's cabin shall be Pip's home henceforth while Ahab lives." The old man drops his stern facade to admit, "Thou touchest my inmost centre, boy; thou art tied to me by cords woven of my heart-strings" (p. 509). Ahab has an opportunity to fulfill his recently made promise to the gods in "The Candles": Ahab promised to worship them if they came in their lowest form of love. As Percival records,
There, then, is the form of love which Ahab solemnly promised to worship should it come—Pip the castaway, pleading for love to strengthen his own weakness and offering love, in turn, to Ahab to be an element to human weakness in his inhuman strength. For the first time in the story . . . compassion springs up in Ahab's breast. (p. 98)

Again, the critic, while almost right, is blind to larger modes of compassion. Ahab does adopt Pip and treats him as a son. So much does he become involved with the child that, according to Olson,

his tone . . . is richer, quieter, less angry and strident. He even questions his former blasphemies, for a bottomed sadness grows in him as Pip lives in the cabin with him. There occurs a return of something Peleg had insisted that Ahab possessed on the day Ishmael signed for the fatal cruise. . . . "Ahab has his humanities!" (p. 61)

The most striking evidence of Ahab's love for Pip is their parting in "The Cabin," for although in his sudden anger the old man has threatened to murder the child, he can make the following statement: "God for ever bless thee; and if it come to that,—God for ever save thee, let what will befall" (p. 520). Even as he speaks with Captain Gardiner of the Rachel, he cannot make such a statement. Neither to Starbuck nor any other man does Ahab offer such a remark. No other character allows Ahab to reveal his love, humility, compassion, and charity so fully. Although Ahab no longer listens to Pip at the
end of the voyage, he has for one brief shining moment shown that beneath his demanding purpose, he is a humane man. And the boy he befriends has faced terror, gained courage, met the ancient foe, and seen into the ways of God. He is heroic much like Ahab, an obvious fact almost never observed by Melville's critics.

iii

The final member of the trio, Fedallah, is superstitiously described by Ishmael and others as a phantom, "a muffled mystery," and "the devil in disguise" (pp. 231, 323). Yet these descriptions must be taken with a grain of salt, for the narrator admits that

not only are whalemen as a body unexempt from that ignorance and superstitiousness hereditary to all sailors; but of all sailors, they are by all odds the most directly brought into contact with whatever is appallingly astonishing in the sea, . . . (p. 179)

Thus to perceive Fedallah's true nature, the individual should consider Sherlock Holmes's statement to Watson:

The difficulty is to detach the framework of fact--of absolute undeniable fact--from the embellishments of theorists and reporters. Then, having established ourselves upon this sound basis, it is our duty to see what inferences may be drawn and what are the special points upon which the whole mystery turns.
The superstitious names attached to Fedallah are not fact; only the name "Parsee" (given to Fedallah by Ahab during "The Whale Watch") should be properly associated with this inscrutable individual. Ahab had known Fedallah for several years, probably as many as eighteen years prior to the recorded voyage—when Ahab was an initiate into Zoroastrianism. By calling Fedallah a Parsee, the captain has (as Makhtar Ali Isani states) described his harpooneer as one of the "Indian Zoroastrians . . . well known for their extraordinary religious orthodoxy." Thus he would be seen by members of his own culture as a virtuous man.

Fedallah lives by his religious code, which stresses that a man must do all within his power to blot evil from the world. To the Zoroastrian mind, Moby Dick (because of his noxiousness) would be assigned his own daeva, or demon, and would be hunted as an evil agent or principal. For Fedallah, therefore, this voyage is a means of aiding the cause of Mazda (the good and beneficent god). As Isani explains, "Fedallah is the orthodox believer, steadfast, indeed fanatical, in his dualistic faith, intent upon the destruction of the whale as an act of religious devotion" (p. 368). Therefore, the Parsee faces his own death in the search for Moby Dick because he hopes that with his assistance Ahab may achieve the goal of destroying this malignity, even though Ahab, too, must be sacri-
ficed. To achieve this goal Fedallah and Ahab join forces, Ahab providing the vessel and the means whereby the Parsee and his four associates may join the hunt. Both Ahab and Fedallah are, as Isani notes, "questers and fanatics, both hunting the same creature, . . . both sharing in the Pequod's ultimate tragedy" (p. 385-6). To assure that the encounter with the White Whale will take place, Fedallah relates the prophesies. Whether he knows any more than Ahab about the hidden meanings of these statements is not revealed. Yet he reminds the captain of their joined fates, for wherever Ahab looks, there stands Fedallah returning the glance. Both men ultimately realize their fates, but only Fedallah begins the series of whale hunts knowing that he is doomed.

During the voyage, Fedallah speaks only once, and that is in the darkness before dawn to Ahab when all others are asleep in the whaleboat. He and Ahab discuss nothing but the prophesies. Ahab, in the conversation about the Parsee being his pilot, makes a curious statement:

And when thou art so gone before—if that ever befall—then ere I can follow, thou must still appear to me, to pilot me still?—was it not so? Well, then, did I believe all ye say, oh my pilot. [Italics are mine.] I have here two pledges that I shall yet slay Noby Dick and survive it. (p. 467)

Though the entire conversation is in present and future
tenses, these two sentences revert to the past tense. Because of the wording of the prophesies and because of his self-assertiveness, Ahab doubts the prophesies. Fedallah, knowing the captain doubts, suspects that Ahab may be drifting away from the Zoroastrian faith. From this episode until the Parsee is snatched up in the line, he dogs Ahab's movements. Fearing that the old man is switching his allegiance to the side of Ahriman (the evil and destructive Satan), Fedallah hopes to pull Ahab back into the right path. Ahab, however, continues to ponder if the Zoroastrians are at fault in their teachings, while passively enduring the Parsee. During "The Candles" Ahab makes his break with Parseeism, falling back on what Zoroaster himself had stated: the fire was not to be worshipped but Ahura Mazda (whose symbol the fire was) was to be worshipped. It is Fedallah who becomes the idolator, according to the tenets of his religion's founder. It is Ahab who grasps the Zoroastrian version of truth. In his address to the corporants, he calls upon the "spirit of clear fire" (p. 496); the Zoroastrians (Taraporewala asserts) call this spirit Asha Vahishta, one of the six "Holy Immortals" surrounding Ahura Mazda (pp. 25-6). Thus Ahab—in declaring "I own thy speechless, placeless power; but ... will dispute its unconditional, unintegral mastery in me"—is correct (p. 496). Certainly he must go beyond the visible aspects of the
Deity to find Him.\textsuperscript{14} As Brodtkorb relates, Ahab acknowledges that the fire-gods are full of "speechless, placeless power," but he asserts that they are not ethical: "To neither love nor reverence wilt thou be kind; and e'en for hate thou canst but kill; and all are killed." Like the God of the Book of Job, they torment good men for their own secret purposes. . . . Ahab's hate is expressed in irony when he speaks of himself as a true child of the fire; on the one hand, he suggests that the defiance he proposes reflects the nature of the gods, therefore honors them; on the other hand, he means that the only way a man of integrity can relate to malicious or irresponsible deity is to defy it. (pp. 326-7)

Since Taraporewala declares that the Holy Immortals are "'Rays' from the central luminary (p. 21), Zoroastrians work from a basis similar to that of the emanative process of light described by Plotinus. As Frederick Copleston explains this Neo-Platonic scheme, "Plotinus pictures light a proceeding from the centre and passing outwards, growing gradually dimmer, until it shades off into that total darkness which is matter-in-itself, conceived as the privation of light. . . ."\textsuperscript{15} Therefore, Ahab would be right in stating that "I am darkness leaping out of light," for if God created all things, darkness must be a remoteness from Deity. Also Ahab is not being irreverent when he proclaims, "thou art but my fiery father; my sweet mother, I do not know" (p. 496). As Taraporewala asserts, three of the Holy Immortals are male (Asha Vahishta, being one) and three are female; "they
represent respectively the Father-side and the Mother-side of the Godhead" (p. 21). Ahab does not know his "mother," for the qualities associated with these three Holy Immortals are piety, perfection, and immortality. Ahab's faith is shaky. He is not perfect. He has not been granted immortality. Yet the old man admits that he perceives Something beyond Asha Vahishta, for he asserts at the end of his declaration of belief, "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" (p. 497). With the Parsee, Ahab never loses patience; at no time does Ahab try to avoid him, to threaten him, or to inflict mental or physical injuries upon him. Ahab continues to believe that he has free will until of the second day of the chase when he discovers Fedallah's disappearance. Only at this point does Ahab begin to doubt; only after he has seen the Parsee's body lashed to whale does his frustration surface; only after he realizes that the Pequod is doomed does he despair.

Ahab's association with Fedallah emphasizes several of the old man's virtuous traits. First, he refuses to be swayed from the Truth by Fedallah's influence. He continues to search for the meaning of life even as the
Farsee strives to hold him to Zoroastrian beliefs. Second, Ahab has patience, never lashing out at the individual he perceives as detaining him in his journey toward Truth. Third, the old man's fortitude does not fail in the long days of searching for the one experience which he believes will show him Truth. Fourth, Ahab casts aside the sacrilegious practice of worshipping the symbol in lieu of worshipping the Deity. Fifth, the old man is willing to sacrifice himself to free other whaling men from the particular malignity of Moby Dick. Fedallah is appreciated and accepted by Ahab only in that he serves a purpose in Ahab's plan, and in that his knowledge of a dark God is almost the same as Ahab's. But his respect for Fedallah is real.

In his relationships with Starbuck, Pip, and Fedallah, Ahab's conduct does project one undesirable feature--his fiery quick temper. But there are also several admirable qualities. In his associations with Starbuck and Pip, Ahab shows that temper; however, upon controlling his anger, the old man repents of his actions, apologizing to Starbuck and blessing Pip (pp. 164, 520). During "The Quarter-Deck" scene, Ahab indicates his respect for
Starbuck by terming him "the best lance out of all Nantucket" (p. 165). When the mate labels it blasphemy to chase Moby Dick, Ahab is kind, not punishing the mate for his objections. The old man shows that he does accept responsibility for the cargo when he humbly submits to Starbuck's request to break out the hold to find the leak (p. 466). Many of Ahab's humanities show forth during "The Symphony." During this short interval Ahab admits that he is dedicated to his wife and son, that he has hope for the others on board the Pequod after his encounter with the whale, and that he desires friendship with Starbuck. Because he feels love for Starbuck and mankind, he is willing to turn his back upon the pleasantness of land and face the hardship, the self-sacrifice, necessary to kill the whale. Because of his concern for Starbuck's welfare, Ahab pleads with the mate to stay on board the Pequod when the great chase begins. During the three days of the chase, Ahab proves himself brave and self-disciplined, for without these qualities he could not face his death as calmly as he does. Thus in his relationship with his chief officer, Ahab reveals many positive attributes.

During the short time Ahab is closely associated with Pip, the old man shows his paternal qualities. Despite the fact that Pip is black, Ahab allows him to be a free individual; moreover, when the child suffers, Ahab
benevolently moves him into the captain's cabin, where not only is the boy treated kindly, he is treated as if he were a member of Ahab's family. Ahab expresses his love for the child and his hopes that Pip's sanity will return. By offering Pip the cabin and telling him that he shall be treated as though he were the captain, Ahab has liberally granted him extraordinary favor. In spite of the complications of his existence, Ahab keeps his word and holds himself responsible for the lad's welfare. This is powerful proof of Ahab's humanity.

With Fedallah the outstanding attributes Ahab exhibits are patience, theological insight, and self discipline. During "The Whale Watch," the captain doubts the truth of Fedallah's words and Zoroastrian concepts of God. In smuggling his "five dusky phantoms" on board to act as his boat's crew, Ahab had considered the financial circumstances of the Pequod's owners; he has evidently promised this group money from his own pay. Realizing that he desired to destroy the White Whale in hope of finding Truth and destroying a menace, the old man exhibits industry, bravery, and energy surpassing any of the others on board. Therefore, through his relationships with Starbuck, Pip, and Fedallah, Ahab presents himself as basically a good man. He shows pity, understanding, friendship. He appreciates love. He will not, of course, let
these warm appreciations turn him from a mission he is fated to complete.
Chapter IV
Ahab Alone

In his position as captain of the whaler Pequod, Ahab—because of the imposed isolation of his official position—expresses his true character when he is alone. As F. C. Mattheissen observes, as these times Ahab speaks true Shakespearean soliloquies, a mode that "became Melville's most effective means of expressing Ahab's true development, since . . . he tended to voice his thoughts to himself alone" (p. 415). To assure the reader of what Ahab really thinks, Melville has provided a few instances of his hero speaking with himself.

In "Sunset" Ahab (returning to his cabin after uniting his men to his cause) looks out upon the slowly sinking sun and considers his own position in nature. He admits that he leaves "a white and turbid wake"; he knows he upsets those who quietly absorb what life offers them. Yet he can appreciate the passive beauty of the sea at sunset: "Yonder, by the ever-brimming goblet's rim, the warm waves blush like wine. The gold brow plumbs the blue. The diver sun—slow dived from noon,—goes down" (p. 165). No man could say such things about a sunset had he not been deeply moved by the scene. Yet
he admits that he is not so greatly moved at present as he once was:

Oh! time was, when as the sunrise nobly spurred me, so the sunset soothed. No more. This lovely light, it lights not me; all loveliness is anguish to me, since I can ne'er enjoy. Gifted with the high perception, I lack the low, enjoying power; damned, most subtly and most malignantly! damned in the midst of Paradise! (p. 168)

The loveliness is anguish, not because he is damned, but because he has made the difficult decision to play the heroic role which denies him the world's beauty and pleasures. Because he has a probing mind, he finds the tragedy of existence more readily than its serenity. At least he has the awareness to recognize he is in Paradise and that he cannot enjoy it. By speaking of his soul as weary "with her endless hill," he compares himself to Sisyphus of Greek mythology whose task in Hades "was to roll a huge stone up to a hilltop; but when the steep was well-nigh gained, the rock, repulsed by some sudden force, rushed headlong down to the plain."¹ Since Ahab's encounter with Moby Dick, he sees his life as a long struggle to obtain relief from the physical and mental pain which cannot be alleviated. Because he believes himself bound to his anguish as Sisyphus to his task, he longs to "dismember his dismemberer" and in this way find either peace or death (p. 169). In addition to this
intolerable situation Ahab questions, "Is, then, the
crown too heavy that I wear? this Iron Crown of Lombardy" (p. 168). The old man wonders if he has the strength to
assume the monumental task of killing the White Whale,
and if he has the stamina to assume this kingly, heroic
stance. Although this heroic endeavor is "bright with
many a gem, I the wearer, see not its far flashings; but
darkly feel that I wear that, that dazzlingly confounds."
He believes that his is a glorious quest. Yet he can see
only the pain and weight accompanying his decisions. In
facing his task, he realizes that the foe seems unconquer-
able; however, he asserts, "what I've dared, I've willed;
and what I've willed, I'll do! They think me mad; . . .
but I'm demoniac, I'm madness maddened! That wild madness
that's only calm to comprehend itself" (p. 168). He re-
 mains intensely calm as long as he holds true to his
quest. When he begins to doubt his duty, he begins to
string unrelated questions together hoping for order, but
finding none. In addressing the gods he asserts that

I will not say as schoolboys do to bullies,—
Take some one of your own size; don't pommel
me! No, ye've knocked me down and I am up
again; but ye have run and hidden. . . . Come
and see if ye can swerve me. (p. 169)

He challenges the universe to stop his "fixed purpose"
of making the heroic challenge to the evil which rears
its ugly head on his horizon. Thus, in his first soliloquy Ahab states that he has loved peace and beauty and that he still does to a lesser degree, a change brought about by his dismasting. He accepts a challenge which indicates his courage, fortitude, and self-discipline. Having informed his crew of his purpose, he is true to his word. In spite of his doubts concerning his ability to fulfill his goal, he remains faithful to his quest.

In "The Albatross," "The Sphynx," and "The Dying Whale" Ahab considers his relationships to the natural and supernatural worlds through three encounters with fish and whales. As the wakes of the Goney (the Albatross) and the Pequod cross after the first of the nine gams, he notices that the "shoals of small harmless fish, that for some days before had been placidly swimming by our side, darted away with what seemed shuddering fins, and ranged themselves fore and aft with the stranger's flanks" (p. 237). Although, according to Ishmael, this is a somewhat familiar sight, Ahab takes this abandonment to heart. Like any sensitive and depressed individual, the Pequod's commander is hurt at nature's rebuff: "'Swim away from me do ye?' muttered Ahab, gazing over into the water. There seemed little in the words, but the tone conveyed more of deep helpless sadness than the insane old man had ever evinced" (p. 237). He is risking his life and
the lives of the crew to rid nature of a most noxious creature, only to get sneered at and turned from by nature herself. It appears to Ahab as something akin to insult heaped upon injury. He has not repulsed nature; in fact, he longs to make peace with her but cannot. In "The Sphynx" Ahab, upon viewing the whale's head, ponders how little he knows of his watery world as compared with a whale; he inquires of the head, "Speak, mighty head, and tell us the secret thing that is in thee. Of all divers, thou hast dived the deepest. That head ... has moved amid this world's foundations." He longs for Truth and because he searches everywhere for it, he longs to learn from the greatest of creatures. He grieves because "thou hast seen enough to split the planets and make an infidel of Abraham, and not one syllable is thine" (p. 310). He believes the whale, if it could speak, might give him the one concept which would lead him to the Truth. In "The Dying Whale" Ishmael notes a significant episode in the old man's last year: "For that strange spectacle observable in all sperm whales dying--the turning sunwards of the head, and so expiring--that strange spectacle, beheld of such a placid evening, somehow to Ahab conveyed a wondrousness unknown before" (pp. 484-5). In Ahab's mind the whale's turning toward the sun relates to the sun worship of Zoroastrians: "he too worships fire; most faithful, broad, baronial vassal of the sun"
(p. 485). In this, the old man's faith in Deity is strengthened until death takes his victim, for "no sooner dead, than death whirls round the corpse, and it heads some other way." Whether Ahab means the whale's soul discovers nothingness in death or a different sort of eternity than it anticipated is uncertain. Yet this one moment is indelibly engraved on Ahab's memory, for as Moby Dick destroys the Pequod, Ahab cries out, "I turn my body from the sun" hoping that at death he will be whirled around to face the God he believes awaits him in eternity (p. 559). As the whale is turned about, the old captain addresses the "dark Hindoo half of nature":

thou art an infidel, thou queen, and too truly speakest to me in the wide-slaughtering Typhoon, and the hushed burial of its after calm. Nor has this thy whale sunwards turned his dying head, and then gone round again, without a lesson to me. (p. 485)

Ahab at this juncture casts aside the worship of sun and fire, because he tells the whale, "In vain, oh whale, dost thou seek intercedings with yon all-quickening sun, that calls to life, but gives it not again." In abandoning fire worship, he has declares its God and Holy Immortals to be hypocritical in their dealings with man and nature. Since this light is untrustworthy, he turns to "a prouder, if a darker faith" (p. 485). He will continue searching for Truth which lies behind the dark
In each of these three chapters, Ahab exhibits admirable traits. In "The Albatross," Ahab shows that he is concerned about love and acceptance and that he realizes his odyssey is unappreciated. Yet he has the fortitude to continue. In "The Sphynx" Ahab expresses his need to find that key which will open the doors to Truth. In asking the whale for information, he indicates that he is not pride filled. As he eyes the dying whale, he once again speaks of his mission to find Truth and of the various keys he has already futilely tried.

Although the four chapters discussed above deal primarily with Ahab's words and thoughts, three other chapters--"The Chart," "The Quadrant," and "The Needle"--indicate Ahab's actions during the voyage. In each case, the captain manipulates things in his attempts to find the noxious White Whale and to find the Truth. All three chapters present the old man trying to approach his goal through the use of his rational powers.

In "The Chart" Ahab sits alone in his cabin attempting to locate the whale. Sea charts lay on his table, and then seating himself before it, you would have seen him intently study the various lines and shadings which there met his eye; and with slow but steady pencil trace additional courses over spaces that before were blank. At intervals, he would refer to piles of old log-books beside him, wherein were set down the seasons and places in which, on various former voyages of
Thus the old man, by orderly preparations, had secured log-books from other captains and had placed them aboard the *Pequod* so that his time would not be wasted as he journeyed to the Pacific. He would study the writings of others and the most recently available maps in order to trace the journeys of the whales, and the White Whale in particular. His spare time would not be given over to frivolous activities which might draw him from his purpose. His methodical scheme combined all the printed knowledge available with his own forty years of experience.

Thus this pinpointing the location of one whale, whose home could be anywhere in two-thirds of the planet, did not seem impossible to Ahab, who knew the sets of all tides and currents; and thereby calculating the driftings of the sperm whale's food; and, also, calling to mind the regular, ascertained seasons for hunting him in particular latitudes; could arrive at reasonable surmises, almost approaching to certainties, concerning the timeliest day to be upon this or that ground in search of his prey.

Because of his forty years of whaling, he knew that "the sperm whales, guided by some infallible instinct . . . mostly swim in veins . . . continuing their way along a given oceanline with such undeviating exactitude, that no ship ever sailed . . . with one tithe of such marvel-
loious precision" (p. 198). No wonder that Ahab so little respects science. His diligence in his studies was such that, according to the narrator, "his mad mind would run on in a breathless race; till a weariness and faintness of pondering came over him; and in the open air of the deck he would seek to recover his strength" (p. 201).

This same driving thought continues as he sleeps; this same intensity prevents him from relaxation so that even as he slumbers "he sleeps with clenched hands; and wakes with his own bloody nails in his palms." It is this determination to accomplish the heroic act that produces the nightmares; the rehearsings of his great act, ending in his death (as the prophecies relate), send him screaming from his bed, not dreams of demons and the fires of hell (p. 201). His quest makes him a Prometheus, for he dares to stand "forth his own inexorable self" against all forces of gods, men, and nature to rid the oceans of Moby Dick (pp. 202, 49). In comparing Ahab to Prometheus, Ishmael has raised his captain to one of the greatest heroic heights known to Western man. According to Gayley, Prometheus not only "stole fire from heaven for the use of man" and thus became "the champion of man against the Olympians" (gods who were not always virtuous), but he was "gifted with prophetic wisdom" and was man's creator according to one legend (pp. 2, 10, 8, 9). Prometheus--a name meaning forethought or foresight--is a worthy name with which to link
Ahab's because Ahab tries to help man through his quest for Truth and his desire to destroy evil; he uses foresight to gather his maps, books, personal knowledge, and five helpers. Because he is orderly, earnest, industrious, energetic, brave, and steadfast, he reaches his goal: the confrontation with Moby Dick and the realization of Truth. In "The Quadrant" Ahab is contending with a similar situation. Searching for the whale, he has nothing that can help him arrive at his destination; by use of the quadrant he can use the sun to compute his present position. He tells the sun,

Thou sea-mark! thou high and mighty Pilot! thou tellest me truly where I am--but canst thou cast the least hint where I shall be? Or canst thou tell where some other thing besides me is this moment living? (p. 488)

Ahab wants not to know that he is "here," but the precise location of the "there" of Moby Dick or any other thing. The captain wants what twentieth century man has: radar, sonar, and computers. Ahab, in his Promethean prophetic wisdom conceiving of man having such tools, declares the scientific instrument of his time a

foolish toy! babies' plaything of haughty Admirals, and Commodores, and Captains, the world brags of thee, of thy cunning and might; but what canst thou do, but tell the poor, pitiful point, where thou thyself happenest to be on this wide planet, and the hand that holds thee. . . . Thou canst not tell where one drop of water or one grain of sand will be to-morrow
noon; and yet with thy impotence thou insultest the sun! (p. 489)

By looking upon the glorious sun, Ahab knows that man with his contrivances cannot honor the greatness of nature; through the colored glasses of the quadrant, he sees a disfigurement of the brightest spot in his universe. Since the quadrant alters the sun's glory and can indicate little more than its own position, Ahab declares that it is less than useless, it is insulting to nature. Yet the sun holds less awe for Ahab than it once had held. He doubts the veracity of Parsee teachings, and he curses "all the things that cast man's eyes aloft to that heaven, whose live vividness but scorches him" (p. 489). Not only does he speak of the quadrant, but Ahab also refers to the religion which worships the blinding sun and leads man away from truth. Therefore, "the frantic old man" turns to elements of nature—the earth's magnetism and the sea—to determine his position (pp. 490, 489). By destroying the quadrant, Ahab asserts that he will guide his ship by the basic methods known to mariners for centuries. By turning his back on the sun, he declares he will search for God through nature and logic, not perhaps through organized religions which overlay basic truths.

The morning after the typhoon, Ahab comes on deck to discover that, although the compasses indicate the ship heads east, the sun is astern. Ishmael describes his
Deliberately standing before the binnacle and eyeing the transpointed compasses, the old man, with the sharp of his extended hand, now took the precise bearing of the sun, and satisfied that the needles were exactly inverted, shouted out his orders for the ship's course to be changed accordingly. (p. 505)

He does not react like the madman Ishmael claims him to be. Knowing, as Ahab does, that "to steer by transpointed needles, though clumsily practicable, was not a thing to be passed over by superstitious sailors, without some shudderings and evil portends," he makes a new needle and substitutes it for the inaccurate ones (p. 506). He wants accurate measurements and reassured crewmen. The old man, wanting to reach his rendezvous with destiny, cannot afford to be misled by poor seamanship, regardless of the reason. In substituting compass needles, Ahab shows his flair for the dramatic, which Ishmael interprets as "fatal pride" (p. 507). The facial expression might also be interpreted as a challenge to the crew to match his feat of "wizardry." Had he not managed to correct the compass needles, Ahab might have found the entire crew in a rebellious mood, a situation which would make any sailing treacherous. In putting their fears to rest, he has bettered his chances of fulfilling his quest.

In "The Chase—Third Day" Ahab takes three opportunities to express his actual beliefs, in his contemplation
of the wind, in his farewell to the masthead, and in his last moments in the whaleboat. The first such opportunity shows Ahab as he has just noticed the dawning day. "What a lovely day again!" the old man notes, "again" emphasizing his continuing sensitivity to his surroundings. He acclaims the glorious new day to be "a new-made world, and made for a summer-house to the angels, and this morning the first of its throwing open to them, a fairer day could not dawn upon that world." But this idea stops him; he admits that "here's food for thought; had Ahab time to think; but Ahab never thinks; he only feels" (p. 550). He has used his rational powers until this last day, when the cool logic has been superceded by flaming emotion. Now only the last battle will cool him. Unlike the Ahab who believed his custom built man should have "no heart at all" but have "about a quarter of an acre of fine brains" (p. 461), this older and wiser man considers that feeling is

tingling enough for mortal man! to think's audacity. God only has that right and privilege. Thinking is, or ought to be, a coolness and a calmness; and our poor hearts throb, and our poor brains beat too much for that. And yet, I've sometimes thought my brain was very calm--frozen calm, this old skull cracks so, like a glass in which the contents turn to ice, and shiver it. (p. 550)

Here at last the old captain admits that the ways of man
and God are on two nonintersecting planes; that man should
not try to assume God's role; that when man believes him-
self to be God's equal, he is mistaken; that he himself
had fallen into this error; and that he now understands
and accepts the lower, the human, position. Man, in
attempting to act as God, is destroyed. At this moment,
Ahab turns his attention to the winds, which (like men)
exhibit different characteristics. He compares the wind
disarranging his hair to hypocritical gods and men; it
is a "vile wind that has . . . blown ere this through
prison corridors and cells, and wards of hospitals, . . .
and now comes blowing hither as innocent as fleeces. Out
upon it!—it's tainted" (p. 550). Considering that the
winds are contaminated through contact with men, he de-
clares that "were I the wind, I'd blow no more on such a
wicked, miserable world. I'd crawl somewhere to a cave
and slink there" (p. 550). Yet Ahab knows this is the
coward's way; he, like the winds that billow his sails,
could not totally isolate himself from mankind. He can-
not be the coward, for he explains that "these same Trades
that so directly blow my good ship on; these Trades, or
something like them—something so unchangeable, and full
as strong, blow my keeled soul along" (p. 551). He can-
not explain, or even name, this inscrutable force which
is the supreme God above all the characteristics man has
given Him, not the malicious God Ahab seeks to confront.
In the old commander's farewell to the masthead, he consi-
siders the insignificance of man; the sea and the mast
provide the subjects for his meditation on the shortness
of man's life. For Ahab, the ocean is

an old, old sight, and yet somehow so young;
aye, and not changed a wink since I first saw
it, a boy, from the sand-hills of Nantucket!
The same!--the same!--the same to Noah as to
me. There's a soft shower to leeward. Such
lovely leewardings! They must lead some-
where--to something else than common land,
more palmy than the palms. Leeward, the whale
goes that way... (p. 552)

Not only does the sea speak to Ahab of peace and eternity,
but the path he follows leads to a Paradise, and Moby
Dick leads the way. Moreover, Ahab realizes that nature
outlasts even the heartiest of men, for he has "known
some ships made of dead trees outlast the lives of men
made of the most vital stuff of vital fathers" (p. 553).

At this moment Ahab, described by the narrator and others
as a raving madman, is actually a peaceful human being.
His metamorphosis is nearly finished. The assertive,
proud commander has become the sensitive, peaceful cap-
tain; within the hour, the change completed, he becomes
the despairing, lonely man. The transformation occurs
as the whale attacks the Pequod. Seeing her fill with
the eternal sea, he states, "I turn my body from the sun"
(p. 559). Unlike the dying whale, of an earlier chase,
He cannot face the fire gods, but must hope that with death he will be spun around to face the true God. By being "cut off from the last fond pride of meanest shipwrecked captains," he finds a "lonely death on lonely life"; he arrives at that moment of Truth because he can honestly state, "Oh, now I feel my topmost greatness lies in my topmost grief" (p. 560). He has experienced that which Father Mapple--months before and leagues away--called "top-gallant delight"; for the weary old man now "acknowledges no law or lord, but the Lord his God, and is only a patriot to heaven" (p. 49). He now turns toward the whale to avenge his crew's death; knowing that to the whale he plays a devil's role, he shouts his challenge:

\[\text{to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and all hearses to one common pool! and since neither can be mine, let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied to thee thou damned whale! Thus, I give up the spear!} \text{(p. 560)}\]

At this final moment one of two things happens; either Ahab, in wrath (and he has an explosive temper), says what he does not mean about coming from "hell's heart"; or, most likely, he draws on hate to fight hate.

In each of these instances of Ahab's aloneness, his thoughts, words, and deeds reflect his positive attributes. Through his encounters with nature he shows his
love of serenity and beauty, his longing for release from physical and mental anguish so that he may more fully enjoy nature's goodness, his accepting responsibility for his actions, his humbling himself to admit that there are things wiser than himself, and his abandoning a religious system which distorts the Truth. He also show his fortitude, honesty, humility, faithfulness, courage, and self-discipline. In his solitary life (when working with things), Ahab exhibits further favorable qualities: orderliness, foresightedness, industry, diligence, and determination. His final day proves him to be a man of sensitivity, courage, and love. He finds the whale. He perceives a glimpse of Truth. Since all other acts would be anticlimaxes, it is fitting that Ahab suffer no more. His turning his body from the sun towards an opposite power cannot be over-stressed as a symbolic act that Ahab's plan is more an act of worship than of madness.
Chapter V
Ahab Has His Humanities

Previous chapters have explored certain portions of Ahab's life to be inspected in reference to Peleg's statement, "Ahab has his humanities." This chapter attempts in a final way of summary to answer three questions:

1. Did Ahab at any time possess attributes which might be termed "humanities"?
2. Did Ahab's humanities partly derive from specific strands of his background?
3. Did Ahab retain all, some, or none of his humanities until his death?

The five-stranded cable of Ahab's background shows, as do each of the individual strands, that he is a good individual who has his faults. Since his virtues outweigh his negative attributes, the latter will be discussed first.

Ahab has one major flaw, from which proceed two minor imperfections. The great flaw is self pity. After his disastrous initial confrontation with Moby Dick, the old whale hunter considers himself less than a man, a hopeless cripple. He cannot stand on the Pequod's rolling deck without the assistance of auger holes bored in the deck. He cannot actively engage in whale hunting be-
because the ship's owners hired no harpooneer or seamen to be assigned to his whaleboat. He cannot enjoy the sociability of the gams because he has no means of ascending the other ship's ladder from the whaleboat to the deck. He sees himself as pitifully reduced from a vigorous whale hunter to a sedentary landsman. Yet Ahab strives to be active, and it is through his efforts to act as a whole man that the two minor imperfections materialize.

Both of these lesser character flaws are linked to Ahab's self pity and to each other. Because he cannot as quickly and easily accomplish tasks as he once did, Ahab is impatient, and because he is impatient he does not control his volatile temper. When Ahab attempts to board the Samuel Enderby he shows his impatience because he forgot about his physical condition and because he can do nothing to help himself. Throughout the voyage, the old man's impatience is directed at Starbuck (for wanting to find the leaking cask and for wanting to turn for home), at Pip (for wanting Ahab to stay on board the Pequod rather than chasing Moby Dick), at the men at the mast-heads (for not sighting the White Whale), and at himself (for not being able to discover Truth). Likewise, his temper descends like the typhoon which "will sometimes burst from out a cloudless sky" (p. 491). In the course of the voyage, he threatens death to Starbuck and Pip (who try to avert the disaster), to the crew (who fear the cor-
pusants), and the White Whale (which destroys the Pequod and in doing so kills approximately forty men). These two minor imperfections appear to stand out more than the self pity, yet they are subordinate to it. While some may assert that Ahab's moodiness is still another flaw, it is not. Ishmael, in describing his visit to Father Mapple's chapel, asserts that whaling men are "moody fishermen," and therefore this is not a uniquely savage trait of the Pequod's commander.

In spite of these few negative traits, Ahab exhibits many positive attributes. Although some of these qualities may be considered virtuous in only one of the several strands of Ahab's background, many are held in high esteem by several of the represented groups. Since there are many humanities which Ahab possesses, only a representative few can be discussed in any detail.

For a whaling captain, authority is a virtue. Without this quality a commander could accomplish nothing on board a sailing craft. During the voyage, all of the personnel on board are fully aware of Ahab's ability to command without his having to demonstrate his abilities. However, in two scenes--"The Candles" and "the Log and Line"--he asserts his authority effectively. In "The Candles" as Starbuck nearly kindles a mutiny, the old man (without inflicting physical discomfort on anyone) cowards the crew into submission with the blazing har-
poon (p. 497). As the Kanxman insults Pip, in "The Log and Line," Ahab puts the sailor in his place with only two sentences (p. 509). Thus the old Quaker, who usually keeps order by his presence alone, can be declared one of Browne's good captains.

An individual of any religious persuasion considers benevolence a virtue, and Ahab exhibits this quality in his relationships with Starbuck and Pip. Because he feels compassion for Pip, he offers the boy his own cabin. To Starbuck, Ahab—who knows that death may be the outcome of his confrontation with Koby Dick—offers the safety of remaining of board the ship when the great chase occurs. In these relationships, at least, Ahab demonstrates that he can give freely.

Courage is a significant aspect of Ahab's life. As a youngster he had to have courage to face the taunts of the other children. As an adult, he was courageous to go to sea in one of the most perilous professions of the day. When he first met Koby Dick, he was brave to attack such a creature with a six inch blade, an act which could do little other than provoke the animal. Foremost, Ahab exhibits the ultimate bravery when he confronts the White Whale on three successive days, when the fear of the Parsee's prophesies coming true gnaws at his thoughts. Courage is one of the humanities Ahab retains till the end.
To state that the old man is energetic (a quality held in high regard by whaling men) is an understatement. Because he is a cripple, the owners of the *Pequod* assumed that he would do little more than guide the ship to the feeding grounds and let the mates supervise the actual task of manning the whaleboats. Yet Ahab does not sit idly on deck while his officers and men hunt whales. He has bustled about Nantucket procuring maps and log books and obtaining the assistance of Fedallah and his four friends. Upon getting out to sea, the old man works on his whaleboat, making the adjustments necessary for him to perform his duties as the lance darter. As the search for Moby Dick begins, he rigs "a next of basketed bow-lines" in such a manner that he can be hoisted to the mast-head, where he ascends each day to search for the whale. And in the final three days he pursues the whale with a vengeance and darts not the lances but the heavier harpoons. He saves himself on the first two days when his boat is staved beneath him. Even at his death, he is trying to free the snarled line. This then is another of the humanities he possesses till the last.

Of faith—a virtue for both religious and seafaring men—much can be said. Ahab does not have the simple, unobtrusive, Sunday-only kind of faith. Instead the captain has a faith that there is a God, but He is not
as organized religions paint him. Ahab believes that the Christians (specifically the Quakers and the Calvinists) and the Zoroastrians obscure the true nature of the Deity through various forms and trappings. Therefore, men of organized religious groups can perceive a vague glimpse of certain aspects of God. Ahab searches for God as he truly is. Because Ahab has such a deep faith, he searches until his death. And he conceives of two Gods.

Ahab has fortitude because he holds himself to his purpose till the end of his life. He has the strength of mind to endure the physical and mental anguish until he reaches his goal. He withstands the Parsee's influence and holds himself to the Truth rather than lapsing into fire worship. He has the fortitude to remain on deck watching day and night and to study the maps and log books until he determines the area in which he will locate Moby Dick. He holds himself to his purpose even as he sees each of the prophecies fulfilled as death stalks him.

In spite of the narrator's remarks to the contrary, Ahab has humility. The most striking instances of this are the several apologies the old man makes to Starbuck after raging at the mate. When the captain asks for wisdom from the sphynx, he admits that he knows less than
he would like and that a "dumb creature" knows more than he. When on the second day of the chase he leans on Starbuck, he admits that he cannot be self sufficient at all times. On the last day, Ahab admits that he is inferior to God, and in doing so he accepts the humble position of a mere human being. As he leaves the mast-head for the last time, he is humble, for the vengeance, the pride, and the hatred are gone.

Ahab believes in justice. In rescuing Pip from the crew's scorn, he offers the boy the humane treatment he deserves because he is a member of the human race. No individual deserves ridicule for something he cannot help. Since Pip cannot do anything about the madness brought about by his desertion upon the sea, Ahab judges that the lad should be treated with respect. With Starbuck, the captain tries to be just in spite of the outbursts of temper. Sensing he will be killed in his meeting with Moby Dick, Ahab adjudicates that all the crew and officers (except his own boat's crew) should be allowed the relative safety of the ship. For this reason he sends Flask and Stubb's boats back to the ship and orders Starbuck to stay on board the Pequod. With Fedallah Ahab is just, for although the captain cannot agree with the Farsee, he does not try to impose his concept of Deity on his harpooneer.
Ahab loves deeply. As seen in the parting of the Pequod from the Bachelor, and in the conversation in "The Symphony," Ahab loves his wife, his child, and the island of Nantucket. Because he tries to save both Starbuck and Pip, because he apologizes to Starbuck, and because he blesses Pip, one can assert that Ahab especially loves these two associates. The old man loves the serenity and beauty of nature although he cannot enjoy it as much as he once did. Finally, Ahab loves Truth; otherwise he would not search so diligently for it.

Regarding piety, only two comments from the text can be quoted. In "Ahab's Boat and Crew. Fedallah," Flask and Stubb discuss Ahab's abilities to perform his duties; they declare that Ahab does more than they would under the circumstances. At the end of their brief conversation Stubb comments that he never "saw him [Ahab] kneel" (p. 229). As to Stubb's remark, just because the mate has never seen his commander kneel does not mean that Ahab does not pray. Rather it implies that the old whaling man follows the New Testament injunction to pray in private. When Ahab offers his razors to Perth for making the harpoon, he states that he needs them no longer, "for I now neither shave, sup, nor pray till--" (p. 478). Since Ahab includes prayer among other daily activities, one may deduce that Ahab prays daily as well as shaving.
and eating. Yes, Ahab has his piety, because he searches for Truth casting aside all hindrances to his quest. It is of course a rare, fierce piety.

Two final humanities—self-discipline and self-sacrifice—which are greatly valued by Zoroastrians and Christians, are evident in Ahab's behavior. In his capacity as a whale hunter (a man who must forsake wife, child, and home for long periods), Ahab must have self-discipline. He could not confront the horrors of the whale without inner strength. Neither could he undertake the final voyage, knowing that it may well be his last. His self-discipline reaches its apex when he sees the Parsee's body lashed to the whale. Yet Ahab is willing to sacrifice himself so that the seas may be free of Moby Dick's terrors.

Although several humanities have been considered in detail, these are not all those virtues which Ahab possesses. To discuss each one would be tedious. Suffice it to say, the ones presented serve as grounds to answer those three questions posed at the beginning of the chapter. Ahab did possess humanities throughout his life. The humanities, as indicated above, were drawn from all six strands of the cable of Ahab's background. To the final question, one can answer that Ahab did retain some of his humanities until his death, a few of which have
been discussed above. We can state with Feleg, "stricken, blasted if he be, Ahab has his humanities" (p. 80; italics are mine). As Sam Gamgee (a creation of J. R. R. Tolkien) states: "I know I can't turn back... I don't rightly know what I want; but I have something to do before the end, and it lies ahead... I must see it through." This is true of Ahab also. Ahab's humanities have indeed been "plucked at from the skies, dived for in the deep, and featured in the unbodied air," for the old man has searched the religious, the natural, and the human realms for Truth (p. 147). Considering the evidence, "hold ye then there can be any utter, hopeless harm in Ahab?"
Notes

Chapter 1


2 Moby Dick or, The Whale, ed. Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker (New York: Norton, 1976), p. 80. All further references to this work appear in the text. For each work cited more than once, all references after the first appear in the text.


12 Two Years before the Mast and Twenty-Four Years After (New York: Collier, 1909), p. 16.
Chapter II


2 "Given Names: A Neglected Social Variable," Psychological Record, 20 (Fall 1970), 530-1.


4 "Captain Ahab, the Outsider," English Record, 18 (Oct. 1967), 10. This article, based on Colin Watson's The Outsider (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1958), provides a somewhat empathetic view of Ahab's withdrawal from society.


Chapter III


9 Pp. 503, 509. It is impossible that Ahab did not recognize Hip; the entire company numbered only 40: Ahab, his "five dusky phantoms" (p. 215), three mates, three harpooneers, 23 forcastle hands (pp. 171-7), Fleece (the cook), Dough-Boy (the steward), Pip, Perth (the blacksmith), and the carpenter. Further, the incidents related occur only shortly before "The Symphony"; these same 40 individuals have been together unceasingly for almost one year.


12 "Zoroastrianism and the Fire Symbolism in Moby-Dick," American Literature, 44 (1972), 385.

13 This statement disagrees significantly with the views of several well known critics. Newton Arvin in Herman Melville (New York: Viking Compass Books, 1957) asserts that "Ahab has sold his soul to . . . the Farsee who . . . worships fire . . . as a symbol of raging and destructive Evil" (p. 192). Olson in Call Ke Ishmael declares that Fedallah's relationship to Ahab is like that of Nephistopheles to Faust (p. 56). Vincent in The Trying-Out of Moby Dick perceives Fedallah to be the devil incarnate (p. 232). Dorothea Finkelstein in Melville's Orienda (New York: Octagon Books, 1971) assures readers that "he would symbolize the 'destroying angel!'" (p. 236). Finkelstein also observes that the Farsee is a member of an Islamic cult, contrary to what
Ahab (and Kelville through his character) asserts (pp. 238-9). Nathalia Wright views Fedallah as "a false prophet" (p. 65). Viewed from the Middle Eastern standpoint, the man cannot be the corrupting agent major American critics declare that he is.

To put this in a Christian context, the pilgrim's progress cannot be halted when he encounters Paul's teachings for example. He must continue his journey until he encounters God.


Chapter IV


Chapter V

Bibliography

Books


Dana, Richard Henry, Jr. Two Years before the Mast and Twenty-Four Years After. New York: Collier, 1909.


Articles


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