Research Article

AMERICAN ADAM MYTH AND AHAB: SARTRE'S MASCULINE PRINCIPLES IN HERMAN MELVILLE'S "MOBY DICK"

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ABSTRACT

Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* is open to many readings, but one that has yet to be explored is the existential reading of Ahab's pursuit from a gender perspective. By weaving together biblical, mythical, and mystical elements, the novel promises that Captain Ahab's vengeance on the whale actually transcends the expected qualities of a maritime quest. A self-made man, Ahab endures his ever-present obsession and relentlessly clings to his deadliest struggle, which echoes Sartre's proclamation, "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself." Yet, intricately entwined with the spirit of nineteenth-century America, Ahab's character also assumes a canonical representation of American ideals. Thus, his hunting pursuit is overlaid onto America's expansionist and imperialist mindset in the nineteenth century, which complements the hegemonically masculine manner camouflaged under this political ethos. Bearing this in mind, Melville subtly indicates that Ahab's urge to assert his superiority over the whale is related to the biblical context of appointing females as something to take revenge on. In this narrative, Ahab's embodiment of the American hero undergoes a metamorphosis into an American Adam figure by asserting dominance over the whale that symbolises female subjugation. Interrogating Ahab's portrayal as an American Adam-type within the broader societal and political contexts of supremacist ideals, this article delves into Ahab's pursuit through the lens of Sartrean Existentialism. By doing so, this article interprets Ahab's idealistic quest to hunt down the whale as a metaphor for hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity by exploring the subject/object, and the pursuer/pursued dynamics.

Keywords: *American Adam, Herman Melville, Moby Dick, Sartrean Existentialism, Male Violence, Cultural Expansionism, the Other.*

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ÖZET

Herman Melville'in Moby Dick'i birçok okumaya açıktır, ancak henüz değinilmemiş olanlardan biri, Ahab'ın arayışının toplumsal cinsiyet perspektifinden varoluşsal okunmasıdır. Roman, İncil'e ait, mitolojik ve mistik unsurları bir araya getirerek, Kaptan Ahab'ın balinadan intikamının aslında bir denizcilik arayışından beklenen nitelikleri aştığını vaat etmektedir. Kendi kendini yetiştirmiş bir adam olan Ahab, her zaman mevcut olan takıntısına katlanmakta ve en ölümcül mücadelesine amansızca tutunmaktadır; bu da Sartre'ın şu beyanını yansıtmaktadır: "İnsan, kendisini yarattığı şeyden başka bir şey değildir." Ancak on dokuzuncu yüzyıl Amerika'sının ruhuyla karmaşık bir biçimde iç içe olan Ahab'ın karakteri aynı zamanda Amerikan ideallerinin kanonik bir temsilini de üstleniyor. Böylece onun avcılık arayışı, Amerika'nın on dokuzuncu yüzyıldaki yayılmacı ve emperyalist zihniyetiyle örtüşüyor ve bu siyasi ahlakın altında kamufle edilen baskıcı erkeksi tavrı tamamlamıyor. Bunu akılda tutarak Melville, incelikli bir şekilde Ahab'ın açıkça kendini balinadan üstün kılmasının, kadınları intikam alınacak bir şey olarak öbekleştirme şeklindeki İncil bağlamıyla ilişkili olduğunu belirtiyor. Bu anlatıda, Ahab'ın Amerikan kahramanının vücut bulmuş hali, kadınların boyun eğdirilmesini simgeleyen balina üzerinde hakimiyet kurarak Amerikalı Âdem figürüne dönüşmektedir. Üstünlükçü ideallerin daha geniş toplumsal ve politik bağlamlarında Ahab'ın Amerikan Âdem tipi tasvirini sorgulayan bu makale, Ahab'ın arayışını Sartrecı Varoluşçuluk merceğinden incelemektedir. Böylece bu makale, özne/nesne ve kovalayan/kovalanan dinamikleri arasında, Ahab'ın balinaya karşı olan tutumunu hegemonik erillik ve baskılanan dişillik metaforu olarak yorumlamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Amerikan Âdem, Herman Melville, Moby Dick, Sartre'ın Varoluşçuluğu, Eril Şiddet, Kültürel Yayılmacılık, Öteki.*

INTRODUCTION

In the post-English dominance era of the nineteenth century, America's efforts to assert itself could be likened to the Biblical Adam creating his own existence after the fall. Just as Adam shaped his identity in a post-lapsarian stage, America was navigating a new landscape where it could prove its capabilities and forge a new identity beyond English hegemony. In this figurative overtone, it could not be far stretched to say that both biblical and national incentives seem to correlate with each other, thus leading to a conceptualised literary representation called American Adam, initially introduced by Lewis Mumford in *The American Adam*. This metaphorical figure encompasses various aspects of the American nation as it strives to assert its capabilities in the American Renaissance (1830-65) with an insinuation of a national rebirth. With this figure, Pearce notes that the American literary canon in this timeframe relied heavily on national demonstrations of self-sufficiency with protagonists overcoming deadly struggles in adventurous spaces (1956, p. 104).

Politically, when we consider America's collective trauma of English dominance to resonate with Adam's fall from the realm of authority, the American Adam notion gains another layer to deepen the context of this article. The American Adam, functioning as a narrative device, seems to nullify the national traumatic past by embodying both a biblical sense of self-creation and a national sense of "expansionism" as a therapeutic action to showcase the nation's potential in the nineteenth century (Brodhead, 1984, p. 10). At the microcosmic and macrocosmic levels, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* [2]exemplifies this through the renowned presence of a sea captain, Ahab, with a traumatic past, who seeks redemption through vengeance. Ahab's magnetic presence in his isolated cabin, like an Adam figure, predisposes each crew member to act and think in the same way as well, as explicitly uttered by Ishmael: "I feel deadly faint, and bowed, and humped, as though I were Adam staggering beneath the piled centuries since Paradise" (MD, p. 507). Therefore, Ahab's personal seclusion digresses through the crew. It manifests that Ahab's spearheading incentives to prove his potential to make himself in a biblical reference are accompanied by a wholistic idea of making the nation through the homosocial activity to hunt the whale, as in the American policy on androcentric expansionism (Brodhead, 1989, p. 10). However, what begs an answer is: in what sense do Ahab and the crew

[2] In subsequent quotations, the novel will be identified parenthetically by work and page numbers within the text. The work will be abbreviated as MD.

try to prove themselves, and how is the American nation in accordance with this premise? My answer to both is hegemonic masculinity.

Melville's textual perception of masculine emphasis operates at the level of the political and sociological growth of nineteenth-century American policy. As Anderson (2006) notes, the novel as a genre befits all substances to "provide the technical means for *representing* the kind of imagined community that is the nation" (p. 25; emphasis in original). Drawing a similarity on the nation's extra-territorial expansionism, the personal trauma of Ahab's results in masculine domination being utilised as therapeutic redemption on the whale. At this point, what American identity relied on in the first place, expansionism, reaches its connotative point of "masculinity" (Brodhead, 1984, p. 10). The convergence of masculinity and expansionism in Ahab's quest reflects the ideal community of American identity, which is bound to a supremacist hierarchy in the social and historical context because "critics have demonstrated the degree to which Melville's writing often reveals a sensitivity to issues of gender, to the uneven power dynamics […] to the reclamation of attributes conventionally associated with femininity but integral to humanity at large" (Boone, 2022, p. 2).

The symbolism of the white whale, representing a female emphasis on a semantic level[3], draws a parallel between the nation's "absolute potency" and Ahab's "aggressive assertion of masculine strength" (Broadhead, 1984, p.10). Therefore, Ahab, embodying the American Adam archetype, aligns national purposes with a rejection of femininity, creating an oppressor/oppressed binary akin to Sartre's two modes of being.[4] This binary reflects Sartre's philosophical inquiry, where the subject violently negates external constraints and, according to Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, oppresses the female Other to cherish transcendental freedom. [5]

[3] See Vlasopolos, A. (2009). Intercourse with Animals: Nature and Sadism during the Rise of the Industrial Revolution. Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment, where she notes that culturally, "[i]t is a given that nature from the beginning of time has been represented as female and thus open to exploitation of various kinds" (p. 23). Within this spectrum, the white whale meets all criteria to represent feminine ideals. To reinforce it, see Mumford, L. (1929). Herman Melville. (New York: Literary Guild of America Inc.), where he observes the embodiments of dialectics between Ahab and the whale: "Mr D. H. Lawrence sees in the conflict a battle between the blood consciousness of the white race and its own abstract intellect, which attempts to hunt and slay it; Mr Percy Boynton sees in the whale all property and vested privilege, laming the spirit of man; Mr Van Wyck Brooks has found in the white whale an image like that of Grendel in Beowulf" (p. 194). All in all, then, Mumford's following statement is very well applied to the dialectics: "Each age will find its own symbols in Moby Dick" (p. 194).

[4] The modes of existence include "being-for-itself" and "being-in-itself," referring to the subject and object respectively.

[5] In Sartre's philosophy, the Other is characterised by being-in-itself, which is associated with feminine qualities.

In this regard, Ahab's quest encapsulates both concepts, fabricating a motto of self-creation with vengeful intent while limiting the whale's freedom on a pragmatic level. Ahab's masculine freedom symbolises the categorical imperative of androcentrism, balancing expansionist policy through male emphasis and shedding light on female oppression in the process of expansionism. Within these sexual and historical principles, this article analyses the hunting quest as a shared phenomenological experience between Ahab and the whale, unveiling the oppression of female/nature within the context of male/androcentric expansionism in the nineteenth-century American mindset.

FREEDOM OF MAN-AS-MAN

Moby Dick is such a dense piece of work that it provides the reader with a nourishing basis to comment on and meditate upon. Universal expressions in characterizations and about life offer an existential and erudite passageway for each reader to sympathise with. Not only do Melville's direct statements in describing a futile quest echo universality in this way, but also his utilisation of temporal poetics in the novel's space evinces existential remarks through Ishmael as a mouthpiece:

I so keep pushing, and crowding, and jamming myself on all the time; recklessly making me ready to do what in my own proper, natural heart, I durst not so much as dare? Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm? But if the great sun move not of himself; but is as an errand-boy in heaven; nor one single star can revolve, but by some invisible power; how then can this one small heart beat; this one small brain think thoughts; unless God does that beating, does that thinking, does that living, and not I. By heaven, man, we are turned round and round in this world, like yonder windlass, and Fate is the handspike. (MD, p. 508)

This awareness is subsequent to the absurdity of the hunting quest. Besides, within the spectrum of this quotation, it could be understood that the pursuit extends beyond traditional heroism, signifying an amalgamation of a glorified search for identity with heroism. So, Ishmael's shouting aligns with the notion of human struggle, depicted as neither fluid nor solid, much like Beckett's *How It Is*.[6] Ishmael's indignation marks the ambiguity of

[6] How It Is (1964) self-translated from Comment C'est (1961) is a renovating novel in which there is neither a solid plot nor punctuation marks. In this narrative, the narrator is nameless while struggling in the mud. The amorphous, but universal, quality of the mud seems to be the perfect personal narrative for a person to solidify their identity in life, just like the speaker in the novel, who soon takes up the name Pim. However, Becket's absurd vision shows itself in the closing remark of the novel, "[I]t was end of quotation" (London: Faber & Faber,

life and existence, hinting at the existential question of whether one's life narrative is self-authored or merely a fleeting quotation suspended between birth and death on God's lips.

In this context, the appropriate way to delve deeply into this essay's context would be the first lesson of Existentialism: the maxim of existence precedes essence. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre upholds this maxim as the individual's privilege of free choice and self-conduct against the external codes of society. This existential action involves inner negation between for-itself and in-itself, that is, the subject and the Other, with a specific emphasis on the future (Sartre, 1978, p. 78). [7]

In a general overview, Sartre distinguishes two modes of existence: the subject conducting their identity (for-itself) and the subject of their ascribed identity (in-itself). Sartre's vivid example involves the situation of a café waiter. In the example, the waiter's adherence to social expectations becomes so ingrained in his actions that his authentic and free identity (for-itself) undergoes distortion for the sake of pleasing the customers, eventually manifesting as a constrained and predetermined entity (in-itself) as if being an "automaton" (1978, p. 59). On the other hand, the state of being a subject, for-itself, represents infinite progress by choice, actively transcending the societal givens through constant evolution. This constant negation of the social givens allows the subject to make choices and determine their own course of action, leading to the famous declaration in "Existentialism is Humanism" that "Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself," which recalls Nietzsche's God is dead and highlights the individual's assumption of responsibility through self-choice.

Moby Dick, in this respect, gives a detailed elaboration on that kind of subject, Ahab, who is introduced as "a grand, ungodly, god-like man" (MD, p. 92). Ahab's conscious act of choice happens to be a powerful existential gesture in line with Sartre's for-itself. The mythic quest to capture Moby Dick highlights Ahab's subjective choice while "stand[ing] lost in the infinite series of the sea" (MD, p. 159):

2009), p. 129. The reason is that without any punctuation marks, the reader is instilled into believing that the novel is Pim's personal self-orientation in life, which is turned upside down in the end. Therefore, the pronoun in the title, It, suggests absurd universality to search for something in our existence, which may be in vain all along."

[7] The emphasis on the future is important since Pearce also notes that the American Adam archetype is depicted with the quality of "looking only one direction, forward" (1956, p.104). The reason is that the future is considered to be untainted by societal codes, which brings the notion of freedom on par with America's national identity embodied by Ahab.

What I've dared, I've willed; and what I've willed, I will do! They think me mad […] I am madness maddened! That wild madness that's only calm to comprehend itself! The prophecy was that I should be dismembered; and—Aye! I lost this leg. *I now prophesy that I will dismember my dismemberer.* (MD, p. 171; emphasis added)

Ahab's existential acumen to kill the white whale is revealed under his conscious attitude towards his Other, through which he becomes a future project by "penetrat[ing] through the thick haze of the future" (MD, p. 158) with Pequod's bulbous bow. The point coming to the forefront in the case of choice not only curtails Ahab's fall into bad faith (mauvaise foi) but also evinces the masculine manner of enjoying freedom.

PENETRATING DEPTHS: MARITIME ODYSSEY AND SEXUAL UNDERTONES OF EXISTENCE

As much as Ahab's maritime journey as a consequence becomes somewhat a symbol of his freedom, Ishmael's subtle remark in the word choice there, namely penetration, opens up the gateway for a masculine resonance, thus imploring us to be preoccupied with the sexual underside of that pursuit. The account that Meszaros gives unequivocally explains such an underside, stating that "sexuality is understood as a fundamental existential project which aims simultaneously (a) at the Other and (b) at being in general" (2012, p. 179). To Sartre, the desire to be is disguised under the mask of a desire to play with and act against. In other words, if Ahab's actions presuppose his free existence, his actions must be inherently linked to the subjugation of the Other. In accordance with this idea, this preoccupation goes hand in hand with the common behaviour of the novel's zeitgeist to build a slow but surely free identity with an archetypal body of new beginnings in an identity-in-difference: Adam/Ahab who tries to exist with the egress from God/England in his action of playing with or against Eve/the whale.

Therefore, Ahab, who is apparelled with semi-god qualities, symbolically bears the responsibility for authentic existence that is distended to encompass realistic national purposes, too. Given that, Ahab's portrayal as out of the ordinary is misleading. Apart from the unstable balance of his extreme actions, Ahab is by nature, as Peleg says, "a good man" (MD, p. 93). This brief description that downplays Ahab's biblical investiture is far more to the point than his usual cited descriptions, which are connotatively interpreted as Ahab being an alien. Besides, he acts and observes his surroundings in accordance with humane responses replete with subjective fluctuations in manners. In a nutshell, "Ahab has his humanities" (MD, p. 93). Melville,

thus, obliquely pens down a character much closer to home with esteemed virtues. At this point, McWilliams observes that Ahab's "qualities are endemic to American population" en masse (2012, p. 236). Therefore, the deduction from this statement suggests a constitutive reflection between Ahab and American society in a single body "with long roots in the nation's history" (2012, p. 235). With a high degree of clarity, McWilliam's statement has an implied proposal within. If Ahab's distinctive traits and American society are endemically interrelated, then means and purposes equally converge into one another: They both playfully stand on their own two feet but gratuitously allow no room for heterotopic presence for the Other in an allegorical narrative applicable to both the text and the context.

Here, we run a notable privilege of resorting to the archetypal Ship of State metaphor through Pequod to explain the conservative overtone in the (con)text. The metaphor's expressive quality is responsive to the nation's ordeal, posing the question of whether the republic will shatter in the tempest of political upheaval or be able to deck at the safe shore once again. Standing in the blurry line between socio-political and figurative rhetoric, as Thompson writes, "[t]he sailing ships of the ship of state image were coherent arrangements of *opposing tensions* set in a constantly adjusting dynamic" (2001, p. 172; emphasis in original). The storm of the Mexican-American War in 1848 is a key greeting of ours to oscillate between the text and the context, Pequod and the American nation, so as to afford a reading based on realistic opposing tensions. Of more interest is the Texas annexation during this storm of conflict, which served as a stark reminder to America that its policies could be challenged at any time by a formidable adversary. Recognising this connection between the Pequod and the metaphor, Heimert gives a crucial reference to Daniel Webster's speech on March 7, 1850: "The Ship of State […] approaches the awful maelstrom of disunion […] Yes, we approach the whirlpool – the sails are rending, the masts are shivering" (1963, p. 500). Building on the national discomfort of dichotomies, a compelling argument could be made that Melville reaches a plateau in an obvious conclusion to negate the pernicious possibility of disunion related to the idea of oppositions: The captain of the nation must "stand alone among the millions of the peopled earth, nor gods nor men as his neighbors" (MD, p. 517). Since the political iconography mentioned construes oneness, it gains an implicit and gradual sanction based on a pure delusion of the American Dream or realising the self, both of which are symbiotic if personal desires come into play.

Ahab's robust persona, as the captain of the nation, is influenced by the placement of desire as a conduit for self-realisation; being at liberty to do, choose, or volitionally create a muscular frenzied culture "in those semidivine terms" are the items true to the supremacist build-up (McWilliams 2012, p. 235). Furthermore, in a metaphorical sense, desire inherently carries an elusive quality, intertwining the notion of shaping an autonomous self with the suffix "-ing" as a symbol that remains forever beyond reach. In alignment with Sartre's perspective on the divinity embraced by Ahab, the notion of God's demise serves as an impetus for individuals to assume the roles of gods in their own lives, a horizon eternally unreachable. Gillespie's note about free existence in the Sartrean notion shifts the idea of desire for God to desire for freedom: "Sartre holds in tension the desire for the impossible absolute and the reality of the non-existence of God through his drive for freedom" (2016, p. 54). Only the elusive desire treated here allows any room for free action and existence in the process.

The metaphor of making oneself lies in the elusiveness of the whale as Ahab's object of desire. With eloquent symbolism, we see Ahab in a seemingly inevitable cause-and-effect relationship with the whale. This kind of dynamic balances Ahab's aspirations to capture the whale with the explicit impossibility of such a feat. This trope speaks volumes regarding existential insights. Rather than fixating on a predetermined destination, his elusive nature of desire foregrounds the lacuna created by the whale. As long as Ahab's "unachieved revengeful desire" (MD, p. 201) continues to exist in its current unfulfilled state, the essence of this experience remains valid – something that Melville strategically weaves into the narrative.

The symbolic attribution of desire stems from the white whale's laconic complexion, namely whiteness, which triggers male desire. If desire is the nucleus for Ahab's self-existence, tangent to American rebirth for independence, it must be associated with male desire within the broader societal context because Sartre discusses the erudite remark of "smooth whiteness" (1978, p. 576) as an echo of the ideal female body in the erotic descriptions and thus comes to the conclusion that such a fantasy incites male desire at its most. What renders Sartre's meditation is the necessity of desire for a continual process for the self against stable predeterminations since smooth whiteness "is like water" (1978, p. 576). It defies societal appropriation and thus ensures freedom, for which the whale's symbolic albino skin is the perfect metaphor:

The symbol represents the dream of a non-destructive assimilation. It is an unhappy fact-as Hegel noted-that desire destroys its object. In this sense, he said, desire is the desire of devouring. In reaction against this dialectical necessity, the For-itself dreams of an object which may be entirely assimilated by me, which would be me, without dissolving into me but still keeping the structure of the in-itself; for what I desire exactly is this object; and if I eat it, I do not have it anymore, I find nothing remaining except myself. (1978, p. 579)

It is needless to opine that the metaphorical device of devouring is replaced with Ahab's revenge for the cold dish. To adapt desire into this scheme, Ahab's completed revenge would signal the end of his journey and the attainment of his freedom. In other words, he would lose all the dialectical necessity after the assimilative digestion. This account of Sartre's complements Ishmael's consensus on the hue's "elusive quality" (MD, p. 190). In firm belief of this quality, the "whale must […] *indefinitely run away* […] as often happens" (MD, p. 496; emphasis added).

Not surprisingly, the novel's main pillar revolves around the concept of Ahab's insatiable appetite or desire. In this artifice, the linear trajectory rooted in Ahab's starting point is elongated, passing on vast meridians and parallels whose endpoint is clearly determined by the whale. Likewise, the more the whale keeps its evasive manoeuvres, the more Ahab chases. For this very reason, Ishmael chooses to describe the white whale with an "unnearable spout" (MD, p. 231), a description crucial for Ahab's hegemonic existence. Ishmael explicitly utters, "I now regard this whole voyage of the Pequod, and the great White Whale its object" (MD, p. 226). In this portrayal, Ishmael subtly alludes to the telos of the pursuit, identifying it as Ahab's "reality [as] the pure effort to become for-itself" (Sartre, 1978, p. 575), either in terms of masculinity or humanity in toto, all entwined in the dialectical necessity of desire. After all, "[d]esire expresses this endeavour" (1978, p. 576). Yet, this desire is absolutely the male desire for Ogilvy's primary approach, which elides the distinction between the male/female and for-itself/in-itself under the overarching themes of imperialism/nature (1980, p. 201). In this extrapolation, the pursuit of dominating the Other is inseparable from the quest to conquer the self. Hence Ahab's desire for domination.

MEMORY, ADAM AND AHAB

Another point to consider by means of masculine measurement is the historical thematic perception of the novel in the first place, setting the tone that succinctly reverberates throughout the text. The brief account is as follows: "Call me Ishmael," in the instant aftermath of which he articulates, "I account high time to get sea as soon as I can" (MD, p. 21). This sentence's contextual frame is neither the past nor the future but the present of the zeitgeist with which Melville absolutely shows accordance. Far more complex than it seems, Ishmael's memorable statement instantiates a general overview of the American Renaissance, exactly unfolding as "[w]haling is imperial" (MD, p. 119). In this historical share of nationalist thinking, the premise was the general paradigm of the cultural spirit, which was not just an inevitable result of whale-hunting for the nation's economy but rather for glory. This essence is reflected in the following elucidation: "Butchers we are, that is true" (MD, p. 117). Nonetheless, the intercourse with animals for the pursuit of domination also implies a parallel impact action on female bodies because female subjugation, despite being persuasively absent in prospect, has mostly been referred to by this show of strength since the time androcentric ideology took a hegemonic posture against nature.[8] In a "man-book" (Broadhead, 1984, p. 9), Ishmael is required to embody this masculine ethos prevalent in the collective consciousness. He, like the glorified heroes being memorialised in gold letters on marble tablets, including Ahab, is compelled to navigate the path where destiny might inscribe his name to be remembered as a man: "Yes, Ishmael, the same fate may be thine" (MD, p. 53).

The conscious actions of authority against females, however, are isomorphic with cultural memory, biblically etched on Adam's fall from locus amoenus and thereafter the sense of shame. Theologically speaking, in a civilised activity in a post-lapsarian sense, Tomkins argues that "shame is an anthropological a priori" (as cited in Ward, 2012, p. 309). Western cosmology provides collective consciousness with the incentive of shame in the passage of civilization. The shame is generally attributed to Eve's infamous transgression of limits, that is, her consumption of the prohibited apple. While the act of ingestion has various metaphorical implications, the acquisition of knowledge, in general, culminates in Adam's recognition of nakedness and concupiscence. There are

[8] See Adams C. (2010). The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory (London: Continuum). In her analysis, she contends that there exists a profound connection between the digestion of meat and patriarchy. According to Adams, butchering animals as an act, in this context, is metaphorically cut into the fabric of butchering female bodies.

two consequences on behalf of Adam: On the one hand, Adam, as the ancestor of civilization, steers for inhabitation on earth; on the other hand, through shame, Adam feels rectified since "it [… gives] evidence of Adam's innate nobility because [he is] ashamed of the sexual arousal and this could act as a spur to remedy" (Ward, 2012, p. 308). The positive disclosure of shame, then, avails American Adam to avoid further "continuing embarrassment" (2012, p. 309) in a dramatic way of coping strategy that one may call an androcentric design of dichotomies, like nature-culture and understandably female-male, in which the latter uncongenially suppresses the other.

In this cosmological cultural meta-discourse, a deliberate choice is reflected in the novel's sparse female presence. When looked at from a pervasive perspective, the spatial ethos of the novel is nothing but an archaic *symposium* [9] with the proper criteria of female interdiction. The novel actually goes beyond the slightly benevolent nature of such an account and comes to pass that a piece of martial music is played on Pequod, orchestrated by Ahab. The crew's musical aptitudes skilfully get in tune with "a sound so strange, long drawn, and musically wild and unearthly" reverberating in the marine landscape (MD, p. 214). In a connived possibility, Ishmael's memorable psychological torture of an "everlasting itch for things remote" (MD, p. 26) upon seeing the horizon of the landscape at the very onset of the novel is also reminiscent of this disclosure to play his part at a certain level. The rhapsody of this wild and unearthly harmony eventually culminates in the absence of female voices and their inability to contribute to the narrative's tune. As a result, the cosmological economy in its nominal form particularises why the novel is so male-dominated.

The unity of shame does not take place in isolation. A sense of shame is felt by every member of the crew; it is a shared experience of universal shame. As Ishmael goes his way to divulge Ahab's traumatic past in the aftermath of being informed about Ahab's mutilated body, he glosses over the universality of "desperate, moody, and savage" attitudes that Ahab acts in, stating that "it will all pass off" (MD, p. 93). What we know is that he later finds himself in the spotlight of the narrative and events as the narrator of the persecution that the voyage intends. Perhaps intuitively, he understands the existential universality of Ahab's shame, in which the crew somehow finds a share. They become the national voice in responding as

[9] Symposia encompassed a wide range of entertainments, such as weddings and festivals. The important thing is that in ancient Greece, only men were allowed to join while putting a blanket ban on women's attendance.

"Aye, aye!" to Ahab's declaration: "[T]his is what ye have shipped for, men! to chase that white whale" (MD, p. 166). What they all share is shame in a theological and cultural sense in the axiom of female transgression that is to be negated, endorsed in the embodiment of women/nature reciprocity in an ecofeminist sense as well.

In this sense, the exposition of Ahab's revenge is the extension of this cultural artistry composed of social gestures of male dominance, which brings Ishmael's own narrativization on par with Ahab's archetypal narrative of heroism. Ishmael admires Ahab as well as sharing his psychology. In this homosocial dynamism, cultural markers signify that Melville's exploration of the revenge theme maintains a configuration by seeking to neutralise the perceived threat of the white whale in a cultural context that labels women and nature as inherently malevolent. Just as we might expect, then, the white whale refers to a body in which "all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were personified" (MD, pp. 185-6), providing all of the crew members with an antithetical embodiment to inveigh against without a second thought. It denotes, in this respect, the evocation of how the female body is projected to the subject as evil as Eve in supremacist cosmology. The only way that can soothe the shame here, as Natanson pinpoints, is "a *retaliation* against the Other" (1973, p. 35; emphasis added).

The concept of retaliation, the generic effect of retribution that we see in the novel, results from the carnivalesque performances of both Eve and the whale, whose actions point out the resistance to subjugation as far as the sexual imbalance of the world picture is concerned. The case handled here is reminiscent of "Other-as-subject" (Sartre, 1978, p. 277). Sartre reminds us that existence is a symbiosis; the actions of transcendentality transpire in the sphere of the Other's subjectivity, which is epitomised in a single sentence: "[The whale]'s chasing me now; not I" (MD, p. 526). Sticking with the concept of Other as a subject, Ishmael narrates during the voyage that the white whale has capsized several ships, as recounted by a few encounters. Ahab, akin to a troubled mythic figure, becomes increasingly distressed, mirroring his escalating desire to master the whale in the aftermath of his shame. In this ontological fencing game, the white whale's touché becomes imperative to revoke the shame and reinforce the therapeutic action: "Inasmuch as the Other as the-Other-as-a-look […] the for-itself experiences itself as an object in the Universe beneath the Other's look. But […] soon […] the for-itself by surpassing the Other towards its

ends makes of him a transcendence-transcended" (Sartre, 1978, p. 520), which both maintains the idea of retaliation in the novel and thus configures Ahab's will to dismember his dismemberer.

The white whale's intricate entanglement with feminine qualities reinforces the masculine therapy enacted by Ahab. Adapting Stack and Band's approach, which handles sexual and metaphysical superiority together, we doctrinally understand that "[i]n this experience of shame" (1982, p. 370), Ahab foregrounds the pretext of oppression, including "sexual intentionality" (1982, p. 359) beneath the guise of his vengeance. What renders this idea's presence in the novel is the fact that over the course of the novel's linear structure, the reception of the white whale varies; her pronouns oscillate between he and she, the climax of which is reflected in Daggoo's shouting: "There she blows!—there she blows!" (MD, p. 510). This "magnified mouse" (MD, p. 125) that they all have been chasing for a long time now is held as a desideratum to equilibrate an androcentric pre-eminence over nature and gender disparity: "*Penetrating* further and further into the heart of […] [t]he long drawn virgin vales" (MD, p. 463; emphasis added). Nor, in any optimist sense here, does there open any other but Fleming's statement to conclude this paragraph about the constitutive conduct of actions endorsed with violence for the subject. Sartre, Fleming maintains,

is describing Man in a particular situation, a form of praxis, a specific act of re-creation that is only unfolding since alternative paths to re-creation and to reciprocity have been blocked. The endorsement of physical violence is firmly situated in a realist narrative of [retaliation] and is temporally limited […] to […] the general view that Man makes himself through action. (2001, p. 28)

The narrative of Fleming's point here is the illusion of creating a one-and-only nation for America. This is undeniably the narrative of male history in the author(ity) of Ishmael and Ahab's on a smooth white paper represented by the whale's albino skin. The clear cut is here: The more they write on it, the more her skin becomes scraped and tarnished.

SUPREMACIST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN MOBY DICK

Fleming's remark about violence remains relevant to gendered hermeneutics in the novel. Ishmael's one-sided narration not only affirms making oneself but also designates a transposition of self-knowledge to know the Other without permission, which is saturated in violence. Here, the inner negation

for the sake of freedom is superseded by external negation to the extent of Hegelian master-slave dialectics. Only in so far as Sartre's piece of work is concerned do we see that Sartre's negation is thoroughly exemplified within the framework of daily life since the pursuit of being a subject takes place in temporality for an active consciousness. Whether willingly or not, the first-oriented sensation in temporality becomes the gaze in the process of knowing.

The violence identified here lies in the subject's potential to see and know the Other without being reciprocally known, which is the first principle of voyeurism. Regardless of the Other's potential to disrupt the subject's equilibrium, as illustrated through Ahab's disturbingly vivid memory of the whale, the subject observes others without their consent and somehow asserts domination in the ocular agency. As for the sexual underside of this practice, Donovan observes that since the Other demonstrates participation in "being" only as an object, "women are cast into the role of en-soi [in-itself], while men take up the independent transcending position of the pour-soi [for-itself]" (2000, p. 136). In Donovan's formula, female bodies and consciousness are subject to the second-hand creation of the male gaze, whereas the first-hand originality of self-portrait resides with masculine dominance. Highlighting the masculine perspective on the physical construction of the female body, the biblical Adam's words are as follows: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2: 23, *Authorized King James Version*). The strict and unchanging biblical reminder is symbolically attached to Ahab's "despot eye" (MD, p. 500) as a male gaze in the continual process of male desire.

In its order of providing active self-constitution and Other-as-a-constituted-body, Ahab's "master eye" (MD, p. 130) befits the Sartrean notion of voyeuristic gaze and, in so doing, effaces any transgressive counter-play happening again by the white whale. The adventurous space of the novel is attributed to the metaphorical connotations grown into Sartre's analogy. We can interchangeably use this analogy between the ocean or sea and a shower in this regard: *What* is seen is possessed; to see is to deflower […] [T]he object is *ignorant of the investigations* […] It is unconscious of being known; it goes its business without noticing the glance which spies on it, like a woman whom a passerby catches unaware at her bath. (Sartre, 1978, pp. 577-8; emphasis added)

Here, the image of a woman could be easily superseded by the white whale.

The symbolic focalization of the male gaze is doctrinally attributed to each member of Pequod in general. Consider this time what Ishmael recounts in seeing the whale: "At length, the breathless hunter came so nigh his seemingly *unsuspecting prey*, that [her] entire dazzling hump was distinctly visible, sliding along the sea *as if an isolated thing*, and continually set in revolving ring of finest" (MD, p. 511; emphasis added). Despite being the target of both scopophilic and physical violence, the crucial element is the whale's unawareness of the gaze fixated upon her. Hence, the novel encapsulates a quintessential facet of deep male fantasy: Voyeurism. Unaware of the scrutiny, the whale remains "calm, enticing calm" (MD, p. 511) during the whole process until "Moby Dick move[s] on" (MD, p. 512). In so doing, the white whale's own "malicious intelligence" (MD, p. 513) undergoes a scopophilic butchery under the male gaze, succumbing to being a constituted subject. Of course, it points out a melting pot of broad concepts to deduce from, like whether the female body is entrapped in a panoptic male gaze or forced to be deprived of any intelligence for autonomy. On any scale, it is accosted by the crew in such ways, revelling in the oppressing masculinity alluded to by the novel.

In order to develop a further argument on the white whale's passive position, I will dedicate the following paragraphs to expounding on the analogy of the whale's skin as paper. After Ishmael makes a similar statement on the white whale's elusiveness bound to her complexion, he also opines after long pages of meditation: "But not have we solved the incantation of this whiteness, and learn why it appeals with such power to the soul" (MD, p. 196).

Ishmael's intellectual impasse could be answered through my paper-pen analogy construed in three ways formed gradually: First, that Eve has been banished from the domain of knowledge in the first place, thus rendering her deficient in knowledge's suggestive practices as well, i.e., writing, or claiming the author(ity) in her autonomy; secondly, backing on this biblical discourse, that the voiceless white whale with the baggage of Eve's incarnated aspects represents just as much deficiency for women in author(ity) in an altruistic gesture as in paper in its relation to pen; lastly, that knowledge has pertained to masculinity since then and hence manoeuvred into a Foucauldian insight of hegemonic power when utilized manipulatively. In this quasi-equality, when all cards seem to be laid out, feminine freedom in self-knowledge is confined to a deck of cards counting on the fingers of one hand, while the rest is preserved for manipulative tricks up the opponent's sleeve.

In order to answer Ishmael's questioning, this time explicitly, I must draw attention to Stokes, who coins a domineering practice entitled "the power of pen" on a page (2001, p. 2); he goes on meditating:

White supremacy is a fleshy ideology; it's very much about bodies. An obsession with skin color is only the most obvious manifestation of this. Put simply, for all its fascination with color, white supremacy is perhaps equally driven by its fascination with sex […] White female bodies become sexual territory to be displayed, fought over, and protected […] And white male bodies, for all their apparent visibility, depend on the bodies of others to feed the various systems that their invisibility maintains (2001, p. 133).

In this approach, the white skin is an ideological territory and a landscape. It promises abundant space for male sovereignty to write on, reifying authorship at play since the power of pen, as a personal observation, also turns into the power of ink by indelibly staining the surface.

By and large, "[i]mplicated in the same bodily/textual economics" (2001, p. 2), this quintessential practice is to be seen nowhere more conspicuously and readily than in the whale's white skin like a paper, laying a perfect ground for a palimpsestic structure. Either metonymically or metaphorically, Ishmael's author(ity) is affirmatively practiced through the cetological categorizations of the whale, justifying the sense of authorship affiliated with the whiteness: "Nothing but to take hold of the whales bodily, in their entire liberal volume, and boldly sort them that way" (MD, p. 144). Through the whale's anatomical peculiarities, the chains of Ishmael's words in recording the Cetology ensnare the whale, but the intention of authorship has been boded ill by Ishmael: "Dissect [her] how I may, then, I but go skin deep" (MD, p. 363) or "I have been blessed with an opportunity to dissect [her] in miniature" (MD, p. 426). The sheet of paper-like being, the whale, succumbs to being a wordless victim since "the whale has no voice" (MD, p. 357). The objectified body of hers grants Ishmael's author(ity) to conjure another preferential layer, going as far as describing her by choice as a "marbleized body" (MD, p. 512). This is all in the Cetology; easy to fathom, it is subject to Ishmael's supremacist narrativization in exchange for the whale's wordlessness. The clarity emerges as we recognise that knowledge and the written material about the oppressed body are found within the understanding of the oppressor, Ishmael; that is why, although what is written on the surface of the Cetology seems to be an informative dialogism with whales, the systematic value is maintained invisibly, making

it deformative diabolism inside. [10] In parallel with this idea, Sartre comes to the conclusion that the privileged state of knowing things is another form of sexual caress: "Knowledge is at one hand and the same time a penetration and a superficial caress, a digestion and the contemplation from afar of an object" (1978, pp. 579-80). It is violence, both subtle and explicit, that has been overlooked since the novel's publication.

Most of the time, just because for-itself aims at the future-oriented self, especially when we consider Sartre's Existentialism in a political stance, it befits the most crucial extension of progress, that is, American expansionism, whose inimical underside is dominant masculinity as exemplified above. This entanglement is symbolically woven into the Pequod's "imperial beak" as a phallic symbol (MD, p. 535) penetrating through the masterless ocean in order to ideologically superintend "some violent, ungovernable, unintelligent" (MD, p. 455) women. The need for further exploration seems to be in vain when Ishmael's description of nature as a female in "Schools & Schoolmasters" is considered, which equally hovers around the sea that is described as a tigress in "Brit." If the last feminine resonance occurs in the calm atmosphere of "The Symphony" just before the trio of chases, it is, without a doubt, the symphony of nineteenth-century American whalemen who put heart into proving their independence as American Adams. Then, as the calm gives way to the storm, "[t]hey [become] one man" (MD, p. 519), compiling the national identity on the axis of masculinity. That is the cliché way of making oneself at the expense of femininity, be it national or ideological.

BAD FAITH: MELVILLE'S CRITICISM OF EXPANSIONISM

Delving deep into Moby Dick is reminiscent of opening up a superbly crafted Pandora's box, unexpectable and sharp in its cultural insights. To Lawrence (2009), the relentless triumphalism in America's ebullient expansion in the nineteenth century is also accompanied by anxiety about multicultural national identity; therefore, the mainstay of Melville's writing, by all means, stirs the same concern, so much so that Melville "interweaves counter-imperial, dissenting rhetorics into [his] narratives" (p. 61). I intend

[10] To understand further the relationship between information and deformation, see Han, B.- C. (2018). Topology of Violence (London: MIT Press), where Han adapts Nietzsche's idea of communicating oneself as "extending one's violence over the Other" (as cited in Han, p. 104). Therefore, Han pinpoints that communicative language is doctrinally a means of violence: "The subject and object of a sentence behave in relationship to each other like master and slave" (2018, p. 104). Therefore, Ishmael's seemingly communicative language in mapping out the whale's anatomical parts is a part of narratological violence since the whale is the object for which each syntactic declension and inflexion are darted.

to use the Sartean way of seeing the past as a conceptual form to demystify Melville's ventriloquism in Moby Dick, pivoting on Ahab's demonic and troubled psyche.

Alongside the imperialist outlook on androcentrism, Melville also makes a point of his criticism about that idea digressing through extra-textual materials, like Ahab's formative past that influences the present. Melville's approach is distinctive, compelling readers to scrutinise not only the current plot but also the underlying motivations rooted in Ahab's mnemonic experiences in the story. This is particularly obvious in his relentless pursuit of the whale following the loss of his leg. This aspect, though situated in the obvious past, assumes paramount significance as it continues to shape Ahab's actions. Then, the question is: is it not falling short of the idea of progress, as in Sartre's for-itself that changes himself ad infinitum in the prospect of the future? In a peculiar sense, it is. Therefore, Melville offers an accurate description of his disfavour of such practices in the spirit of progressive expansionism, both culturally and metaphysically, by referring to a personal and ideological cul-de-sac, that is, the past.

Sartre stands out from any existentialist philosopher by bringing forth an ideal unity of past, present, and future with his relevant perception of freedom. According to this trio, the subject is in the midst of being formed by their already and not yet at the same time. This being is in the present, which "is a presence to being, and such it is not" (1978, p. 208) with its continual flow into the future. In this process of extension towards the future, however, the "instrument of apprehension […] is the Past – that is, as that which no longer" (1978, p. 208) in the principle of causality. Therefore, the past is clearly a temporal collage "without any operation [towards the future]. [I] t is a recollection" (1978, p. 205). Therefore, "it is in-itself by virtue of transcendence" (1978, p. 205). Still, it is a crucial formative element for the subject.

To clarify the complexity here, Sartre opines that "[m]y past is past in the world, belonging to the totality of past being […] which I flee" (1978, p. 208). It is or should be a mere departure point for a transcendental subject since it is unchangeable. Yet, the matter is redefinition with choices anchored towards the future. Even though the past seems pressing, "by action I decide its meaning" (1978, p. 498). Through the actions that the subject chooses to do, "the past is thus created" (1978, p. 500). It is not problematic when we consider it the way Sartre does: The experience in the past loses

its value when we attribute different meanings to it, especially when we claim new perspectives in our free living, that is, for-itself. Remembering Sartre's laconic description of such a state of existence: Not being what it is and being what it is not. By doing so, it seems evident that the past is thus created or redefined to some extent. This granted mental possibility is what we could call freedom; it is in progress both in mentality and actions under the banner of free existence.

In the novel, however, Ahab's actions unfold predictably, driven more by the weight of his past than by the transcendental interplay suggested earlier. Epitomising Sartre's "a limit-of-potentiality" (1978, p. 206), Ahab is consumed by what could have been better, not what he wants to do. Ishmael articulates: "[M]emory shot her crystals as the clear ice most forms of noiseless twilights. And all these subtle agencies, more and more they wrought on Ahab's texture" (MD, p. 132). This ongoing absurd feud to kill the whale, affecting the present, renders Ahab blind to the endless potential of the future: "He seemed ready to sacrifice all mortal interests to that one passion" (MD, p. 211; emphasis added). Despite his formal bodily frame flexing into the future with each whale to kill, he has been trapped somewhere that could be pinpointed amidst the past and now, thanks to his dour experience with the whale. All in all, Ahab fails to invest in the future, as for-itself must do. In simple terms, he is blind.

Hence, what is left as cultural criticism within its metanarrative? First of all, Ahab's psyche pertains to not a post- but rather a pre-lapsarian state of mind, carrying the troublesome thoughts after God's punishment in the form of his mutilated leg. Ahab's mental orientation looks backwards, zooming in on the very moment of his punishment. It is prosaic and inept at the core of mental delimitation, which predisposes Ahab's actions.

Second of all, additionally, Ahab has overtly fallen into the world of mauvaise foi (bad faith) from the very onset of the novel. Expounding on this, Ahab's myopic agency does not fit in with the notion of American Adam looking towards the future with the hope of making himself. In fact, the nostalgia remains significant for Ahab, who is entrapped in a self-consuming knit, like Sisyphus, called the past that he fails to untie.

This two-fold biblical inscription is not only etched on Ahab's memory throughout the novel but also insinuates the progressive ideal's hollowness or its overlapping regression. Clearly, Ahab's mutilated leg does not meet

the criteria for transcendental progress. In the novel, as we follow Pequod's misbalance through the waves, the inert absurdity of the quest piles on top of one another. The description of the experience is as follows in Ishmael's words: "The prospect was unlimited, but exceedingly monotonous and forbidding; not the slightest variety that I could see" (MD, p. 86). Then, what is thought to be a continual process on the surface is a stagnant point in reality. The illusion of progressive ideals, in Melville's idea, does not go beyond a brick wall of looping around.

Moreover, even if Ahab uses a replica to cure this parasitic error in the ideological lacuna, it is an artificial leg crafted from ivory. Melville's ideology shows itself when I adopt Joseph Conrad's approach towards ivory as emblematic of imperialist power in Heart of Darkness into the argument, unfolding that ivory is corrupted inside regardless of its shiny exterior. Besides, it is worth mentioning that in the last confrontation, Ahab's ivory leg becomes chopped off by the whale again. Despite Ahab's motives to oppress the whale, Melville explicitly reduces the oppressor and the oppressed alike. [11] This is another form of the Horror! the Horror! It is a mere cultural criticism, acknowledging that the asinine idea of progress with all the connotations of imperialism is destined to come to a deadlock – eventually. After all, "t's an ill voyage" that Melville writes down, "ill begun, ill continued" (MD, p. 478).

CONCLUSION

As this analysis illustrates, Melville's masterful work, Moby Dick, unveils various facets of the American Adam, an entity in the process of self-creation on Earth after the fall. Initially, this concept manifests in the novel as the fictional creation of an ideal nation through Ahab, who serves as a biblical embodiment. In a symbiotic unity of the microcosm and macrocosm, Ahab's self-creation narrative is overlaid onto America's expansionist and imperialist pursuits in the nineteenth century, as the nation sought to establish its post-independence from England or, metaphorically, God.

However, the implications of this analogy deviate from its seemingly innocent application due to the underbelly of expansionism, specifically the embodiment of masculine ideals. The narrative of expansionism in the novel, symbolized by the hunting quest, metaphorically aligns with a

[11] It is related to Sartre's notion called boomerang reading in his preface for Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth (1961), meaning that actions that we are responsible for are coming back in the exact form that we launched them.

masculine impulse to subjugate the female nature, embodied by Ahab and the whale, respectively. This process of self-making, therefore, resonates with Sartre's notion that "man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself," encompassing various manifestations of oppressing the feminine Other through male desire. Consequently, the broader narrative of the novel, characterised by masculine ideals, not only shapes the vision of an ideal community but also underlines the pervasive theme of female oppression embedded in the androcentric quest of hunting.

Nonetheless, within a world where everything solid seems to melt into thin air, Ahab's demise, portrayed as Melville's repudiation of progressive imperialism, reveals the flip side of the ever-evolving quest to subdue the whale. This compelling argument contends that both Adam and Eve share an equal set of rights in philosophical and ideological senses.

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