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INDIVIDUALISM AND THE PURSUIT OF THE UNCONSCIOUS IN MELVILLE AND CONRAD

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To those rare creatures who do not
accept coercion, nor authoritarianism,
nor tyranny — those rare samples of
the human race who never bow their
heads and backbones.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is the result of the analysis of the novels Billy Budd, Sailor and Moby-Dick, by the American author Herman Melville; and The Nigger of the "Nascissus" and Heart of Darkness, by the Polish-English author Joseph Conrad.

All these four novels have the waters as their setting: Heart of Darkness is a strange adventure up the Congo River, and the other three are sea adventures. However, they are not mere adventures. They are symbolic trips that stand for a plunge of the individual into his own interior. That is the main study of this dissertation: the motif of the "journey within," the journey the individual has to make in his own interior in order to awaken his unconscious. It is the quest for knowledge that here is examined in the light of the Eastern concept of "illumination," and also in the light of psychology — especially the studies that Carl Gustav Jung made on the subject.

As this quest for knowledge is a quest of the individual, the problem of how these two authors treat the theme of individualism is also examined in depth here. My aim is to demonstrate that, in addition to many critics' tendency to classify these authors' position simply as conservative or liberal in these works, in terms of individualism, it must be considered (and that is very important) their being also pessimistic or optimistic. So Melville's Billy Budd, Sailor and Conrad's The Nigger of the "Nascissuss" are contrasted with Moby-Dick and Heart of Darkness. In the first pair of novels, the possibility of the individual's finding his own way and asserting his individuality is seen by the authors in a pessimistic light, whereas in the second pair, this is seen optimistically — but in

both pairs of novels the authors' position is liberal, that is to say, they praise individualism and criticize a system that represses the individual's self-assertion.

Besides the psychologist, a philosopher too is examined in this dissertation: Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche. There are similarities between the quest for "illumination" and the quest for the "superman." In both cases there is a "journey within," the awakening of the unconscious (or the encounter with "the double"), the recognition and integration of evil, the transcendence, and the return. But the similarities go only to a certain extent, for, in Nietzsche's "superman" another characteristic is added: power. So the two philosophies are not only compared here, but contrasted as well.

All the four novels examined here contain the motif of the "journey within," but only the two optimistic ones contain the motif of the "superman," since the "superman" can only sprout in a context where individualism is not repressed — from without and especially from within.

RESUMO

Esta dissertação é o resultado da análise das novelas Billy Budd, Sailor e Moby-Dick, do autor americano Herman Melville, e de The Nigger of the "Nascissus" e Heart of Darkness, do autor polônio-inglês Joseph Conrad.

Todas essas quatro novelas têm as águas como seu cenário: Heart of Darkness é uma estranha aventura rio Congo acima e as outras três são aventuras no mar. Contudo, elas não são meras aventuras. Elas são viagens simbólicas que correspondem a um mergulho do indivíduo no seu próprio interior. Este é o principal estudo desta dissertação: o tema da "viagem ao interior," uma viagem que o indivíduo tem que fazer ao seu próprio interior de modo a despertar o seu inconsciente, é uma busca do conhecimento que aqui é examinada à luz do conceito oriental da "iluminação" e também à luz da psicologia — especialmente os estudos que Carl Gustav Jung fez sobre o assunto.

Como essa busca do conhecimento é uma busca feita pelo indivíduo, a questão de como esses autores tratam o tema do individualismo também é examinada em profundidade aqui. O meu objetivo é demonstrar que, somando-se ã tendência de muitos críticos em classificar a posição desses autores simplesmente como conservadora ou liberal nesses trabalhos, em termos de individualismo, deve ser considerado (e isto é muito importante) o fato deles serem também pessimistas ou otimistas. Então Billy Budd, Sailor do Melville e The Nigger of the "Nascissus" do Conrad são contrastados com Moby-Dick e Heart of Darkness. No primeiro par de novelas, a possibilidade do indivíduo encontrar o seu próprio caminho e afirmar a sua individualidade é vista pelos autores sob uma luz pessimista, enquanto que no segundo par,

isto é visto otimisticamente — mas em ambos os pares de novelas a posição dos autores é liberal, isto é, eles louvam o individualismo e criticam um sistema que reprime a auto-afirmação individual.

Além do psicólogo, um filósofo também é examinado nesta dissertação: Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche. Existem similaridades entre a busca da "iluminação" e a busca do "super-homem." Em ambos os casos, há uma viagem ao interior, o despertar do inconsciente (ou o encontro com "o sósia"), o reconhecimento e integração do mal, a transcendência e o retorno, mas as similaridades vão somente até um certo ponto, porque no "super-homem" de Nietzsche uma outra característica é acrescentada: o poder. Então as duas filosofias são não somente comparadas aqui, mas contrastadas também.

Todas as quatro novelas examinadas aqui contêm o tema da "viagem ao interior," mas somente Moby-Dick e Heart of Darkness contêm o tema do "super-homem," porque o "super-homem" só pode surgir num contexto onde o individualismo não é reprimido — de fora e especialmente de dentro.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM 1

REVIEW OF CRITICISM 5

1. The Critics View Billy Budd and The Nigger of the "Nascissus" 5

2. The Critics View Moby-Dick and Heart of Darkness 20

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 36

Notes on Chapter One 39

CHAPTER II

WESTERN AND EASTERN CONCEPTS 43

Notes on Chapter Two 60

CHAPTER III

THE REPRESSION OF INDIVIDUALISM 62

1. Billy Budd - Psychological and Social Implications ... 62

2. James Wait - Psychological and Political Implications. 83

3. *De profundis* 116

Notes on Chapter Three 122

CHAPTER IV

THE HERO AND THE HEROIC QUEST 123

Notes on Chapter Four 141

CHAPTER V

THE ASSERTION OF INDIVIDUALISM 143

1. Whiteness 143

2. Darkness 164

3. Sowers and Seeds - *Homo novus* 195

Notes on Chapter Five 201

CHAPTER VI

THE NARRATIVE AND THE AUTHORS' VIEWPOINT 203

Notes on Chapter Six 215

CONCLUSION 216

Notes on the Conclusion 221

GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY 222

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

If we examine Melville's and Conrad's letters, we can see that many times they sound rather Nietzschean — as, for instance, when they utter their opinions concerning the idea and ideals of democracy, or when they talk about individualism, or when they state the supremacy of feelings over plain intellect (like Melville writing "I stand for the heart. To the dogs with the head.")

Many people tend to see Nietzsche as a conservative philosopher, and nothing, I think, is farther from the truth. I agree that Nietzsche can be seen as politically conservative if you see liberalism as synonymous with socialism — Nietzsche regarded the socialists with an Olympic disdain —, but, in terms of individualism pure and simple, he was more liberal than most philosophers. Due to this praise of the individual, he came to dislike democracy also, because one of the democratic ideals is that all men are equal — Nietzsche could not see how individualism could be conciliated with equality: if everybody were equal, then there could be no individuality, but uniformity. In terms of his being against the exarcebated rationalism of his

time (and ours), Melville and Conrad could be compared to Nietzsche. In his The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche says about the poet:

> We talk so abstractly about poetry because all of us are usually bad poets. At bottom, the aesthetic phenomenon is simple: let anyone have the ability to behold continually a vivid play and to live constantly surrounded by hosts of spirits, and he will be a poet[1].

The philosopher for him, like his superman, must step beyond his own time, and experience the sensations of timelessness.

> What does the philosopher demand of himself first and last? To overcome his time in himself, to become "timeless". With what must he therefore engage in the hardest combat? With whatever marks him as the child of his time[2].

Individualism is Nietzsche's main concern: the realization in the individual of the tremendous power he has inside himself, and the consequent awakening of that power. The individual must get away from the mass, from the conformity of the mass. Nietzsche glorifies what is noble — the individual.

> Noble morality, master morality, conversely, is rooted in a triumphant Yes said to oneself — it is self-affirmation, self-glorification of life[3].

The great fear of people in relation to Nietzsche is because they tend to link him with Adolf Hitler, but that is a horrible mistake. Hitler, in order to show that he had aesthetic taste, listened to Wagner, and in order to show that he had ideas, and in an attempt to justify those ideas, quoted Nietzsche. However, Hitler's ideas are not justified in Nietzsche, on the contrary. Nietzsche never preached the racial supremacy of Arians or whatever; he did not believe in an aristocracy by birth, but in an aristocracy of the mind — and that would eliminate all of Hitler's followers, including Hitler himself. Hitler used

Nietzsche to attain his purposes; and to condemn Nietzsche for having been "adopted" by Hitler would be the same as to condemn Christ for all the bad use the Church has made of him for two thousand years — vide the Crusades, the Inquisition, Jesuitism, etc. The Crusades were actually nothing else than looting masked by the pretence of the "propagation of faith". The Inquisition showed nothing more than ignorance, superstition, and fear on the part of the Inquisitors; and, besides, under the pretence of fighting witchraft, the Church accused many rich families of this "crime" and condemned them to the bonfire, so that the priests and bishops could confiscate their wealth. And Jesuitism is no less indecent than the other two. The "work" the Jesuits and missionaries perpetrated (and they still do that!) on the so-called "savage" or "heathen" communities is something absolutely hideous. They go to the jungle, for example, take perfectly happy and proud and courageous men, and teach them that they are wicked and that they live "in sin". So they stuff these formerly proud men with a mighty guilt-complex that starts to gnaw at their souls and ends up by bending their backbones. They also teach them that the white man's way of living is the best and the right one, and that they, the natives, are ignorant, and that they must be integrated in civilization. The missionaries are able to transform those formerly proud men into trash, under the pretence of "integrating" them in society. But what actually happens is that the natives are not accepted in the white man's society, and they can no longer go back to their roots, to their old way of living, and so they end up acquiring, instead of the white man's virtues (if any), the white man's vices. As an aftermath, many of these formerly dignified men end up drunk in the gutters or by the sides of the roads, and their women become prostitutes — both, things that the natives did not know before — and that is "integration" enough for the so-called

missionaries. Considering those natives as "ungodly", wild, and savages, like animals, these pious, godly missionaries propose to "tame" them into "good Christians". In his Twilight of the Idols, Nietzsche says that

> To call the taming of an animal its "improvement" sounds almost like a joke to our ears. Whoever knows what goes on in menageries doubts that the beasts are "improved" there. They are weakened, they are made less harmful, and through the depressive effect of fear, through pain, through wounds, and through hunger they become sickly beasts. It is no different with the tamed man whom the priest has "improved"[4].

Some critics (as we will see in the Review of Criticism) tend to see in Conrad the prototype of the Victorian ethic, especially concerning the ethic of work, of duty, but Conrad's Marlow criticizes bitterly this "duty" when he finds it in Africa as a disguise for looting and exploitation of the natives. Marlow has a sense of duty, but his is a personal duty and not an impersonal one imposed by society. Nietzsche too has something to say about this subject of duty. In his The Antichrist, he says,

> Nothing ruins us more profoundly, more intimately, than every "impersonal" duty, every sacrifice to the Maloch of abstraction[5].

And he adds,

> What could destroy us more quickly than working, thinking, and feeling without any inner necessity, without any deeply personal choice, without pleasure — as an automaton of duty?[6]

There are many deeply traced parallels between Nietzsche and these two authors I analyze here. Some critics are able to notice this, but many are not.

In Moby-Dick and in Heart of Darkness we have the figure of the hero, who, in Nietzsche's terms is the "superman" (at least a potential "superman"). There is, however, a difference between

the quest of the "superman" — which is a thoroughly Western hero — and the quest for "illumination" — which is an Eastern idea before anything.

The problem to be examined here is to determine how to conciliate these two concepts — with the reserves that, of course, will have to be taken in consideration.

REVIEW OF CRITICISM

1. The Critics View Billy Budd, Sailor and The Nigger of the "Nascissus"

The critics' opinions about Billy Budd vary widely from a theory of "Acceptance" to a theory of "Resistance". In the first case, E.L. Grant Watson affirms that Melville changed from a rebel into a conformist.

> Melville is no longer a rebel. It should be noted that Billy Budd has not, even under the severest provocation, any element of rebellion in him; he is too free a soul to need a quality which is a virtue only in slaves. His nature spontaneously accepts whatever may befall. When impressed from the merchant-ship, the "Rights of Man," he makes no demur to the visiting lieutenant's order to get ready his things for trans-shipment. The crew of the merchant-ship are surprised and reproachful at his uncomplaining acquiescence. Once aboard the battleship, the young sailor begins to look around for the advantages of chance and adventure. Such simple power to accept gives him buoyancy to override troubles and irritations which would check inferior natures[1].

Watson clearly takes Captain Vere for a spokesman of the author, and he concludes that if the first is submissive to the system, the latter must be that way too.

> And not only Billy Budd is marked by this supreme quality of acceptance. Captain Vere, also, possesses it, but with full conscience, and weighed with the responsibility of understanding the natural naturalness of man's volition and the unnatural naturalness of the law[2].

It is interesting that even a sacred-cow like Matthiessen suggests that Melville came to an attitude of acceptance, which is totally wrong.

> No longer does Melville feel the fear and deslike of Jehovah that were oppressing him through Moby-Dick and Pierre. He is no longer protesting against the determined laws as being savagely inexorable. He has come to respect necessity[3].

On the other hand, in his essay "Billy Budd: Testament of Resistance", Phil Within tries to nullify all of Watson's hypothesis, and affirms the very opposite. He refutes the argument of acceptance by appealing to the logic of the implications that would follow as an aftermath of that argument, and by pointing out the fact that Melville dedicated the book to Jack Chase, the real person who inspired him to create a novel that is a protest against impressment — White Jacket.

> A logical extension of this argument is that man should abdicate responsibility for unjust law and enforce it mechanically. Man should not try to chance that which is wrong, but merely accept injustice and tyranny and lie supinely beneath them; man is to stand by and watch the innocent as indiscriminately ground under the heel of unresisted law as are the evil.
>
> Melville makes his opposition to this view clear by dedicating the book to Jack Chase, his companion years before on the frigate "United States". It was this voyage that became the story of "White-Jacket", the novel that cried out so eloquently against impressment, flogging, the captain's tyranny. Jack Chase is here mentioned by name and is referred to as "a stickler for the Rights of Man and the liberties of the world." It would be ironic indeed to dedicate Billy Budd to such a man if the novel was devoted to submission[4].

Within objects to the point of view that Billy is submissive at all, and suggests that his last words ("God bless Captain Vere")

should be taken as an ironical remark.

> If the episode is taken ironically, then it fits the rest of the story as so far interpreted and acquires tremendous power. For Billy is willing to die as Isaac or as Christ was willing; he accepts all the captain's arguments, but it is Billy alone who is noble. The captain suffers and wishes he could avoid this duty, but he has no nobility and above all no trust in man. Yet Billy's very acceptance of his role is the evidence that proves man can be trusted, that man can rise above the need for forms[5].

The obvious implication here would be that Billy knows he is dying unjustly and, knowing that, he suggests with his remark that Captain Vere is in reality his torturer. Now, the problem that I see here — besides the obvious fact that Christ was willing to die for something that he believed — is that Melville himself calls our attention to the fact that Billy is a totally instinctive being who lacks intelligence, so it would be impossible for a person like that to make use of irony which is a totally intellectual device. William Braswell too points that out in his essay "Melville's BILLY BUDD as 'An Inside Narrative'". He says,

> His final words, uttered just before his execution, are, "God bless Captain Vere". It has been suggested that this remark is ironical, but Billy, we are explicitly told, is incapable of conscious irony, and nobody has yet presented convincing argument that Melville meant the remark to be taken so[6].

It is interesting that Within himself is aware of that and he uses this very argument of Billy's incapacity to think to contradict the theory of acceptance.

> Again, would it not be contradictory for Melville to represent Billy as inarticulate, nonthinking, naive, emotionally adolescent, and morally undeveloped, and then expect the reader to accept his cry, "God bless Captain Vere," as indicative of full understanding, instinctive or otherwise?[7]

And he concludes, "Thus, Billy's cry, 'God bless Captain Vere,'

is the crowning irony and really the climax of the story, for he was hanged unjustly"[8]. As we see, the man contradicts himself.

The fact is that Billy blessing Captain Vere indicates no irony, but an obvious submission. And that submission Vere managed to obtain in the private interview he had with the sailor in a locked cabin. We never know the exact gist of the conversation that takes place inside the cabin between the captain and his foretopman, but it seems that Vere managed to convince Billy that the latter would sacrifice himself for a noble cause, that is, the prevention of mutiny in the King's ship.

Withim gives as proof of Vere's unsuitability as a hero, the following argument:

> Observe that Vere dies drugged and on shore before he has "attained to the fullness of fame". In other words, Vere's end is suitable to one who did not deserve such renown as the daring and imprudent Nelson, a man capable, as Vere is not, of inspiring his men to loyalty, or substituting persuasion for coercion[9].

But "fame" cannot be taken as a proof that a person is right or just in his attitudes, since fame is something very relative. Stalin too became famous, and so did Pinochet... Melville uses other devices to show that Vere is no hero, especially by the trick he plays concerning the reporter's reference to Dr Johnson's famous sentence about scoundrels and patriotism.

Withim ends up by emphasizing again Billy's "heroic" death as contrasted with Vere's conservative attitude.

> Another contradiction inherent in the "acceptance" theory lies in Melville's argument that barbarians with their instincts and warm hearts have sounder values than civilized men with their intricate intellects and their rabied hearts. Would it not be contradictory for Melville to suggest this not once, but twice, and then have Vere, Melville's foremost spokesman, weave a complex intellectual argument? Would it not be contradictory for Melville to have Billy die bravely, crying "God bless Captain Vere", and then have Vere say directly that mankind is a denizen of the forest

> and must be controlled by form and routine?[10]

But, as I have already pointed out, Billy's death has nothing really heroic in it, and one more proof is given by Withim himself at the end of this last quotation, "and then have Vere say directly that mankind is a denizen of the forest and must be controlled by form and routine." Vere is very sure of that, and that is because he has really convinced Billy, during the mysterious intercourse in the locked cabin. And that "form and routine" is then extended to the whole crew, for, immediately after Billy's execution, orders are given to bring the men back to the normality of the ship's routine.

Wendell Glick, in his essay "Expediency and Absolute Morality in Billy Budd," comes up with interesting arguments, but he too makes Melville's Vere's position.

> But he agreed with the Captain that justice to the individual is not the ultimate loyalty in a complex culture; the stability of the culture has the higher claim, and when the two conflict, justice to the individual must be abrogated to keep the order of society intact[11].

But Melville is not advocating this philosophy at all, because he is always bitterly critical of Captain Vere. And the critic tries to show Vere as a heroic person who has to do things against his will for the sake of the community.

> No price was too great to pay to keep such unhinging forces of anarchy in check; in giving his life to destroy the "Athéiste," Captain Vere sacrificed himself in defense of the sine qua non of civilized existence and in opposition to the false, unworkable doctrines of the French Revolution. The triumph of the "Indomitable" over the "Athéiste" was the triumph of order over chaos[12].

The problem is that Vere does not sacrifice himself, but Billy. Vere's death takes place ashore, later on. Billy is the one who is sacrificed for the stability of society.

However, Glick manages to save his essay by saying something rather interesting:

> Social stability based upon expediency is paid for also with a general blighting, human mediocrity. The standards of any civilized society are the standards of the great mass of men who make up its bulk; and when maintenance of the stability of society becomes the supreme obligation of every person, the result is a levelling of the superior persons down to the level of the mass. The chief personal virtue becomes "prudence;" the end most worth seeking for becomes "that manufacturable thing known as respectability," so often allied with "moral obliquities," and occasionally, as in the case of Claggart, indistinguishable even from "natural depravity". "Civilization," Melville remarks categorically, "especially of the austerer sort, is auspicious" to natural depravity because natural depravity "folds itself in the mantle of respectability" by avoiding "vices or small sins" and by refraining from all excesses; in short, by exhibiting the prudence which is the only virtue society demands. ... Prudence, while being the mark of the socially adjusted man who rigidly adheres to the utilitarian principle of expediency, may also be the last refuge of scoundrels[13].

Now, how is it possible that, seeing all this, and knowing that Melville also saw it, this critic associates Melville with Vere? Here is his contradiction. If he himself recognizes that Melville's position towards civilization and the social fabric is such, he should never try to link Melville's position with that of Captain Vere. The critic poses the following question:

> A society which elevated prudence above all other virtues seemed to be anathema to the sort of moral adventuresomeness which Melville loved, and which for him set the great man off from the mediocre one. Yet such a society seemed to be the only sort which could safeguard men from the perils of "irrational combustion" which followed hard upon an idealism permitted to run its free course unrestrained. Here lay a crucial dilemma: was the race doomed to accept mediocrity as the price of its self-preservation, or was it still possible in a complex society for great private virtues to generate and grow?[14]

Carl Gustav Jung has said that,

> Society, by automatically stressing all the collective qualities in its individual representatives, puts a premium on mediocrity, on everything that settles down to vegetate in an easy, irresponsible way. Individuality

> will inevitably be driven to the wall[15].

As we see, Jung's answer seems to be <u>No</u>. But the critic himself provides the answer in relation to Melville's position.

> The question naturally arises whether Melville intended the digression on Nelson to illuminate the final scene of the novel. Might the answer be that the hanging of Billy Budd is Melville's final commentary upon the theme of the impracticability of absolute standards in a world necessarily ruled by expediency? Billy's noble devotion to absolute justice and right throughout the novel made him a sort of personification of the moral law; his death must have meant for Melville, consequently, that the standard of behavior to which Billy gave his allegiance, though a noble one, is simply unworkable when applied to complex social relationships[16].

The conclusion that I draw from this last quotation is the same that I myself would come to, that Melville is not conservative, in terms of individualism, in his position in <u>Billy Budd</u>, but simply pessimistic. Pessimistic in relation to the fight of the individual for self-assertion in a society dominated by form. Nevertheless, the author <u>is</u> liberal since he disapproves of Vere's attitude throughout.

In "The Unit of <u>Billy Budd</u>," Ray B. West, Jr. attempts to trace a parallel between Billy's story and that of Christ. He contrasts the "Rights of Man" with the "Indomitable" by stating that

> The "Indomitable" is ruled by a concept of absolute order imposed by authority and depending upon fealty to the source of legislated power. Historically, however, it is the distinction between primitive society (which, of course, Melville knew well and at first hand) and the era of what he called "citified man." Theologically, it is the contrast of pagan and Christian order[17].

In my view, this order is not exactly Christian, but Mosaic. The critic goes on and says:

> The religious level is primary during the period of Billy's execution for technical mutiny and the

> crucifixion have been commonly seen. Christ's godlike innocence is mirrowed in Billy's natural innocence; Christ's agony in submitting to the Will of Heaven is Billy's submission to the authority of Captain Vere. Captain Vere's exclamation following the death of Claggart (the naturally depraved) by the hand of Billy — "Struck dead by an angel of God. Yet the Angel must hang!" — reflects the paradox of atonement by which Christ suffered the agony of death in order to release mankind from the bondage of evil[18].

Things are not exactly like that. Christ's submission to death cannot be compared to that of Billy. Christ did not submit to death to preserve the social order — his death was meant to subvert that order, to change man's mentality —, whereas Billy's death is meant to maintain the social order, to preserve the status quo. Both are submissions to death, but the purposes are widely different.

The critic pushes still further this Billy/Christ parallel,

> The question I take it Melville is raising here is this: If the King's authority is gone, and Nature's, what then supports us? Billy dies for his impulsive act with a prayer for Captain Vere (vir — man) upon his lips. A little later the "Indomitable" meets the French warship "Athéiste" (formerly the King's ship, the "St. Louis") and engages her. The "Indomitable" survives the engagement, sinking the "Athéiste", but Captain Vere, who is also the old god, perhaps even the father of Billy, dies with Billy's name upon his lips, not, as Melville says, "in accents of remorse," but as though transferring his authority to his son: Billy the Son of God and the Son of Man; God become Man and Man become God[19].

But here we face a serious problem: this transferring of authority from father to son does not work, since Billy is dead. The story ends with no heir. There is no individual at the end to take up the prophet's rod, and so the critic's argument is invalidated.

Other critics, such as Nathalia Wright ("Melville's Use of the Bible"), come up with this Billy/Christ parallel. She not only does that, but makes still another parallel with the story of Abraham and Isaac; but her parallel cannot be pushed far without

coming to a *cul-de-sac*, and she herself recognizes that.

> The figure is moving, but the parallel can be carried no further. For Isaac did not die. Even waiving the fact that his near sacrifice is a deliberate scheme of the Old Testament Jehovah, the obedience of Isaac and of Billy Budd are two different things. Isaac was not taken into Abraham's confidence any more than Abraham was taken into Jehovah's. All is blind obedience, dependent on a jealous and capricious deity[20].

Since we are talking about "going too far," some critics really do that. Some absurdities can be found in examining criticism. As for example, Richard Chase's "Billy Budd, Antigone, and The Winter's Tale." The critic says,

> And so we are enabled to feel that Billy Budd, though not quite successful as tragic drama, remains myth. In this respect, its kinship is with the late plays of Shakespeare and with the New Testament, in its affirmation that out of the death aflicted by nature and society there issues new life[21].

I cannot possibly agree with that. With the mere creation of a legend it does not mean that "there issues new life." For that, it is required that some change of values and behavior should appear, since "new life" means a rebirth, and a rebirth implies the acquisition of new values and not the perpetuation of the old ones. As I have said, Billy Budd leaves no heir. With his death everything goes back to "normal," that is, the repression of individuality. It is different from Moby-Dick and Heart of Darkness where we have an Ishmael and a Marlow as the heirs of the supermen, the continuation of the cult of individuality, and, in that case, "there issues new life." This heritage is missing in Billy Budd (as well as in The Nigger of the "Nascissus."). The critic closes saying that

> Claggart's death is sudden and final. Captain Vere dies without having achieved the fame that might otherwise have come to him. But "the fresh young image of the Handsome Sailor" lives on in the heart of men[22].

Yes, but there is no change of behavior, there has been no deep effect in the men, there is no nominal heir.

There are gross absurdities. In an essay entitled "Billy and Oedipus," two critics, Herbert Weisinger and Adrien J. Jaffe, say the following:

> Like Oedipus,Budd must suffer for the commission of a crime he did not intend to commit and which was, moreover, forced upon him. And like Oedipus, Billy Budd recognizes at the end the justice of Vere's decision and calls out before his death, "God bless you, [sic] Captain Vere," for without this understanding on Budd's part the tragedy would have no more meaning than if Othello had died without discovering that Desdemona was in fact innocent of adultery with Cassio. Thus the moral order, as in Greek tragedy, is questioned as the human being is pulled toward acquitting Billy Budd, and then in Vere's decision it is again reafirmed and strengthened as we know that divine law still prevails on earth and that everything is in its proper place. It is a harsh and difficult acceptance that we must make, one that goes against every fiver of our human feeling, but it is of the very nature of the problem that this should be the way it is[23].

Well, *ad introitum*, there is no way of comparing Billy to Oedipus — it makes no sense. Besides the fact that Oedipus had a privileged mind (the decipherer of enigmas) and Billy is totally ignorant and naive, there is the fact that Oedipus committed a sin or a crime (even trying his best to avoid committing it), whereas Billy, as a matter of fact, does nothing wrong (naturally), except react in self-defence (which is natural). There is also the fact that Oedipus's punishment was self-inflicted, whereas, in Billy's case, it is imposed by an external authority. Another "heresy" these critics commit is their absurd comparison of Billy to Othello. If they compare Billy to Othello, they are, of course, comparing Claggart to Desdemona, and that is ridiculous, since Desdemona was notably innocent (ergo, Othello was guilty), but Claggart is certainly guilty (ergo, Billy is innocent). The end of the quotation (the parts I underlined) also shows that these two critics are very fatalistic and conservative.

Milton R. Stern ("The Case For Captain Vere") brings back again the idea of Vere as a hero with an enormous capacity for self-sacrifice, assuming the "responsibility of command." And this sacrifice is lost, as well as "Billy Budd's final realization" which is also lost, and "the cycle continues"[24]. The critic is right when he says that everything is lost and that the cycle continues, but he is wrong when he sees heroism in either Billy or Vere.

Opposing this critic's view, there is Leonard Casper's "The Case Against Captain Vere" in which he shows the demagogy of Vere's attitudes. Analysing the episode of Billy's trial, Casper says,

> The court-martial itself is improperly conducted by Vere, who, as a witness, should have disregarded his rank; yet he knowingly testifies from the ship's weather side. After several moments of investigation have passed, he suddenly terminates interpretation of motives and circumstances and limits the court's judgement to the death blow itself. This is tantamount to having the court-martial sit merely as a coroner's jury. They are to decide the cause and causer of death. Punishment follows inevitably. Vere's reported strangeness of manner reveals that Melville is carefully indicating that all this is a mistrial, a miscarriage of justice. The officers are shocked at the prejudgement evident in Vere's utterances[25].

So, here, the critic is rightly suggesting that there is not much difference between Vere and Claggart after all. Still about Captain Vere, the critic closes this way:

> His death is connected with Billy's through an interesting and subtle device, an ironic newspaper report of the latter's death. The reporter says that Claggart's splendid character refutes Dr. Johnson's statement that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel. Since Claggart is actually a depraved person, it must be obvious that Melville's opinion coincides wholly with Dr. Johnson's. And Starry Vere, of course, is the principal patriot in the story[26].

And I agree entirely with him.

* * *

Like Melville's Billy Budd, Conrad's The Nigger of the "Nascissus" also arouses many controversies among the critics as they have very different opinions about the author and his work.

Ian Watt, in his critical biography Conrad in the Nineteenth Century, is hard on Conrad as far as literary techniques of narrative are concerned.

> Such collective subjects suffer from at least one serious literary difficulty: the ordinariness of ordinary life. However wide our sympathies and interests, it is difficult not to stifle a yawn at the thought of reading many pages documenting how a group of people work harmoniously together in their normal quotidian routine. At the level of plot, as we have seen, Conrad's solution of the problem was to add various exciting or psychologically absorbing invented episodes; but there remained the problem of finding an appropriate narrative method which would make the ordinary life of the crew seem simultaneously real, interesting, and representative. Conrad's solution was a special kind of participant narrator who functions as a collective voice[27].

Watt is, as we see, describing a very superficial kind of reading. The same kind of reading that would tend to see Moby-Dick as a mere adventure of whaling.

The critic, and here he is right, points out flaws in the use made by Conrad of a narrator in the novel,

> Only a participant, a member of the crew, could provide the necessary sensory, emotional, and intellectual closeness to the life of the forecastle; but no one person could plausibly have access to so much else[28].

And he calls the reader's attention to the inconsistencies brought about by Conrad's manipulations of the narrator.

> There are also various inconsistencies of a logical kind, especially when the narrator briefly goes into the minds of particular characters, as he does occasionally with Wait and Donkin, or when he mysteriously witnesses scenes where only certain specified characters were present, as when Podmore and Donkin talk privately to Wait, or Allistoun to Baker in the officer's cabin[29].

In terms of form, I agree entirely with him, of course, and it is interesting that Melville also incurred the same incongruences in his Billy Budd, though less extensively. But my analysis in this thesis is far from being formal; I am not interested merely in the structuralistic aspects of the novel, but especially in its psychological contents. And Watt has some insights in this aspect too, including one seeing Donkin as a socialist, with which I agree completely.

Watt calls attention to Conrad's playing with dark and light symbols, showing Singleton, although I don't exactly agree with his interpretation.

> Conrad's most significant visual addition is "stepped out of his lighted cabin into the darkness." This also serves to establish the novel's central symbolic contrast between light and darkness. The contrast continues when we look at the forecastle: "in the illuminated doorways, silhouettes of moving men appeared for a moment, very black, without relief;" the first seaman we see clearly, "with his spectacles and a venerable white beard," is "Old Singleton, the oldest able-seaman on the ship, set apart on the deck right under the lamps." Baker has already been connected with the imagery of light when he orders a "good lamp" for the muster; and it is through Baker's agency that the men in the forecastle come from the darkness into the lamp's emblematic circle of light, and are there formally transformed into the crew of the "Nascissus." One man, however, is missing. Then an invisible late arrival pronounces the word "Wait!" He comes down toward Baker, but is too tall for the lamplight to illuminate his face. The ominous mystery is only dispelled when the ship's "boy, amazed like the rest, raised the light to the man's face. It was black"[30].

Conrad makes Wait so explicitly connected with darkness that darkness is physically manifested in him. But Watt spoils everything by reducing the universe of Wait's symbology to a mere "fear of death."

> Wait is a symbol, not of death but of the fear of death, and therefore, more widely, of the universal human reluctance to face those most universal agents of anticlimax, the facts; and facts find him out, as they later will the crew, and everyone else.
>
> Most of the crew believe that their behavior

> towards Wait is dictated by their generosity of spirit and their fellow-feeling; but that is surely the illusion projected by self-pity at the thought of their own mortality[31].

Of course Wait is much more than that. Fear of death is not the same as a wish for life, and Wait cannot be seen as a mere negative espect, but also as something positive: the struggle to assert one's individuality, one's differences, the things that set individuals apart, make them outstanding, make them unique. But Watt insists on regarding everything in a totally negative way.

> The crew, then, and their symbolic representative Singleton, seem to feel bound to nature only in the negative sense that for the most part they accept their common servitude to its power. The other question, that of whether the visible world binds the men on the "Nascissus" to each other, receives no more inspiring answer[32].

Watt also spots the difference of attitude in the crew in times of calm in the sea, and in the periods of storm.

> During the gale the crew have other things to think about besides Wait; but when calm supervenes the full ambivalence of their feelings comes to a head, and they are torn between pity for the sick man, urging them one way, and hostility to the shirker, punishing them the other[33].

And he notices that when the crew have to save Wait trapped in his cabin, they decide that spontaneously, without being ordered by their hierarchically superiors. Their act is collective, of course, but there is also an individual act of Podmore, the cook.

> In the storm, it is true, the crew's psychology exhibits a moral unanimity which has a much more humanly affirmative character than that described by Le Bon. The structure of command, of course, is still needed; but some members of the crew are also shown as capable of spontaneous collective and individual effort, not only in the rescue of Wait but also in Podmore's miraculous production of coffee. Conrad places the storm in the central position of the narrative, and this, combined with power of the writing, makes the solidarity exhibited there the most powerful and enduring experiences in the book[34].

Albert J. Guerard, in his biography Conrad the Novelist, spots Wait's symbolizing the unconscious, the dark side of our psychology. He says that

> ... it has been the very convention of the novel that Wait must remain shadowy, vast, provocative of large speculation; in a word, symbolic. The very fact that he comes in some sense to represent our human "blackness" should exempt him from the banalities of everyday interior monologue[35].

He also points out the fact that Wait represents the sense of individuality which appears in the individuals on the ship in periods of calm in the elements, whereas solidarity shows up in periods of storm.

> But "The Nigger of the 'Nascissus'" presents the classic human contradiction (and the archetypal descent into self) in collective terms, reduced to the simplicities of shipboard life. The storm tests and brings out the solidarity, courage, and endurance of men bonded together in a desperate cause. And the Negro James Wait tests and brings out their egoism, solitude, laziness, anarchy, fear. The structural obligation of the story is to see to it that the two tests do not, for the reader, cancel out[36].

Guerard notices that the appeal to individuality only shows itself when man meditates — and that is the origin of the "therapy" of work which the Victorians advocated.

> The menace of Wait is greatest when men have time to meditate. Thus Conrad's practical ethic of a master-mariner (seaman must be kept busy) may not be so very different from the ethic of the stoic pessimistic who wrote psychological novels[37].

But is that really Conrad's ethic? I will demonstrate in this dissertation that it is not.

Jocelyn Baines, in Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography, after showing that the crew on the "Nascissus" do not know what to think of Wait — if he is really dying or if he is a fraud —, says that they cannot help but keep that attitude of attraction/

repulsion towards the Negro.

> It is that which is so insidious; the crew would have known what to do if they had been certain that Jimmy was dying or that he was a fraud. But the uncertainty enabled him to blackmail them; to undermine and corrupt the spirit of the ship[38].

Thus, Mr Baines keeps a position of conservatism in relation to James Wait, even knowing that he is NOT a fraud — does he not die of this mysterious illness that so confounds the crew? But Mr Baines correctly shows that Donkin, even for Conrad, is "a whole contemptible character," and that the crew, knowing him and what he is, know exactly what to make of him, whereas Wait's influence is much more subtle and the crew are faced with the dilemma of believing him or not.

2. The Critics View Moby-Dick and Heart of Darkness.

In his essay on Billy Budd, William Braswell comes up with an interesting comparism between Billy Budd and Captain Ahab. He says that although it may seem difficult to believe that there should be a symbolical relationship between Ahab and Billy Budd due to the former being a much more complex character than the latter, similiIarities can be traced between them as well as between Ahab and both Vere and Claggart. Braswell states that the parallels between Ahab and Billy are especially signigicant, and he explains:

> Consider the conflicts in which the two men become embroiled. On the one hand, there are Ahab and Billy, symbols of man's naturally good heart outraged by evil, and, on the other hand, their adversaries, Moby-Dick and Claggart, symbols of evil (to Ahab, Moby-Dick symbolyses "all evil"). One may smile at the suggestion that in the whiteness of the whale and the pallor of Claggart there is a subtle tie between the adversaries of

> Ahab and Billy. More important, Moby-Dick is an "agent" of the Deity, to use Ahab's label, and Claggart, a petty officer in His Majesty's Navy, is likewise symbolically an agent of the Deity. Thus both Ahab and Billy rebel, in effect, against the highest authority: Ahab's "blasphemy" in harpooning Moby-Dick is matched by Billy's "mutiny" in striking the master-at-arms during war. In both fables the symbol of the heart, when injured, strikes back in retaliation[1].

And the critic goes on, and states that those characters had Melville's "deepest sympathy".

> There is no doubt that Pierre, Ahab, and Billy all had Melville's deepest sympathy. "I stand for the heart. To the dogs with the head!" Melville wrote to Hawthorne. But he ultimately realized that a rebellious heart could bring him to disaster — in fact, threatened to do so[2].

But, as we see, this critic too advocates Melville's having become less rebellious, more of a conformist.

Ahab's adventure is a heroic quest, and the critics have something to say about this idea too. W.H. Auden makes a contrast between Ahab's fate and that of the Greek hero, concerning the order in which the tragic events are supposed to come.

> The hero, Captain Ahab, far from being exceptionally fortunate, is at the beginning, what in a Greek tragedy he could only be at the end, exceptionally unfortunate. He is already the victim of what the modern newspaper, which is Greek in this respect, would call a tragedy; a whale has bitten off his leg. What to the Greeks could only have been a punishment for sin is here a temptation to sin, an opportunity to choose; by making the wrong choice and continuing to make it, Ahab punishes himself[3].

And the critic says that Ahab is "tempted" by an external agent that brings in suffering, whereas another character, Fedallah, tempts himself and so he represents the demonic.

> Fedallah is clearly intended by Melville, I think, to represent the demonic, i.e., that which (unlike Ahab, who is tempted by suffering) tempts itself and denies for the sake of denying, and about which, therefore, nothing historic can be said; we are only told his religion[4].

Now, if one says that Ahab does not need a demon to tempt him, since he is already tempted by suffering, and, even so, one says that there is a demon in the novel, represented by Fedallah, what would be the function of this demon? The critic Henry A. Murray ventures on the same path: Fedallah is Mephistopheles, but, nevertheless, his role is superfluous in the novel.

> Melville may have been persuaded by Goethe's Mephistopheles, or even by some of Hawthorne's bloodless abstracts of humanity, to add Fedallah to his cast of characters. Evidently he wanted to make certain that no reader would fail to recognize that Ahab had been possessed by, or had sold his soul to the Devil. Personally, I think Fedallah's role is superfluous, and I regret that Melville made room for him and his unbelievable boat-crew on the ship "Pequod". Still, he is not wholly without interest. He represents the cool, heartless, cunning, calculating, intellectual Devil of the medieval myth-makers, in contrast to the stricken, passionate, indignant, and often eloquent rebel angel of Paradise Lost, whose role is played by Ahab [5].

And he goes on describing the origins of Fedallah's name, and pointing out that there are other "infidels" aboard the "Pequod", especially the harpooners. It is strange that even seeing all this, the critic still maintains that Fedallah's role is superfluous. I will show in my analysis that, far from being superfluous, Fedallah is very important — the double-bladed prophecies that he makes contribute to keep Ahab stuck to his *idée fixe* and hasten him to his end.

Reginald Cook comes up with an interpretation in the light of magic, taking up the aspects of rites and the demonic attitudes in Ahab. He describes Ahab's behavior in psychoanalitical terms.

> After the first fateful meeting with the White Whale at sea, he envisions his own greatness dramatically by exalting the egotistic will until his malaise is that of a megalomaniac paranoid. His behavior becomes strange and psychotic. He casts away his pipe, to be rid of serenity [6].

The critic tries to explain Ahab's use of satanic rites on the

ship, saying that it is a means of getting control of the crew, and he says that Ahab really did not believe in magic.

> There is a subtle consciousness in Ahab. He operates on two levels: sometimes on the Christian; more frequently on the primitive. Yet his ceremonial rituals are not aimed to influence either deity or devil. He hardly respects the power of either of them. He uses them only so that the appropriate spells will inevitably produce the desired effect on his crew. There is no evidence that he believes in their efficacy in giving him ultimate power over Moby-Dick, but they influence his men, and this is necessary to gain his blood-minded end[7].

So, Ahab is just manipulating the men's superstitions. Cook then explains that Ahab's defeat is a proof of "the limitation of men" when facing "superior animate forces," and that it also proves the "inadequacy of magic."

> Ahab's equivocal defeat is, in a sense, the failure of magic as an effective force in the manipulation of natural forces. Moby-Dick is not an apotheosis of magic. By inference, it is a confession of the inadequacy of magic as a means of control. Ahab is brave and proud, but in his reversion to magic he confesses human ignorance and im his physical defeat, he betrays, not lack of skill but the limitation of all men before superior animate forces. Ahab's fallibility is a token of the inadequacy of magic[8].

If Ahab goes through all this just to arouse the men's fear, then there is an enormous contradiction in this interpretation, because, in the second previous quotation, Cook says that Ahab does not believe in the magic. Well, if he does not believe in magic, then his defeat does not prove the "inadequacy of magic." I agree entirely that Ahab wants the rites to cause an effect on his crew, but that effect is not of fear. It is another kind of response that he expects, as we will see in this dissertation. Ahab is really attempting (in vain, for that is impossible from the outside) to arouse in the crew, this desire for the quest. He is trying, through rites, to arouse the men's unconscious.

In his "'Introduction' to Moby-Dick", Alfred Kazin points

out that Ahab, contrary to many critics' opinions, is not a fanatic or lunatic, but a hero who tries not only to assert his own individuality, but to lead his crew to try the same.

> But Ahab is not just a fanatic who leads the whole crew to their destruction; he is a hero of thought who is trying, by terrible force, to reassert man's place in nature. And it is the struggle that Ahab incarnates that makes him so magnificent a voice thundering in Shakespearean rhetoric, storming at the gates of the inhuman, silent world. Ahab is trying to give man, in one awful, final assertion that his will does mean something, a feeling of relatedness with his world[9].

And Kazin points out the world-wide scope of the possibility of the quest — i.e., it can be attempted by human beings from any part of the world.

> But Melville has no doubt — nor should we! — that Ahab's quest is humanly understandable. And the quest itself supplies the book with its technical *raison d'être*. For it leads us through all the seas and around the whole world; it brings us past ships of every nation[10].

However, not just any man can do that, not even understand that — this is the true meaning of Moby-Dick. The critics too are able to see that this book is not for all, the same way as the quest is not for all. As Raymond Weaver says, "But neither 'Lycidas' nor 'Moby-Dick' should be read by philistines or pragmatists"[11].

On the other hand, Richard Chase makes Ahab stand accused of too much "self-reliance."

> As Newton Arvin demonstrates, there is some reason to think of Ahab as guilty of "hybris", in the Greek sense, or of excessive pride, in the Christian sense; but there is more reason to think of him as guilty of or victimized by a distorted "self-reliance"[12].

And the critic even presents Starbuck as a positive alternative to this "excessive pride," and "distorted 'self-reliance'".

> To be Starbuck is to understand what the white whale might mean to a man like Ahab but to insist "with the stubbornness of life" that the whale is merely "a dumb brute" to seek vengeance on which is "blasphemous" and "madness"[13].

But we know that Starbuck stands in the book for the accomodated human being who is incapable of self-assertion — and that is not positive in the eyes of either Ahab or Melville.

Henry A. Murray, after pushing Melville to assume a position that sounds like Starbuck's position, saying that Ahab's "inflation" is what is defeated at the end, then shifts ground and goes on another direction, saying that that is not "the whole truth", and supporting his point at all events.

> Melville adhered to the classic formula for tragedies. He could feel "spotless as a lamb," because he had seen to it that the huge threat to the social system immanent in Ahab's two cardinal defects — egotistic self-inflation and unleashed wrath — was, at the end, fatefully exterminated, "and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago." The reader has had his catharsis, equilibrium has been restored, sanity is vindicated.
>
> This is true, but is it the whole truth? In point of fact, while writing Moby-Dick did Melville maintain aesthetic distance, keeping his own feelings in abeyance? Do we not hear Ahab saying things that the later Pierre will say and that Melville says less vehemently in his person? Does not the author show marked partiality for the "mighty pageant creature" of his invention, put in *his* mouth the finest, boldest language?[14]

And then he goes even farther, and talks about what, in his opinion, was Melville's intention,

> Melville's clear intention was to bring not rest, but *unrest* to intrepid minds. All gentle people were warned away from his book "on risk of a lumbago or sciatica." "A polar wind blows through it," he announced. He had not written to soothe, but to kindle, to make men leap from their seats, as Whitman would say, and fight for their lives[15].

These words "a polar wind blows through it" are Melville's own words in describind the book — and that is very similar to Nietzsche's describing the superior minds. He says,

> Let us face ourselves. We are Hyperboreans; we know very well how far off we live. "Neither by land nor by sea will you find the way to the Hyperboreans" — Pindar already knew this about us. Beyond the north, ice, and death — our life, our happiness. We have discovered happiness, we know the way, we have found the exit out of the labyrinth of thousands of years[16].

Besides Ahab, the other really important character in the book is Ishmael. However, there are critics who state that Ishmael cannot be seen as being even a character. That is Auden's opinion, for example. He says,

> So Ahab, refusing life, goes unrepentant, like all of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, to the unnecessary death he has chosen, dragging with him all his companions, and the only survivor is, as in Greek tragedy, the Chorus, the spectator, Ishmael. But Ishmael is not, like the Greek Chorus, the eternal average man, for he isn't a character at all. To be a character one must will and act, and Ishmael has no will, only consciousness; he does not act, he only knows, and what he knows is good and evil, i.e., possibility. He cannot die because he has not yet begun to live, and he ends the book as a baby, reborn from the sea in Queequeg's coffin, thrust back into life as an orphan with his first choice still to make[17].

It seems that, having failed to see Ishmael outwardly active (as he, in fact, is NOT), the critic also fails to realize that Ishmael is inwardly active — and very active —; however, other critics are able to see that. Sedgwick says that

> Certainly, there are two actions in the book which although they mesh are distinct from one another, one of which is Shakespearean, the other Dantesque. The Shakespearean or outward tragic action includes Ahab's conflict with forces outside himself and, also, the bitter, agonizing self-conflict which follows on its heels. All the other characters are caught up in this action, but it centers in Ahab. The other action, the Dantesque, lies entirely with Ishmael, who, let me say for the moment, stands to Ahab as the shadow to the object which casts it. Pushing a paradox, I shall call this action passive as well as inward — inward, that is, with respect to the book as a whole[18].

Kazin too is able to spot that

> Ishmael does not pefform any great actions, as Ahab does; he is the most insignificant member of the fo'c'sle and will get the smallest share of the take. But his inner world of thought is almost unbearably symbolic, for he must think, and think, and think, in order to prove to himself that there is a necessary connection between man and the world. He pictures his dilemma in everything he does on board the ship, but never so clearly as when he is shown looking at the sea, searching a meaning to existence from the inscrutable waters[19].

It is such fascination that the sea exerts on Ishmael that makes him start his journey, for journey and "vision" mean the same for him, as Feidelson points out,

> The first chapter of Moby-Dick is the statement of a point of view. Ishmael opens his narrative by identifying voyage with vision: the field of man's vision is the sea[20].

And what attraction is that? What "vision" is that? Feidelson himself provides the answer. He says, "The attraction of the mind to the sea is life itself as a quest for knowledge"[21]. The quest for knowledge implies the quest for rebirth. However, there are critics who do not acknowledge that Ishmael experiences a rebirth. Chase, for instance, says,

> But is this really a catharsis, a redemption, a rebirth? The momentary sense of harmony and joy is all too easily dispelled by the chilly gloom, the final despair, of the last words. "On the second day, a sail drew near, nearer, and picked me up at last. It was the devious-cruising Rachel, that in her retracing search after her missing children, only found another orphan."
>
> For Melville there is little promise of renewal and reward after suffering. There is no transcendent ground where the painful contradictions of the human dilemma are reconciled. There is no life through death. There is only life and death, and for any individual a momentary choice between them[22].

But what the critic cannot see is that the meaning of rebirth is not a rise out of an actual death, but out of the symbolic death of all the old values — rebirth is the adoption of new values; and it is possible for a man to have more than one rebirth during his life-time. And this rebirth (and the quest for it) is a lonely

enterprise — the reason for Ishmael's utter loneliness in the end. And Alfred Kazin is able to perceive this, for he says,

> Yet utterly alone as he is at the end of the book, floating on the Pacific Ocean, he manages, buoyed up on a coffin that magically serves as his life-buoy, to give us the impression that life itself can be honestly confronted only in the loneliness of each human heart[23].

And, because of that, the book has a tremendously individualistic connotation.

> The book grows out of a single word, "I", and expands until the soul's voyage of this "I" comes to include a great many things that are unseen and unsuspected by most of us. And this material is always tied to Ishmael, who is not merely a witness to the story — someone who happens to be on board the "Pequod" — but the living and germinating mind who grasps the whole world in the tentacles of his thought[24].

Even though the philosophy of the book is positive, some critics insist on seeing it negatively; even though Ishmael (despite his outward inactiveness) is a strong character, critics insist on seeing him as "average human being." Seawall says "He is a constant link to the known and familiar. He is average, goodhearted humanity"[25]. And negativism is seen not only in Ishmael, but also in Ahab. Feidelson states that

> The totality of symbolic meaning is intensely present, but destroys individuality; its "atheism" is that of transcendentalists like Whitman who, in order to become God-possessed,deny a personal God. By the same token, in order to unite themselves with nature, they also deny personal identity. Melville follows in evident dismay. Seen rationally, as an object, the world is inaccessible; but seen as accessible, the world swallows up the visionary. Ishmael's presentiment of the danger of water-gazing is verified by the fate of the "Pequod," which disappears into the ambiguity and formlessness of the sea. Only by self-annihilation does the "Pequod" penetrate the whiteness, which closes above it in "a creamy pool"[26].

I disagree with him. I think — and I will demonstrate it in my analysis — that Ahab and Kurtz (I am including Kurtz because I

am sure Feidelson would see Kurtz in the same light) do not deny their personal identities, but they lose them, for the simple reason that they are unable to cope with the force they arouse, and are swallowed by it.

Because of this position of seeing Ahab in a negative way, some critics see Ishmael as an opposing force against him. And they extend this to the author: Ishmael would be a "resistance" in Melville to follow Ahab. That is Bewley's point. He says:

> Moby-Dick is, then, Melville's great attempt to create order in a universe in which a breakdown of the polarity between good and evil is threatened. This threat comes from Ahab, whose hatred of creation is the symptom, or perhaps the consequence, of that democratic disillusionment with the universe I have spoken of — that resentment of the spirit's betrayal of matter, and of God's betrayal of the world. In so far as Melville's own thought is to be equated with any particular person's, it is with Ishmael's. Ishmael represents Melville's resistance against the temptation to follow Ahab which was so powerful for him; he represents Melville's hold on the world of reality and of nature[28].

That is a mistake, as Murray is able to perceive,

> Here it might be well to remind ourselves of a crucial statement which follows the just quoted passage from Melville's letter: "I have written a wicked book." The implication is clear: all interpretations which fail to show that Moby-Dick is, in some sense, wicked have missed the author's avowed intention[29].

And that is exactly the point: if Melville admits that the book is wicked, and, continuing with his thought, he adds that even so he feels "spotless as a lamb," it is because he has some sympathy for the devil — some sympathy for Ahab.

* * *

The same way Charles Feidelson, Jr. views the sea journey as a journey within, a quest for knowledge in the case of Ishmael, here, in analysing Heart of Darkness, Albert J. Guerard views the Congo journeys by the same token. He says, "The sea voyage and the Congo journey are unmistakably journeys within, and

journeys through a darkness"[29]. Guerard also talks about the loneliness of the quester, and that the quest involves "spiritual changes," in other words, a rebirth. He also mentions the dangers that such an enterprise may bring to the lonely voyager.

> In its classical form the journey is a descent into the earth, followed by a return to light. Sometimes the dream is literally an illuminating dream (as with Don Quixote's experience in the well); more often, it is dramatized through an actual voyage and movement through space. ... But very often the dream appears to be about the introspective process itself: about a risky descent into the preconscious or even unconscious; about a restorative return to the primitive sources of being and an advance through temporary regression. Psychologists have their different geographies of the unconscious. ... Not all would agree that the male shadow, female anima, and occult mandala have as definite an existence as Jung implies, and not all would agree with him that integration of the personality is impossible without a full descent into the unconscious. But nearly all would agree that an unconscious exists[30].

So here, Guerard is talking about the unconscious and saying that a descent into the unconscious may bring illumination for the quester. But then the problems of interpretation begin. He sees the end of the relationship between Marlow and Kurtz, in _Heart of Darkness_, as a kind of exorcism — Marlow has exorcised his "double".

> On the final level of psychological symbolism, communication is with a deepest self; a symbolic descent into the unconscious results in immobilization and is followed by partial or full release. The double is exorcised, either to die or go free. But in the material terms of a relationship between flesh-and-blood men, these conversations are also important. Through them an act of communication has occurred, creating a bound of brotherhood and loyalty. In _Heart of Darkness_ psychic needs most of all determine the loyalty to the "nightmare" of Marlow's choice[31].

But that is not so. The "loyalty" is due to the fact that the "double" has been incorporated, not exorcised (why would he exorcise something of _his_ choice?). Marlow has identified himself with his "double" — that acknowledgement is the incorporation.

He knows that Kurtz is a part of himself that had been hidden and that now has come to light.

Guerard wants, at any cost, to see Victorian traits in Marlow. He says, analysing Kurtz's death,

> The redemptive view is Catholic, of course, though no priest was in attendance; Kurtz can repent as the gunman of The Power and the Glory cannot. Heart of Darkness (still at this public and wholly conscious level) combines a Victorian ethic and late Victorian fear of the white man's deterioration with a distinctly Catholic psychology. We are protected from ourselves by society with its laws and its watchful neighbors, Marlow observes[32].

It is a true fact that Marlow makes that observation, but, concerning his intentions, the truth lies somewhere else. Marlow says that as a criticism, a very strong criticism of society and its pretences. He denounces the so-called "good behavior" in the citizens which is not due to any virtue in them, but to their fear of punishment. So Marlow's position is very much in favor of individualism and of a change in the morality of society.

Many critics tend to see Conrad in a position of anti-individualism. Ian Watt says that

> In both Konrad Wallenrod and The Forefather's Eve, Byronic individualism is corrected through an identification with national suffering; and this transformation from a narrow self-concern to a larger loyalty is a characteristic theme not only of Mickiewicz but of Slowacki, the other Polish romantic poet whom Conrad most admired. Conrad's protagonists often undergo a similar conflict, and he himself remained deeply devoted to the idea of national sentiment; unlike the other great figures of modern literature, Conrad was not the critic but the nostalgic celebrant of the civilization of his homeland; and the steady insistence on the patriotic values of courage, tenacity, honour, responsibility and abnegation gives Conrad's fiction a heroic note very rare in twentieth-century literature[33].

However, if we examine Heart of Darkness, for example, we have a very different view of Conrad's position. There, Marlow is utterly individualistic throughout the entire novel, and there is

nothing nationalistic in Heart of Darkness; there is absolutely nothing concerning patriotism. The book only praises the individual and his inner strength.

Ian Watt tries to pump Victorian traits into Marlow. He sees in Marlow the representative of Victorian values, and in Kurtz, he sees a projection of future dangers.

> Conrad's first description of Heart of Darkness makes it clear that he conceived it in an ideological context: "The idea in it," he wrote to William Blackwood, "is not as obvious as in Youth — or at least not so obviously presented... The criminality of inefficiency and pure selfishness when tackling the civilizing work in Africa is a justifiable idea." This letter was written very early, and refers only to the story's obvious anti-colonial theme; but there are many other ideas in Heart of Darkness, which is Conrad's nearest approach to an ideological summa.
> That summa emerges from the conflict between Marlow, in whom Conrad the seaman presents his lingering wish to endorse the standard values of the Victorian ethic, and Kurtz, in whom Conrad the seer expresses his forebodings that the accelerating changes in the scientific, political, and spiritual view of the world during the last decades of the old century were preparing unsuspected terrors for the new[34].

Watt says that the fact that Marlow does not behave like the savages dancing on the banks of the river is simply due to his Victorian ethic of duty.

> Marlow only tells he does not go "ashore for a howl and a dance" because he is committed to his job as captain: "There was," he says, "surface-truth enough in these things to save a wiser man." Marlow's ethic here is in accord with one of the most pervasive of the Victorian moral imperatives. "Except for 'God'," Walter Houghtone writes, "the most popular word in the Victorian vocabulary must have been 'work'"[35].

However, the truth is that Marlow never lets himself be totally dragged by the unconscious. If he did that, he would end up like Kurtz. Marlow is able to keep his conscious active during the whole process of the assimilation of the unconscious. As a result, he succeeds where Kurtz fails. And this resistance to plunge blindly into the unconscious has nothing to do with ethics,

despite Krieger's efforts to affirm the ~~opposite. He says:~~

> Someone like Conrad's Marlow, however — the sensible even if sensitive man — must, at whatever cost to his pride and his vision, finally rest in the ethical level, however sympathetic he may be to those who have renounced it to move into the realm of the tragic. Who is to say whether it is out of a "failure of nerve" or out of a special strength flowing from a profoundly tranquil vision, hardly known to us since the Greeks, that he has resisted the unmitigated tragic? It depends, very likely, on whether our view is Kierkegaard's or that of a less austere, less Protestant authority; on whether ours is the tragic vision or the classic vision[36].

Ethics has to do with society — it is the values of the group. However, in Marlow's case, it is the values of the individual that prevail. Jocelyn Baines says that

> The "sombre" theme of the story, in part at least, is the conflict between the power of the wilderness to release "forgotten and brutal instincts" and the capacity of a human being to resist this pressure. Thus Marlow, like Kurtz, is subjected to the test of the wilderness[37].

It is the individual in his fight for self-assertion. Marlow's being dragged blindly by the wilderness (or by Kurtz) would be his loss of identity — his conscious would be lost. That would be like the Harlequin in the story who loses will and self-respect in his adoration of Kurtz.

Watt extends this idea of conservatism that he and Baines see in Marlow to Conrad. He gives his opinion about the meaning of Kurtz's return to barbarism, saying that

> Kurtz's return to barbarism exemplifies the dangers in the attempt to make technological and evolutionary optimism a functional substitute for more traditional views of the social and moral order. In a large historical perspective the evolutionary optimism of the mid-century can be seen as having weakened the two main lines of demarcation which had traditionally defined man's estate; there was the upper one which separated man from God and the angels; and there was the lower one which separated him from the animals. But evolutionary thought had introduced a new mobility into the chain of being, and this was

> widely supposed to make it possible for man to transcend the upper barrier, as he had already transcended that which separated him from the apes[38].

In my opinion, however, Conrad is preaching exaclty this upper transcendence. Watt now quotes another critic and comes closer to the truth.

> The prophetic quality of this surrender to the archaic and irrational drives of the unconditioned ego has been analysed by Lionel Trilling. In his essay "The Modern Element in Literature," he writes that Conrad's "strange and terrible message of ambivalence toward the life of civilization" continues the tradition of Blake and Nietzsche; and Kurtz is therefore a portent of the future, for "nothing is more characteristic of modern literature than its discovery and canonization of the primal, non-ethical energies[39].

However, this energy is to be used by man, and not that man is to be used by it — that is, plunge blindly into the energy, like Kurtz has done.

Watt, nevertheless, maintains the view of Conrad as a conservative.

> The tendency to see Kurtz as a modern variant of the Faustian hero is partly the result of identifying vision and wish; but it is characteristic of Conrad and Freud, as of most truth-tellers, that what they see is often just the opposite of what they want to see. For us, and no doubt for Conrad, Kurtz makes a vivid appeal to the imagination, while Marlow does not; but the contrast between Marlow's undramatic moral posture and the emblematic extremities of Kurtz's career itself enacts one of the ideological lessons of Heart of Darkness: that nothing is more dangerous than man's delusions of autonomy and omnipotence. ... In Heart of Darkness, against all the unreal psychological and social hyperboles of his waning century, Conrad affirmed the need, as Camus put it, "in order to be a man, to refuse to be a God"[40].

That is not Conrad's position if we just see the fact that Marlow is a continuation of Kurtz — he continues from the point where Kurtz fails. But Watt dissociates Marlow and Conrad from Kurtz completely. After mentioning the fact that there are critics who

link author with personage, he says that

> These critics ignore the disavowals which both Marlow and Conrad made of any admiration for Kurtz. Marlow's overt judgements are unremittingly hostile or ironic: "Mr. Kurtz was no idol of mine," he affirms; and in this, as we have seen, Marlow reflects Conrad's intentions. The fact that both Conrad and Marlow overtly dissociate themselves from sharing or admiring Kurtz's satanism is no doubt a major reason why most critics who have assumed that there is some deep identification between Marlow and Kurtz have seen it as unconscious[41].

And he is correct, but just to a certain extent, for there is not in fact an identification between Conrad and Kurtz, but there is sympathy — just like Melville has sympathy for his Ahab. Watt cannot deny the fact that Marlow considers Kurtz as "the nightmare" of <u>his</u> choice.

But Watt goes to extremes, like picturing Marlow like an ostrich, hiding his head in the sand. He says about the lie Marlow says to the Intended:

> The lie to the Intended, then, is both an appropriately ironic ending for Marlow's unhappy quest for truth, a humane recognition of the practical aspects of the problem: we must deal gently with human fictions, as we quietly curse their folly under our breath. Since no faith can be had which will move mountains, the faith which ignores them had better be shared[42].

But, then, he suddenly shifts ground and has a glimpse of the truth.

> At the end of the scene we are wondering whether it is worse that the ideals of the Intended should continue in all their flagrant untruth, or that Marlow should have been unable to invoke any faith in whose name he could feel able to challenge them. To put the alternatives in terms of the main symbolic polarity of <u>Heart of Darkness</u> as a whole: which perspective is more alarming? that people such as the Intended should be so blinded by their certitude of being the bearers of light that they are quite unaware of the darkness that surrounds them? or, on the other hand, that those who, like Marlow, have been initiated into the darkness,

> should be unable to illumine the blindness of their fellows to its omnipresence[43].

And he now goes still farther, saying that

> They must learn that light is only a lesser force than darkness in power, magnitude, and duration, but is in some way subordinate to it, or included within it; in short, that the darkness which Marlow discovers in the wilderness, in Kurtz and in himself, is the primary and all-encompassing reality of the universe[44].

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The objective of this study is to examine in Melville and Conrad the motif of the "journey within", the awakening of the unconscious in the individual. For that reason, I have chosen two works of each author, and I separated them, having in mind the fact that, in each author, there is a work in which he is pessimistic concerning the possibility of the success of the individual's quest for self-knowledge and self-assertion, and another one in which this possibility is seen optimistically. The pessimistic works are Billy Budd, Sailor, by Melville, and The Nigger of the "Nascissus," by Conrad. The optimistic ones are, in the same order of authors. Moby-Dick and Heart of Darkness.

There is a second aspect to this theme of the individual's quest for the awakening of the unconscious: the result, the rebirth the individual experiences, his "transcendence" or "illumination," the new state of mind in the individual who suddenly realizes that his experience has placed him above the ordinary man. This transcendence can be seen, in Eastern terms,

as "illumination", or, in Western terms, as the "higher man" or the "superman." Thus, the analysis of these four books will be made in the light of psychology and philosophy. In psychology, the best authority in dealing with the problem of the unconscious and Eastern philosophy is, doubtless, Carl Gustav Jung. In philosophy, nobody praised the individual more intensely than Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, and he was the one who came along with the concept of the "superman."

Due to the fact that both the concept of the "journey within" and the concept of the "superman" are complex problems, I decided to throw some light on the two concepts separatedly before starting the actual analysis of the novels.

Another fact has to be considered: in all the four novels we find this motif of the "journey within," but in the two pessimistic novels the journey is not successful, since there is repression on individualism, and so the "superman" (or anything similar) is never mentioned. However, he is (or, at least, potential "supermen" are) present in the optimistic novels. Therefore, I decided to insert the chapter dealing with the unconscious and the "journey within" — chapter which I named "Western and Eastern Concepts" — right before the chapter in which I analyse the pessimistic novels (*Billy Budd* and *The Nigger of the "Nascissus"*). The chapter dealing with the concept of the "superman" — which I named "The Hero and the Heroic Quest" — I inserted right before the chapter in which I analyse the more optimistic novels (*Moby-Dick* and *Heart of Darkness*).

In the chapter "Western and Eastern Concepts," I will analyse this problem of the awakening of the unconscious as seen by the Orientals as well as by the Occidentals, and see when and how they coincide or contrast. I will also trace this problem in Christianity and see the roots of religion — which lie in the East.

In the chapter "The Hero and the Heroic Quest," the problem of the hero will be analysed, and many critics and thinkers will be quoted in support, until we get to Nietzsche and his "superman".

Linking the ideas presented in these two chapters, my own personal concept of individualism will be clarified, as well as my position towards Nietzsche's "superman" — to which I have some reservation.

As I was sure it would clarify the position of the authors in relation to all these ideas and concepts, I decided to write a chapter to be entitled "The Narrative and the Authors' Viewpoint." My intention is to demonstrate that the authors' position, in these works analysed here, is not that of conservatism, as many critics tend to think. On the contrary, their position is very liberal; but we must be attentive to the fact that they are simply pessimistic or optimistic about the possibility or not of their heroes being able to get rid of the social standards and social morality in order to attempt successfully the quest for knowledge or illumination.

Furthermore, in this chapter, I will also deal with the problem of the narrators in the novels and their relationship with the authors themselves. Through the authors' personal letters, I will demonstrate that their position in real life matches the position I assume as being theirs in my analysis of the books.

NOTES ON CHAPTER ONE

- STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

[1] Nietzsche, F.W., The Birth of Tragedy, p.64.

[2] idem, The Case of Wagner, p.155.

[3] ibid., p.191 - original underlining.

[4] idem, Twilight of the Idols, in The Portable Nietzsche, Walter Kaufmann (ed.), p.502.

[5] idem, "The Antichrist", in op. cit., p.577.

[6] ibid., p.578 - original underlining.

- REVIEW OF CRITICISM

1. The Critics View Billy Budd and The Nigger of the "Narcissus"

[1] Watson, E.L. Grant, "Melville's Testament of Acceptance," in Melville's BILLY BUDD and the Critics, p.76.

[2] ibid., p.76.

[3] Matthiessen, F.O. American Renaissance, p.510.

[4] Withim, Phil, "BILLY BUDD: Testament of Resistance," in Melville's BILLY BUDD and the Critics, p.84.

[5] ibid., p.88.

[6] Braswell, William, "Melville's BILLY BUDD as 'An Inside Narrative'", in Melville's BILLY BUDD and the Critics, p.100.

[7] Withim, Phil, op. cit., p.89.

[8] ibid., p.90.

[9] ibid., p.85.

[10] ibid., p.88.

[11] Glick, Wendell, "Expediency and Absolute Morality in BILLY BUDD," in Melville's BILLY BUDD and the Critics, p.105.

[12] ibid., p.107.

[13] ibid., p.108.

[14] ibid., p.109.

[15] Jung, Carl G., Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, p.163.

[16]Glick, Wendell, op. cit., p.111.

[17]West, Jr., Ray S., "The Unit of BILLY BUDD," in Melville's BILLY BUDD and the Critics, p.120.

[18]ibid., p.120.

[19]ibid., p.121.

[20]Wright, Nathalia, "Melville's Use of the Bible," in Melville's BILLY BUDD and the Critics, p.134.

[21]Chase, Richard, "Billy Budd, Antigone, and The Winter's Tale," in Melville's BILLY BUDD and the Critics, pp.144-145.

[22]ibid., p.145.

[23]Weisinger, Herbert and Adrian J. Jaffe, "Billy and Oedipus," in Melville's BILLY BUDD and the Critics, p.150 - my underlining.

[24]Stern, Milton R., "The Case for Captain Vere," in Melville's BILLY BUDD and the Critics, p.152.

[25]Casper, Leonard, "The Case Against Captain Vere," in Melville's BILLY BUDD and the Critics, p.154.

[26]ibid., p.155.

[27]Watt, Ian, CONRAD in the Nineteenth Century, p.101.

[28]ibid., p.101.

[29]ibid., p.102.

[30]ibid., p.95.

[31]ibid., p.106.

[32]ibid., p.100.

[33]ibid., p.107.

[34]ibid., p.116.

[35]Guerard, Albert J. Conrad the Novelist, p.107.

[36]ibid., p.104.

[37]ibid., p.111.

[38]Baines, Jocelyn, Joseph Conrad - A Critical Biography, p.228.

2. The Critics View Moby-Dick and Heart of Darkness

[1] Braswell, William, "Melville's Billy Budd as 'An Inside Narrative,'" in Melville's BILLY BUDD and the Critics, p.95.

[2] ibid., p.96.

[3] Auden, W.H., "The Christian Tragic Hero: Contrasting Ahab's Doom and it's Classic Greek Prototype," in TRAGEDY: Vision and Form, p. 145.

[4] ibid., p.147.

[5] Murray, Henry A., "In Nomine Diaboli," in MELVILLE: A Collection of Critical Essays, p.67.

[6] Cook, Reginald L., "Big Medicine in Moby-Dick," in Myth and Literature, p.195.

[7] ibid., pp.194-195.

[8] ibid., p.197.

[9] Kazin, Alfred, "'Introduction' to Moby-Dick," in MELVILLE: A Collection of Critical Essays, p.44 - original underlining.

[10] ibid., p.44 - original underlining.

[11] Weaver, Raymond, "Melville's Composite Achievement," in MOBY-DICK - A Norton Critical Edition, p.627.

[12] Chase, Richard, "Melville and Moby-Dick," in MELVILLE: A Collection of Critical Essays, p.56.

[13] ibid., p.59.

[14] Murray, Henry A., "In Nomine Diaboli," in MELVILLE: A Collection of Critical Essays, pp.72-73 - original underlining.

[15] ibid., p.73 - original underlining.

[16] Nietzsche, F.W., "The Antichrist," in The Portable Nietzsche, p.569 - original underlining.

[17] Auden, W.H., op. cit., p.147 - original underlining.

[18] Sedgwick, William E., "Ishmael vs. Ahab," in MOBY-DICK - A Norton Critical Edition, p.642.

[19] Kazin, Alfred, op. cit., p.42.

[20] Feidelson, Jr., Charles, "Moby-Dick as Symbolic Voyage," in MOBY-DICK - A Norton Critical Edition, p.671.

[21] ibid., p.671.

[22] Chase, Richard, op. cit., p.58 - original underlining.

[23] Kazin, Alfred, op. cit., pp.40-41.

[24] ibid., p.41.

[25] Sewall, Richard B., "Moby-Dick as a Tragedy," in MOBY-DICK - A Norton Critical Edition, p.693.

[26] Feidelson, Jr., Charles, op. cit., p.675.

[27] Bewley, Marius, "Melville and the Democratic Experience," in MELVILLE: A Collection of Critical Essays, p.110.

[28] Murray, Henry A., op. cit., p.66.

[29] Guerard, Albert J. Conrad the Novelist, p.15.

[30] ibid., p.15 - original underlining.

[31]ibid., p.48.

[32]ibid., p.36.

[33]Watt, Ian, CONRAD in the Nineteenth Century, p.7.

[34]ibid., p.148 - original underlining.

[35]ibid., p.149.

[36]Krieger, Murray, "Tragedy and the Tragic Vision," in TRAGEDY: Vision and Form, p.28.

[37]Baines, Jocelyn, Joseph Conrad - A Critical Biography, p.276.

[38]Watt, Ian, op. cit., p.163.

[39]ibid., p.165.

[40]ibid., pp.167-168.

[41]ibid., p.238.

[42]ibid., p.248.

[43]ibid., pp.248-249.

[44]ibid., p.250.

CHAPTER II

WESTERN AND EASTERN CONCEPTS

Apparently, there is an insurmountable gap between the Eastern and the Western ways of seeing man and life. However, if we examine the origins of Western civilization, we see that it is very much connected with the Orient. We know that our present logic and our always-too-rational way of regarding the world and ourselves have come from the Greeks, but the Greeks themselves went through a process in which, as they became more and more rationalistic, they exchanged the Dionysian, chaotic, sensual, instictive living for more subliminal, Apollonian standards, and, slowly, they forgot their roots that were planted in the Orient — the Greek civilization, in its genesis, drank from the waters of the Nile.

Even Christianity is linked with the East. Christ's preachings, if we examine them closely, have a lot to do with Oriental philosophy. There is even a strong hypothesis today which says that that obscure period of Christ's life (from 13 to 30 years of age) of which the Bible says nothing, was spent studying in the East — especially in India.

As time went by, we, Westerners, became, due to our eagerness for rationality and objectivity, more and more

extraverted — linked with the external world —, which allowed scientific and technological advancements to sprout in our Western world. On the other hand, the Easterners kept faithful to their nature, and are still introverted — linked with their inner world. As Jung says,

> Introversion is, if one may so express it, the "style" of the East, an habitual and collective attitude, just as extraversion is the "style" of the West. Introversion is felt here as something abnormal, morbid, or otherwise objectionable. Freud identifies it with an autocratic, "narcissistic" attitude of mind. He shares his negative position with the National Socialist philosophy of modern Germany, which accuses introversion of being an offence against community feeling[1].

Well, Freud, even being what we call a scientist (or because of that), was full of intellectual prejudices, and felt uncomfortable in dealing with subjects such as Oriental philosophy and yoga. And when he ventured to make any comment about it, he tended to reduce everything to sexual terms — his *idée fixe*. Jung disagreed with him in this, *inter alia*. Far from disregarding Oriental philosophy, Jung studied it in depth, and brought forth his ideas of the "collective unconscious" and of the "prototypes." Although he comes up with some serious contradictions, as we will see later, in the chapter dealing with the idea of the "hero," Jung is, for my theme, a much more reliable source than Freud.

Contrasting the Eastern and the Western positions in terms of where to look for "grace," Jung says,

> The Christian West considers man to be wholly dependent upon the grace of God, or at least upon the Church as the exclusive and divinely sanctioned earthly instrument of man's redemption. The East, however, insists that man is the sole cause of his higher development, for it believes in "self-liberation"[2].

And here we find the first problem, when we confront the original

ideas exposed by Christ with what Christianity has become. According to Christ's own words, the Kingdom of God is to be searched in man's own heart, "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke, 17:21). It is due to this kind of misconception about true Christianity that Jung is led to say that

> The Eastern attitude stultifies the Western, and vice versa. You cannot be a good Christian and redeem yourself, nor can you be a Buddha and worship God[3],

when Christianity and Oriental philosophy have so many points of contact: the Buddha cannot worship an external God, because he too knows that God is within him.

Within man is not only God, but also what is called the Devil. Good is there, but also is evil — opposing forces getting along together: light is there, but so is darkness. Jung calls this dark side of man's personality the "shadow" — it is part of our repressed, hidden unconscious.

> And indeed it is a frightening thought that man also has a shadow-side to him, consisting not just of little weaknesses and foibles but of a positively demonic dynamism[4].

Jung also says that, in order to have true self-knowledge, man has to reach a recognition of his dark side.

> The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge, and it therefore, as a rule, meets with considerable resistance[5].

It would not be a moral problem for the Easterners, but it is for the Westerners, because we have projected this evil-side that we have, as well as the good-side, to the outside world: we have

created an outside Devil and an outside God. So, in the West, man is to be good or bad as he sides with each one of those projections. Thus, we have created all this problem of morals, as well as a world of pretences — things that could be avoided if we only had the courage to face the fact that we have those two forces, in ourselves, and cope with that.

> If we could see this shadow (the dark and tenebrous side of our nature), we would become immunized against any moral and intellectual infection and contagion[6].

This "dark" side in us is part of the unconscious, since it has been repressed by society in countless generations; but many are those who refuse to acknowledge things like that. We have become so objective, so practical, that we tend to sniff the air when we hear such things as the "unconscious" being mentioned nearby.

> We have either purely theoretical prejudices against it, or superstitious ideas. One cannot even talk about the unconscious before many educated people without being accused of mysticism[7].

That is the typical attitude of Western intellectuals, and, because of that, while we explore the external world extensively, our brain capacity remains highly reduced. And that, because "we limit ourselves to the attainable, and this means renouncing all our other potentialities"[8]. The Easterners know, as do also many Westerners, that reducing everything whatsoever to the rational and the practical is stupid. The rational and the practical are not all — there are other things besides and beyond that (as Hamlet informed his friend Horatio). Quoting Jung,

> We should never identify ourselves with reason, for man is not and will never be a creature of reason alone, a fact to be noted by all pedantic culture-mongers. The irrational cannot and must not die[9].

Once decided that we are not only reason, that our Self is

not composed of consciousness alone, but of the unconscious, too, the next step would be bringing this repressed unconscious to the surface. It has to be put on equal terms with the conscious mind so that we become a complete being and not merely a one-sided creature.

> Whoever makes progress along the path of self-realization must inevitably bring into consciousness the contents of his personal unconscious, thus enlarging considerably the domain of his personality[10].

Now, just as for the Eastern mentality this can be very easily done, for the Westerners it is virtually impossible, so attached we are to the social. We cannot cease to be, before anything, social beings — an ideal we have inherited from the Greeks. It is really difficult for our mentality to cut the umbilical cord that links us with society, and plunge into physical or psychological isolation; and isolation is the first step in the process of making the unconscious surface. One has to cut-off the external stimuli in order to concentrate in his inner world. Thus the fact that sea-voyages (as the ones we will examine in the four novels studied in this dissertation) are regarded as representative of inner-voyages, for the sea is usually associated with the unconscious. Thus, isolation is necessary.

> Isolation by a secret results as a rule in an animation of the psychic atmosphere, as a substitute for loss of contact with other people. It causes an activation of the unconscious[11].

That is why the Buddha sat motionless under the Bo-tree. That is why Christ preached detachment for those who seeked salvation, urging them to forsake family, relatives, friends, jobs, and all external stimuli. Joseph Campbell, who is Jung's disciple, says something about this in his analysis of Buddhist India.

> Whether in the forest voluntarily as a monk, or in jail by "force majeure," the individual is

> psychologically dissociated from the field of life normal to his kind. External stimuli are cut off.
> Next: with the normal system of sign stimuli cut off (the reality system), a supernormal order is developed (the mythic system), to which the sentiments are addressed[12].

The difference that I would make would be that in isolation by force (in prisons, for instance), a feeling of resentment would overcome the isolated person. The position of the hermit, not being dictated by his own will, may lead him to a mere plunge into the "shadow" side (remember the Marquis de Sade). Solitude can become hell for one who is not ready for it.

The awakening of the unconscious is, in the East, attained mainly by means of yoga. It is common to find Westerners who think that the aim of yoga is the complete suppression of the ego, as this next quotation from Campbell may suggest,

> Nevertheless, the ultimate realization, which the sages have celebrated is that the god worshiped as though without is in reality a reflex of the same mystery as oneself. AS long as an illusion of ego remains, the commensurate illusion of a separate deity also will be there; and vice versa as long as the idea of a separate deity is cherished, an illusion of ego, related to it in love, fear worship, exile, or atonement will also be there[13].

But what has to be suppressed is that part of the ego that is guided by the superego, by the codes of society. Thus the individual must get rid of that part of himself that is linked with the social and society's values, but he preserves that part of his ego that is linked with the id, with the unconscious. He ceases to obey external stimuli, and starts to listen to his true nature.

We have already seen that this linkage with the social has created the external projections of good and evil, and impeded true fulfilment in the human being as a complete unity. Campbell himself recognizes that reaching Buddhahood does not mean plunging into the oblivion that a total suppression of the ego would imply,

as he quotes from the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sutra.

> "Hence, also, when you have perceived that Buddha, it is in fact your own mind that is in possession of those thirty-two signs of perfection and eighty minor marks of excellence perceived in the Buddha. In sum: it is your own mind that becomes the Buddha. Nay! it is your own mind that is even now the Buddha. The ocean of true and universal knowledge of all the Buddhas derive its source from one's own mind and thought"[14].

As we see, the mind and the thought are always present, never a word is said about suppressing the conscious. The conscious (the ego) cannot be simply suppressed. That is not possible. It would be a psychological suicide — the person would go mad. And new psychologists, like Laing, for instance have said that. Yoga's function is to link (yoga means union) — it links the conscious with that part of the Self that is the true mind, the true inner being; the unconscious.

> The Indian term yoga is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root yui, "to link, join, or unite," which is related etymologically to "yoke," a yoke of oxen, and is in sense analogous to the word "religion" (Latin re-ligio), "to link back, or bind." Man, the creature, is by religion bound back to God. However, religion, religio, refers to a linking historically conditioned by way of a convenant, sacrament, or Koran, whereas yoga is the psychological linking of the mind to that superordinated principle "by which the mind knows." Furthermore, in yoga what is linked is finally the self to itself, consciousness to consciousness; for what had seemed, through māyā, to be two are in reality not so; whereas in religion what are linked are God and man, which are not the same[15].

(And it is interesting that the idea here is that the yogi not only does not deny consciousness, but he is all-consciousness.)

Jung himself admits (with some reserve) the possibility of yoga controlling even the unconscious. He says,

> I know that yoga prides itself on being able to control even the unconscious processes, so that nothing can happen in the psyche as a whole that is not ruled by a supreme consciousness. I have not the slightest doubt that such a condition is more or less possible. But it is possible at the

price of becoming identical with the unconscious[16].

That is a little bit contradictory. First he admits that, through yoga, a "supreme consciousness" rules even the unconscious, and then he says that the price is a merging of the consciousness into the unconscious. But, in this case, there would be no consciousness, and the unconscious would be the ruler. Here, Jung is forgetting the idea of transcendence: the yogi brings the conscious and the unconscious together, and transcends both. And Jung himself admits that somewhere else. He says,

> There is nothing mysterious or metaphysical about the term "transcendent function." It means a psychological function comparable in a way to a mathematical function of the same name, which is a function of real and imaginary numbers. The psychological "transcendent function" arises from the union of conscious and unconscious contents[17].

It is clear that this "transcendent function," the union of the conscious and the unconscious, can be nothing but "illumination" or the state of "Buddhahood" in Eastern terminology.

As we see, "illumination" is the transcendent state reached from the equilibrium of the two opposing forces: good and evil, light and darkness, conscious and unconscious, man and his "shadow".

In the East, the awakening of the unconscious is the highest goal for any yogi. But they are aware also of the dangers that this awakening may bring to the soul, the mind, or even the body. Dealing with or trying to awaken the unconscious is something regarded as being extremely dangerous: the awakening of the "kuṇḍalini serpent." According to the imagery in the Kuṇḍalini Yoga, it is a fiery serpent that lies, coiled in rolls, sleeping, at the bottom of our spines. It may go on sleeping *in aeternum*, provided that we do not wake it up. Once we try it, we must be totally sure that we can cope with it, otherwise, it may be our

end as rational beings, and the end of our identities (that is what Jung called becoming "identical with the unconscious"). The yogis advise neophytes never to try it before they have years of experience of practice in yoga (Kuṇḍalini Yoga is the highest stage in yoga) and total awareness of their senses, and command over their emotions and over their bodies.

Two things may happen when the "serpent" is awakened:

a) if we are strong (inner strength) and can control it, it uncoils itself, ascends through the spine until it reaches the area of our foreheads that corresponds to the third eye of Shiva (the well-known "third eye" of omniscience that the Buddha possesses) — thus, we become illuminated, like a Buddha;

b) if, on the other hand, we are not prepared for that, if we are not strong enough, the "serpent" descends to the sexual organs and starts to control us.

Of course, the whole thing is symbolic. The "serpent" stands for our basic instincts, in other words, the unconscious (including the "shadow") which, integrated with our consciousness, and trasncended, plants wisdom (illumination) in us.

The symbol of illumination is the lotus-flower — perhaps, the most beautiful image in the whole imagery we may find in Eastern religions and philosophy — a perfect, beautiful, clean, pure flower which blooms out of the dark, muddy waters of the swamps. The flower is our illuminated minds, integrated with the Cosmos; and this perfection and power has risen from dark, swampy waters (the unconscious). The motto of the Eastern ascetics is "If thou seekest wisdom, know thyself." And that is also a Greek motto! Although it is from the Greeks mainly that we have borrowed our models of rationality, and logic, and social ideals, we, distracted by our technological glory, forgot to examine their temples, especially one of them, at Delphi, over whose portals it

is chiselled: *Gnothi Seauton* (KNOW THYSELF).

The serpent is a tremendously powerful symbol. We find it in the mythologies of all cultures, symbolizing "good" in some, or "evil" in others. It is present in the Myth of Adam and Eve, where it apparently represents evil. God tells Adam and Eve that they can eat of the fruits of any tree in Eden, but those of the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil" they must not touch. However, the Devil, subtly and surreptitiously, tells Eve that if she eats of those fruits and gives some to Adam, they will acquire wisdom and will "be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis,3:5). (That is exactly the Eastern concept of wisdom attainment!). And, mind, the devil is here depicted as a serpent (the kuṇḍalini serpent?). It is very interesting that when God (in the Old Testament God and Man are completely distinct) knows that the fruit of knowledge has been eaten, he summons the angels and says,

> Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and, now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:
> Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden (Genesis, 3:22-23).

God wanted to prevent man from becoming wise, for that would lead him to take another step and become immortal like a god. So, He admits that man <u>can</u> become a god. Very interesting!

But such a thing does not happen in the East, where God is not a separate deity, but lives in Man, as in all Nature, and thus, He does not prevent Man from reaching his plenitude.

However, even in the Old Testament, things are not so neatly established as they seem to be. Campbell calls our attention to the fact that Jeohvah also is linked somehow with the serpent.

> Moreover, as in early Bronze Age seals of Mingizzida and his serpent porter, we have clear and

> adequate evidence throughout the biblical text that the Lord Yahweh was himself an aspect of the serpent power, and so himself properly the serpent spouse of the serpent goddess of the caduceus, Mother Earth[18].

And he gives as evidence the rod which Moses transformed into a serpent before the Pharaoh and his court. This same serpent-rod Moses used to make water gush from the rock in the desert. And there is still more: when Israel started to murmur against God while wandering in the desert, God sent "fiery serpents"among the people. As the serpents killed many of the people, the Israelites bagged Moses to pray for them. God said to Moses:

> Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live (Numbers, 21:8).

So here, we are presented the serpent with a dual power: that of killing, and that of healing. Thus, the serpent embodies opposing forces in itself — life and death, good and evil, God and the Devil.

> If all symbols are really functions and signs of things embued with energy, then the serpent or snake is, by analogy, sumbolic energy itself — of force pure and simple; hence its ambivalence and multivalencies[19].

And it is interesting that not only God is associated with the serpent; in some circles, Christ too is thus associated, as Jung points out: "Among the Ophites, Christ was the serpent"[20].

Acquiring wisdom or attaining illumination is a rebirth — and the snake also is a symbol of rebirth. As Campbell mentions,

> The wonderful ability of the serpent to slough its skin and so renew its youth has earned for it throughout the world the character of the master of the mystery of rebirth[21].

In this aspect, the serpent resembles the Phoenix, which is also representative of rebirth. And it is strange that we have two

creatures so widely different — one that lives on the pinnacles, and another that crawls on earth — representing the same idea. And there is another creature of the heights that we may find associated with the serpent: the eagle. Nietzsche's Zarathustra, for example, has these two creatures always beside him. One could say, in such cases, that the creature of the heights stands for the soul or the mind, whereas the creature that crawls on earth stands for the instincts — "The serpent is a common manifestation of earth powers"[22]. The Aztecs were able to join the two symbols in one when they created Quetzalcoatl, the "plumed serpent."

The serpent, as we have seen, has a dual quality in it — it has opposing forces in it. Its symbolism is also bi-sexual. In the serpent

> The phallic suggestion is immediate, and, as swallower, the female organ also is suggested; so that a dual image is rendered, which works implicitly in the sentiments[23].

Thus, the serpent symbolizes the male as well as the female. It is very interesting to remember that there is an alchemical symbol which is a snake biting its own tail, making a full circle (sometimes, it is depicted as a dragon — but the dragon is also a reptile). My mentioning alchemy here is not gratuitous, for, contrary to what many people think that alchemy was merely a crazy attempt of some philosophers during the Middle Ages to get rich by transforming lead in gold, its goal was not different from that of sitting under the Bo-tree, that is, transcendence. As Jung says,

> But alchemy has also a spiritual side which must not be underestimated and whose psychological value has not yet been sufficiently appreciated: there was an "alchemical" philosophy, the groping precursor of modern psychology. The secret of alchemy was in fact the transcendent function, the transformation of personality through the blending and fusion of the noble with the base components, of the differentiated with the inferior functions, of the conscious with

the unconscious[24].

Jung says more about this in another of his works,

> It looks as if the idea had dawned on the alchemists that the Son who, according to classical (and Christian) tradition, dwells eternally in the Father and reveals himself as God's gift to mankind, was something that man could produce out of his own nature — with God's help, of course (Deo concedente). The heresy of this idea is obvious[25].

But it would not be so obvious if Western religion had not been corrupted.

With its philosophy of melting the base with the noble, conscious with unconscious, alchemy approached West with East. This idea is revealed in our literature as well. Jung spots it in Goethe:

> ... and Faust is an alchemical drama from beginning to end, although the educated man of today has only the haziest notion of this. Our conscious mind is far from understanding everything, but the unconscious always keeps an eye on the "age-old, sacred things," however strange they may be, and reminds us of them at a suitable opportunity[26].

The Titanic battle that takes place inside Faust is projected (he is a Westerner, after all) in the outside world and takes the forms of Mephistopheles on one side, and the angels on the other. They are, in fact, nothing but Faust's own inner light and darkness, his conscious mind and his "shadow."

> Mephistopheles is the diabolical aspect of every psychic function that has broken loose from the hierarchy of the total psyche and now enjoys independence and absolute power. But this aspect can be perceived only when the function becomes a separate unit and is objectivated or personified[27].

This joining of good and evil, light and darkness, masculine and feminine, is represented by the serpent that in alchemy is shown forming a circle. This alchemical circle of conflicting forces is the same that we find in the Chinese Taoist

philosophy. There, we have a circle they call "tei-gi." This circle has inside it two sinuous semicircles of opposing forces, one black and the other white, that can be perfectly matched, thus forming the complete "tei-gi". These opposing forces are called the Teluric Antitheses — Yang and Yin. There is a Cosmic Thesis (the Absolute) that, going through the Teluric Antitheses, culminates in the Synthesis Made Cosmic — the "tei-gi"[28]. The "tei-gi" represents the usually externalized duality joined within the human being: he has inside him the good and the evil, as well as the male and the female. And it is not only the Chinese who have this idea of the duality of genders joined in the human being, since we know that, in certain circles, there is the idea that Adam (before Eve was created) was bi-sexual — and even Christ has been represented as an androgynous being; as Campbell notes,

> The Great Original of the Chinese chronicles, the holy woman T'ai Yuan, combined in her person the masculine Yang and the feminine Yin. The cabalistic teachings of the medieval Jews, as well as the Gnostic Christian writings of the second century, represent the Word Made Flesh as androgynous — which was indeed the state of Adam as he was created, before the female aspect, Eve, was removed into another form. And among the Greeks, not only Hermaphrodite (the child of Hermes and Aphrodite), but Eros too, the divinity of love (the first of the gods, according to Plato), were in sex both female and male[29].

The separation of the female from the male in Adam (the creation of Eve) is said to represent "the fall." The breaking apart of the natural inner energies (including good and evil) would be "the fall" of man.

> The removal of the feminine into another form symbolizes the beginning of the fall from perfection into duality; and it was naturally followed by the discovery of the duality of good and evil, exile from the garden where God walks on earth, and thereupon the building of the wall of paradise, constituted of "coincidence of opposites," by which Man (now man and woman) is cut off from not only the vision but even the recollection of the image of God[30].

The unification that happens in the "tei-gi" has a transcendent value — illumination. It happens micro- as well as Macro-cosmically. According to Eastern thought, one only has access to the Macro- if he first knows the micro-, thus, a greater emphasis is put on the individual rather than on society.

> In India the final focus of concern is not the community (though, as we shall see, the idea of the holy community plays a formidable role as a disciplinary force), but yoga[31].

Real change in the world will only take place after a real change has occurred in the individual and through the individual. Jung recognizes that, and admits that only the individual, through the improvement of himself, can improve the world.

> Individuation is indispensable for certain people, not only as a therapeutic necessity, but as a high ideal, an idea of the best we can do. Nor should I omit to remark that it is at the same time the primitive Christian ideal of the Kingdom of Heaven which is "within you." The idea at the bottom of this ideal is that right action comes from right thinking, and that there is no cure and no improving of the world that does not begin with the individual himself[32].

And here, as we see, Jung mentions something that I have emphasized in this chapter: that the "primitive Christian ideal" has changed with time.

Real outside social changes can only happen through a previous inner, individual change. The individual must come before the social — the psychological is more powerful and more important than the social.

> Psychic existence is the only category of existence of which we have <u>immediate</u> knowledge, since nothing can be known unless it first appears as a psychic image. Only psychic existence is immediately verifiable. To the extent that the world does not assume the form of a psychic image, it is virtually non-existent. This is a fact which, with few exceptions — as for instance in Schopenhauer's philosophy — the West has not yet fully realized. But Schopenhauer was influenced by Buddhism and by the Upanishads.

Even a superficial acquaintance with Eastern thought is sufficient to show that a fundamental difference divides East and West. The East bases itself upon psychic reality, that is, upon the psyche as the main and unique condition of existence[33].

The Western world shared this philosophy with the East in the beginning, but, with time, it changed slowly and got farther and farther from these original philosophy and way of living. We know that the primordial gods of the Greeks (Uranus, Cronus, etc.) were very chaotic indeed (that was the time of the Titans), and the gods are always a reflection of society. It was only with Zeus, who dethroned his father Cronus, that the Olympus became a well-ordered place. Thus, the Greek society was transformed from a former Dionysian chaotic world into an Apollonian well-ordered one. Of course, there have always been individual exceptions, but the general trend of Western civilization became more and more Apollonian. But many people are now opening their eyes, seeing where the West is leading us, and recognizing the truer wisdom of the East — *ex Oriente lux*. There are things that we Westerners are discovering (or re-discovering) now that for Easterners have always been the obvious, as Jung asserts,

We have not yet realized that Western Theosophy is an amateurish, indeed barbarous imitation of the East. We are just beginning to take up astrology again, which to the Oriental is his daily bread. Our studies of sexual life, originating in Vienna and England, are matched or surpassed by Hyndu teachings on this subject. Oriental texts ten centuries old introduce us to philosophical relativism, while the idea of indeterminacy, newly broached in the West, is the very basis of Chinese science. As to our discoveries in psychology, Richard Wilhelm has shown me that certain complicated psychic processes are recognizably described in ancient Chinese texts. Psychoanalysis itself and the lines of thought to which it gives rise — a development which we consider specifically Western — are only a beginner's attempt compared with what is an immemorial art in the East. It may not perhaps be known that parallels between psychoanalysis and yoga have already been drawn by Oscar Schmitz[34].

Despite the supercilious attitude with which the Western pragmatic world regards these many times millenarian Eastern civilizations, we are still groping in the dark with things that have always been common knowledge for them. *Vanitas vanitatum!*

NOTES ON CHAPTER TWO

[1] Jung, Carl B., in The Portable Jung, p.487.

[2] ibid., p.488.

[3] ibid., p.489.

[4] idem, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, p.39.

[5] idem, in The Portable Jung, p.145.

[6] idem, in O Homem e seus Símbolos, p.83 - my traslation.

[7] idem, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, p.214.

[8] idem, in The Portable Jung, p.11.

[9] idem, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, p.82.

[10] ibid., p.281.

[11] idem, in The Portable Jung, p.331.

[12] Campbell, Joseph, "Oriental Mythology", vol. II, in The Masks of God, p.314.

[13] ibid., p.14.

[14] ibid., p.316 - my underlining.

[15] ibid., pp.13-14 - original underlining.

[16] Jung, Carl G., in The Portable Jung, p.500.

[17] ibid., p.273.

[18] Campbell, Joseph, "Occidental Mythology," vol. III, in The Masks of God, p.30.

[19] Cirlot, J.E., A Dictionary of Symbols, (p.285).

[20] Jung, Carl G., in The Portable Jung, p.393.

[21] Campbell, Joseph, "Occidental Mythology," vol. III, in The Masks of God, p.9.

[22] Rose, H.J., Gods and Heroes of the Greeks, p.85.

[23] Campbell, Joseph, "Occidental Mythology," vol.III, in The Masks of God, p.10.

[24] Jung, Carl G., Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, p.232.

[25] Jung, Carl G., in The Portable Jung, p.370.

[26] ibid., p.342.

[27] ibid., p.343.

[28] Lao-tse, Tao te King, pp.27-28.

Note: I had to face a serious problem in translating these terminologies when I came to the last one. The term in Portuguese is "Síntese Cosmificada," but this word "cosmificada" does not exist in English, so, I had to adapt it and, thus, I came to "Synthesis Made Cosmic," which keeps the same sense.

[29]Campbell, Joseph, The Hero With A Thousand Faces, pp.152-153.

[30]ibid., p.153.

[31]idem, "Oriental Mythology," vol. II, in The Masks of God, p.13.

[32]Jung, Carl G., Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, p.238.

[33]idem, in The Portable Jung, pp.486-487.

[34]ibid., p.475.

CHAPTER III

THE REPRESSION OF INDIVIDUALISM

1. Billy Budd - Psychological and Social Implications

Melville's Billy Budd (lixe Conrad's James Wait) represents the unconscious and the latent sense of individuality in the crew (representing humanity) of the ship that in the novel stands for the world. The unconscious is fought against and eventually repressed by rationalism. The author's position is not really that of conservatism, as some critics have suggested, but that of liberalism; only it is also pessimistic. He is depicting the world as it is, and showing that that is how things usually come out: the individual is usually smashed for an illusion of the "social welfare." Individualism is sacrificed for the well being of the community (or is it for the well-being and security of the leaders?) and the "social order."

Billy Budd is shown as an individual living in two different social situations: that of society in times of peace, and that of society in times of war. The society in peace is represented by life aboard the merchantship "Rights of Man," an idyllic situation of a total good-will among human beings, and utter peace. It looks really like a kind of Eden — Billy is even

said to have emerged from the "Rights of Man" resembling a "young Adam before the fall." On the other hand, we have the reverse of the medal in the society representing wartime, which is found aboard the warship "Bellipotent" ("Indomitable" in some versions). The names of the ships speak for themselves, and suggest the situation of the individuals in each case.

The novel opens with the impressment of Billy Budd from the "Rights of Man" into the "Bellipotent," made by Lieutenant Ratcliffe. We are informed about Billy's life aboard the "Rights of Man" by an account made by the master of that ship, Captain Graveling. He talks about his crew's feelings for the young sailor.

> But they all love him. Some of 'em do his washing, darn his old trousers for him; the carpenter is at odd times making a pretty little chest of drawers for him. Anybody will do anything for Billy Budd; and it is the happy family here (p.325).

Even when Billy got involved in trouble earlier when he entered the "Rights of Man," bad feelings never persisted, but were soon replaced by conciliation. That is what happened when he was bullied by a sailor nicknamed Red Whiskers, and instinctively reacted like a lightning, hitting the man and prostrating him.

> So, in the second dogwatch, one day, the Red Whiskers in presence of others, under pretence of showing Billy just whence a sirloin steak was cut — for the fellow had been a butcher — insultingly gave him a dig under the ribs. Quick as lightning Billy let fly his arm. I dare say he never meant to do quite so much as he did, but he gave the burly fool a terrible drubbing (p.325).

Thus, this aspect of Billy's character is emphasized since the very begining: he is quick in action and slow in thought — or simply incapable of thought. He is utterly instinctive, and this characteristic is the more emphasized by Melville's attributing to him an impediment of speech in times of great tension (and that is exactly the cause of his troubles aboard the

"Bellipotent" later on). Billy is

> ... one to whom not yet has been proffered the questionable apple of knowledge. He was illiterate; he could not read, but he could sing, and like the illiterate nightingale was sometimes the composer of his own song (p.330).

So Billy sometimes cannot speak, but he can sing. Music has a direct appeal to the senses, an appeal stronger than that of any other art, an appeal that hits directly at the core of the human soul. In Billy's case, being irrational, he reacts irrationally. Instead of using words and rational arguments to assert his position when challenged, he can only use his fists.

Rationalism in Billy Budd is represented by another character, Claggart, who is the personification of evil. Thus, Melville equates rationalism with evil in this novel (note that, in this last quotation, he refers to the apple of knowledge as "questionable"), and this allegory is carried on throughout the entire book, with an increase of tension between the parts, which culminates in an apparent victory of the rational, and the suppression of the instinctive. Claggart is, even physically, associated with the mind, the intellect, "His brow was of the sort phrenologically associated with more than average intellect" (p.342). But the narrator makes it clear that even his appearance suggests the evil that goes inside him. The pallor of his complexion is contrasted with the "deeply bronzed visages of the sailors" and, though implying that this is caused by "his official seclusion from sunlight," the narrator suggests that this "nevertheless seemed to hint something defective or abnormal in the constitution of the blood" (p.342).

The author also provides us with the reasons for Claggart's promotions in the warship,

> ... Claggart upon his entrance into the navy was, as a novice, assigned to the least honorable section of

> a man-of-war's crew, embracing the drudgery, he did not long remain there. The superior capacity he immediately evinced, his constitutional sobriety, an engratiating deference to superiors, together with a peculiar ferreting genius manifested on a singular occasion; all this, capped by a certain austere patriotism, abruptly advanced him to the position of master-at-arms (p.345).

So here we have as Claggart's qualities, "superior capacity," "deference to superiors," "austere patriotism." They are manifestations of his rational personality, which arouses a rational response in his superiors, bringing about his promotions. The master of the "Bellipotent," Captain Vere, although disliking Chaggart instinctively, cannot help it but responding rationally to his rational qualities, acting rationally, and promoting him. Thus, Claggart's evil nature is protected by the status quo, since it is at the service of this same status quo. The usual pattern of a civilized society.

> Not many are the examples of this depravity which the gallows and jail supply. At any rate, for notable instances, since these have no vulgar alloy of the brute in them, but invariably are dominated by intellectuality, one must go elsewhere. Civilization, especially if of the austerer sort, is auspicious to it. It folds itself in the mantle of respectability (p.353).

And this same kind of problem that Melville denounces here, Conrad also denounces in Heart of Darkness, for example: under this "mantle of respectability" lies rottenness.

So, this is Claggart. This is Billy's antagonist. The antagonist of the unconscious, of the instincts. The rational mind, the cold intellect against the flow of emotions. For Claggart's antagonism towards Billy there is no real reason, except reasoning; nothing rational, except rationalism. It is nothing really personal, but a fight between the superego and the id. It is something that goes beyond the scope of a fight between two mere men, but symbolizes the struggle of intellectualism against the

more primitive energy of the unconscious, the instinctive energy that all human beings living in complex societies are taught and urged to repress in themselves.

There are points in common between Billy Budd and Claggart. For instance, nothing is known about the past of either of them. Of Claggart, the narrator says;

> Nothing was known of his former life. It might be that he was an Englishman; and yet there lurked a bit of accent in his speech suggesting that possibly he was not such by birth, but through naturalization in early childhood (p.343).

It is interesting that, concerning Billy, there is a suggestion in the end, when a reporter writes an article about the execution, that he was not an Englishman. But his past is unknown. Billy himself knows nothing about it. During the interview that takes place right after his impressment into the "Bellipotent,"

> Asked by the officer, a small, brish little gentleman as it chanced, among other questions, his place of birth, he replied, "Please, sir. I don't know."
>
> "Don't know where you were born? Who was your father?"
>
> "God knows, sir" (p.329).

(And this, of course, is a good hint for many critics to smell a Christ-symbol in Billy). When the officer asks again whether he really knows nothing at all about his origin, Billy replies,

> No, sir, But I have heard that I was found in a pretty silk-lined basket hanging one morning from the knocker of a good man's door in Bristol (p.330).

The fact that both Billy and Claggart lack a past history emphasizes their symbolic function. But, although their origin is unknown, they have characteristics of nobility in them.

> Yes, Billy Budd was a foundling, a presumable by-blow, and, evidently, no ignoble one. Noble descent was as evident in him as in a blood horse (p.330).

And something similar is said of Claggart:

> But his personal aspect and manner were so suggestive of an education and career incongruous with his naval function that when not actively engaged in it he looked like a man of high quality, social and moral, who for reasons of his own was keeping incog (p.343).

So, Billy and Claggart are both shining characters. However, they shine in different ways. One sheds a light that may be seen as an inner, instinctive luminescence of life; the other holds the lugubrious light of a death-carrier.

> But the form of Billy Budd was heroic; and if his face was without the intellectual look of the pallid Claggart's, not the less was it lit, like his, from within, though from a different source (pp.354-355).

What clearly shows Melville's pessimistic view of the world in this work is his making Claggart a stronger character than Billy. Whereas Claggart actually attempts to hold the reins of his destiny in his hands, and control it, Billy is presented virtually as a fatalist — "Like animals, though no philosopher, he was, without knowing it, practically a fatalist" (p.327). Billy, as a matter of fact, takes his impressment with a naturalness which shocks everybody aboard the "Rights of Man," and surprises Lieutenant Ratcliffe.

With his impressment into the "Bellipotent," Billy suffers "an abrupt transition from his former simpler sphere to the ampler and more knowing world of a great warship" (p.328), he goes from the simpler world of peace and good-will to a more complex world of fights and competition. Even the attitude of his fellow sailors changes from the former ship (or world) to the new one, but Billy does not change, and he humbly gives a farewell, full of symbolic implications, to the "Rights of Man" (p.327). He is greeted on the "Bellipotent" with "an ambiguous smile in one or two harder faces among the bluejackts" (p.329).

Billy's new fellow sailors are not so kindred to him in this new world as the ones in the former world (the "Rights of Man") used to be.

> Hardly here was he that cynosure he had previously been among those minor ship's companies of the merchant marine, with which companies only had he hitherto consorted (p.328).

Actually, his presence among the new crew is rather incongruous. Melville calls our attentions to this incongruity saying that

> ... Billy Budd's position aboard the seventy-four was something analogous to that of a rustic beauty transplanted from the provinces and brought into competition with the highborn dames of the court (p.329).

The fact is that Billy, representing individualism, is much more at ease in a society with a less strong hierarchical separation. Such a society is that of the merchant ship, where the sailors are, to a greater extent, allowed to let their individuality become manifest. In a society such as that of the warship, marked by a neatly established hierarchy, we find the officers (the leaders) totally distinct from a crew that is not composed of individuals, but form a single body that jumps at orders. There is a marked uniformization in the members of the crew; they are made equal by being lowered to an obeying position. The presence of a necessity for individuality and differentiation on a ship like the "Bellipotent" is regarded as bizarre and undesirable.

> It is observable that where certain virtues pristine and unadulterated peculiarly characterize anybody in the external uniform of civilization, they will upon scrutiny seem not to be derived from custom or convention, but rather to be out of keeping with these, as if indeed exceptionally transmitted from a period prior to Cain's city and citified man (p.331).

So here, we have the "young Adam" transposed from his Eden into "Cain's city" — that is Billy Budd's position in the "Bellipotent."

There is a strange character in this new world who has a function similar to that of the Parsee in _Moby-Dick_ — a kind of guide, a sort of "guru," one who sees better the present and foretells the future. The character is the Dansker. And he is able to spot the incongruity of Billy's presence on the "Bellipotent."

> Now the first time that his small weasel eyes happened to light on Billy Budd, a certain grim internal merriment set all his ancient wrinkles into antic play. Was it that his eccentric unsentimental old sapience, primitive in its kind, saw or thought it saw something which in contrast with the warship's environment looked oddly incongruous in the Handsome Sailor? (pp.347-348).

The Dansker's manners are very significantly described as resembling those of an Oriental, and he is attracted towards Billy: "The Dansker in his ascetic way rather took to Billy" (p.348). It is interesting that this figure of a wise old man (in Jungian terms, an archetypal figure) is present in all the works I will examine: besides, as I have noted, in _Moby-Dick_, we have him also in _The Nigger of the "Nascissus,"_ represented by Old Singleton. In _Heart of Darkness_ this figure is already incorporated in Marlow himself, who is several times described as resembling a Hindu ascetic, sitting cross-legged, and shedding wisdom around him.

Another interesting point to note is that, the same as Billy and Claggart, the Dansker, of course, is an alien, not an Englishman. This old man becomes Billy's confidant.

> At off-times the foretopman had picked up some acquaintance with him, and now in his trouble it occurred to him that he might be the sort of person to go to for a counsel (p.347).

And the Dansker reveals to Billy Claggart's hatred for him, but all to no avail, since Billy can see in Claggart's attitude towards him nothing but friendship.

> The old man, showing up the front of his tarpaulin and deliberately rubbing the long, slant

> scar at the point where it entered the thin hair, laconically said, "Baby Budd, Jemmy Legs" (meaning the master-at-arms) "is down on you."
> "Jemmy Legs!" ejaculated Billy, his welkin eyes expanding. "What for? Why, he calls me 'the sweet and pleasant young fellow', they tell me."
> "Does he so?" grinned the grizzled one; then said, "Ay, Baby Lad, a sweet voice has Jemmy Legs" (p.349 - original underlining).

Billy is unable to perceive behind Claggart's social manners his Machiavellian machinations and the recurrent double meanings in his words. Incapable of double meanings himself, Billy is unable to perceive such things when confronted with them, in dealing with another person. So he thinks that the Dansker must be mistaken, which implies that, in Melville's pessimistic view, the individual has no chance of self-assertion when confronting the social. The machine, the establishment, has the strength of malice which the individual lacks. And the establishment wants men to think (or react to stimuli) and act as a compact mass which is easier to lead and control — and it punishes those who happen to move away from that block of uniformed mentalities. Billy witnesses such a punishment aboard the warship. A man is flogged on the deck, and the reason for his punishment is provided: the young sailor was "absent from his assigned post when the ship was being put about" (p.346). The sailor is flogged and, when released, "he rushed forward from the spot to bury himself in the crowd" (p.346). Thus, the crowd becomes a man's place, his refuge. He has to adjust to the general behavior and general tendencies. Billy is horrified by what he sees, and

> He resolved that never through remissness would he make himself liable to such a visitation or do or omit aught that might merit even verbal reproof (p.346).

As we see, public punishment results in the desired effect. We can never be sure if Billy's decision due to fear of the pains of the punishment, or fear of the indignity of it, but, in any case, it

serves to make him humbler.

The ideal of law and order is represented by the-always-mentioned-but-never-present figure of the King; but the extension of the King's arm — the one representing the establishment and entitled to apply its law — is the master of the ship, Captain Vere. His name is quite ironic, because Vere means "truth," and, instead of standing by Man — a reality —, Vere stands by the establishment — an abstraction —; instead of representing a whole Man, he represents society as a whole — an idea that has to be preserved no matter what. And Vere is the right person for the job, for, besides being weak in character (Melville makes that clear by comparing him to Nelson), he is a conservative, worried with traditional forms.

> His settled convictions were as a dike against those invading waters of novel opinion social, political, and otherwise, which carried away as in a torrent no few minds in those days, minds by nature not inferior to his own. While other members of that aristocracy to which by birth he belonged were incensed at the innovators mainly because their theories were inimical to the privileged classes, Captain Vere disinterestedly opposed them not alone because they seemed to him insusceptible of embodiment in lasting institutions, but at war with the peace of the world and the true welfare of mankind (pp.340-341).

But Vere also represents humanity as a whole, since it is he, and only he, who directly experiences the effects of the fight between Billy and Claggart (instincts and rationality). Vere is Man between the two forces, having to decide where to side. Melville puts the situation this way to show that man's decision (Vere's decision) to repress the instincts is after all a conscious decision.

Some critics tend to see in Vere the embodiment of Melville. But that is not possible, for Melville is too ironic and disdainful of Vere's attitudes and positions, as this study will prove. Of

course, there are some elements of Melville in Vere, as there are in Billy, in the Dansker, and even in Claggart (authors put a bit of themselves in the characters they create), but Melville really stands aloof, although I would say that his sympathy is for Billy (the unconscious), despite picturing him pessimistically as a weak character.

One episode turns out to be the ignition that puts in motion Claggart's machinations against Billy Budd, and that episode is the one of the spilled soup. Billy accidently spills soup in Claggart's path when eating on deck. The scene is described as follows:

> The ship at noon, going large before the wind, was rolling on her cruise, and he below at dinner and engaged in some sportful talk with the members of his mess, chanced in a sudden lurch to spill the entire contents of his soup pan upon the new-scrubbed deck. Claggart, the master-at-arms, official rattan in hand, happened to be passing along the battery in a bay of which the mess was lodged, and the greasy liquid streamed just across his path. Stepping over it, he was proceeding on his way without comment, since the matter was nothing to take notice of under the circumstances, when he happened to observe who it was that had done the spilling. His countenance changed. Pausing, he was about to ejaculate something hasty at the sailor, but checked himself, and pointing down to the streaming soup, playfully tapped him from behind with his rattan, saying in a low musical voice peculiar to him at times, "Handsomely done, my lad! And handsome is as handsome did it, too!" (pp.349-350 - my underlining).

Everything in this passage sounds extremely phallic. Here, we have Claggart walking with a rattan (a symbol of authority, but also a phallic symbol) in his hands. Billy spills the soup (the sexual connotation here is more than evident) exactly on his path. The "new-scrubbed deck" where the soup falls represents the neatly organized forms by which Claggart and his society live. The "greasy liquid" on it represents the force of life in its most instinctive aspect, the force of the unconscious (remember that the kuṇḍalini serpent is linked with sex), and the absence of forms. And, *nota bene*, Claggart would have ignored the event had

he not noticed its author. Had it been any other sailor who had done it, the episode would have had no significance for Claggart, but it is Billy who has done it, so Claggart takes it as a threat, for Billy <u>is</u> a threat for this world of forms. There is an important difference between the ways sex is made manifested here in Billy and in Claggart. In Billy, the symbolism shows up by accident: the soup is spilled on the floor. In Claggart, the symbol is the rattan he carries in his hand wherever he goes. So, in Claggart's case, it is something much more conscious — he chooses to carry that symbol with him —, whereas, in Billy's case, the symbol is shown independently of his conscious will. Claggart decides not to fight openly, but to use subtler arms against Billy's instinctive force, and so he taps Billy's back gently with the phallic symbol, indicating that he will fight subtlety with subtlety. Billy, as usual, cannot understand, and takes it for a demonstration of friendship.

So Claggart is able to show a double face, and thus, he is able to hide his true inner feelings. We will see, when analyzing <u>Moby-Dick</u>, that Melville presents the whale with the same ability. Both, Claggart and the whale, represent evil for Melville; both present to the world a white mask of appearances on their faces, while hiding darkness inside themselves.

From now on, Claggart is at war with Billy. Form is at war with instinctive energy.

The story takes place at a time right after the so-called "Great Mutiny of the Nore," and, because of that, the fear of a mutiny is always in the back of the minds of the officers of most warships. The narrator paints Captain Vere with really yellow colors in this concern, and he suggests several times Vere's weak character by comparing him to Admiral Nelson. Nelson, according to the narrator, would be able to control a mutiny with his magnetic

personality, whereas Vere simply lacks such strength in him. Claggart chooses exactly this crime, mutiny, to accuse Billy Budd of. It is interesting to note that Claggart certainly comprehends Billy Budd's potentialities for the assertion of individuality, and, at the same time, he is aware of Billy's total innocence and passivity; but those, instead of making him leave Billy alone, only intensify his hatred and spite.

> One person excepted, the master-at-arms was perhaps the only man in the ship intellectually capable of adequately appreciating the moral phenomenon presented in Billy Budd. And the insight but intensified his passion, which assuming various secret forms within him, at times assumed that of cynic disdain, disdain of innocence — to be nothing more than innocent! Yet in an aesthetic way he saw the charm of it, the courageous free-and-easy temper of it, and fain would have shared it, but he despaired of it (pp.355-356).

The other man that Melville suggests is able to comprehend Billy is certainly Captain Vere. However, there is still another one: the Dansker — only this one can comprehend Billy not intellectually, but at the level of the instincts.

After the "temptation," when Claggart sends two emissaries, two sailors, to bribe Billy into a mutiny because of the impressments, Billy confides to the Dansker about the incident, and the old man divines that Claggart must be behind it. However, Billy again does not believe it. The Dansker is usually referred to as "the sage," "the old Merlin," etc, but he never interferes, and that detachment is typical of the really wise (the Dansker, of course, is not Oriental, but he acts as such). "Long experience had very likely brought this old man to that bitter prudence which never interferes in aught and never gives advice" (p.363). We will see in the analysis of <u>The Nigger of the "Nascissus"</u> that detachment is a characteristic of Old Singleton too.

The Dansker does not interfere, and Billy is an easy prey

for Claggart. Billy is so simple-minded that even when he discovers that the two men who have tried to bribe him work under the direct orders of Claggart, he does not link them.

> Never did it occur to Billy as a thing to be noted or a thing suspicious, though he well knew the fact, that the armorer and captain of the hold, with the ship's yeoman, apothecary, and others of that grade, were by naval usage messmates of the master-at-arms, men with ears convenient to his confidential tongue (p.366).

Claggart represents evil, but one cannot say that he is "all evil," and only that. No, his personality is not that simple. He has his inner conflicts too. Even his position towards Billy is far from simple, for he feels an attraction towards him and what he represents. He feels an attraction (and that is, of course, his unconscious, latent trend towards individualism) towards that energy that oozes from Billy.

> When Claggart's unobserved glance happened to light on belted Billy rolling along the upper gen deck in the leisure of the second dogwatch, exchanging passing broadsides of fun with other young promenaders in the crowd, that glance would follow the cheerful sea Hyperion with a settled meditative and melancholy expression, his eyes strangely suffused with incipient feverish tears. Then would Claggart look like the man of sorrows. Yes, and sometimes the melancholy expression would have in it a touch of soft, yearning, as if Claggart could even have liked Billy but for fate and ban (p.365).

So Claggart is clearly trapped between two fires: his inner, unconscious, instinctive, latent feelings lead him towards Billy and what he stands for, whereas his rational mind pushes him away, and leads him to become the vehicle of Billy's destruction. The narrator makes that quite clear — Claggart's instinctive trend toward Billy Budd keeps gnawing inside him.

> As to Claggart, the monomania in the man — if that indeed it were — as involuntarily disclosed by starts in the manifestations detailed, yet in general covered over by his self-contained and rational demeanor; this, like subterranean fire, was eating its way deeper in him. Something decisive must come of it (p.367).

And what comes of it is Claggart's conscious decision to act according to the world of forms by which he lives, repressing the yearnings of his heart. Thus, he plans Billy's downfall, and decides to go to Captain Vere and report Billy's "conspiracy" on the "Bellipotent."

Vere is in between Claggart and Billy. He is the one who has to make the judgement and take sides. He may be seen as Man himself, in between the two trends of the mind — the ego placed between the superego and the id, and having to decide where to stand, since he cannot find a balance. Vere's position is conflictual. Although he is for the mind, he instinctively dislikes Claggart; although he instinctively likes Billy, he rationally condemns what he symbolizes, lest it would bring chaos to his well-ordered world. Although he is attracted towards the heart, his rational mind is stronger and represses his feelings. When Claggart approaches him, Vere is disgusted by the way he does it, because it is done surreptitiously and not openly. Quite different from Billy, who is direct, sincere, open, Claggart,

> ... though known to him indeed, has hardly been long enough known for through knowledge, but something in whose aspect nevertheless now for the first provokes a vaguely repellent distaste (p.369).

However, it seems that Vere admires Billy not for his potentialities for being different from the common sailors, his potentialities for assuming an outstanding position, highly individualized above the mass, but for his meekness, his passivity, even (or especially) his passivity by the time of his impressment, when Billy said good-bye to his rights of man.

> Captain Vere, though mistakingly understanding it as a satiric sally, had but thought so much the better of the impressed man for it; as a military sailor, admiring the spirit that could take an arbitrary enlistment so merrily and sensibly (p.372).

So, Vere, even admitting that the impressment is an arbitrary act, believes that one has to submit oneself to it, since it is perpetrated by the authorities. The authority is not to be contested, in Vere's view, but obeyed.

Due to his antipathy towards Claggart, Vere does not take his word for granted, but decides to confront accuser and accused, in order to verify where the truth lies; but that proves to be difficult. Contradicting Vere's expectations, Claggart is able to falsely accuse Billy while staring in his eyes, which proves that Claggart has really driven himself consciously to believe in the net of intrigues he has created, simply because he wants to believe it. His reasoning has dominated his emotions. When thus accused, Billy is struck mute because of his recurrent impediment of speech at times of tension, and reacts by raising his arm *ex abrupto*, and giving a terrible blow on Claggart's head, killing him. Everything here is very ironic: Claggart is expected to react physically when confronted with Billy and be unable to sustain his accusation, but that does not happen, for Claggart reacts intellectually and accuses Billy to his eye. On the other hand, when verbally accused, Billy is expected to react intellectually, and rationally defend himself, refuting the accusation, but that does not happen, for, lacking an intellect, Billy can only react physically, and, thus, he kills Claggart. And all that because Captain Vere knows neither Billy nor Claggart.

Captain Vere has now an enormous problem on his hands. The mutiny that Claggart intellectually idealized and accused Billy of is now made physically manifested with Claggart's death by Billy's hand. Vere comprehends all this. He realizes that Billy is naturally innocent, but socially guilty. If Vere were ruled by his heart, by Nature, Billy would be absolved, but Vere is ruled by forms, so he immediately gives, in a single sentence, the summary of the events and his verdict: "Struck dead by an angel of God!

Yet the Angel must hang!" (p.378) For Vere, the collective is more important than the individual, and so, "the father in him, manifested towards Billy thus far in the scene, was replaced by the military disciplinarian" (p.377).

The narrator now becomes bitterly ironic towards Captain Vere and all the pretences of society, by showing that, although Vere has already made up his mind that Billy "must hang," he calls a drumhead court to judge one who has already been convicted. The fact is that Vere is afraid that if Billy is not executed, that will open a dangerous precedent: a common sailor can kill an officer in a warship, and survive.

> Feeling that unless quick action was taken on it, the deed of the foretopman, so soon as it should be known on the gun decks, would tend to awaken any slumbering embers of the Nore among the crew, a sense of the urgency of the case overruled in Captain Vere every other consideration (p.381).

And this is the very opposite of the dénouement of the same situation we find in one of Conrad's works, The Secret Sharer, where the captain hides Leggat, a sailor who has killed an officer of another ship and has taken refuge in this captain's ship. Leggat is the captain's unconscious and, in this case, the captain acknowledges Leggat, shares his cabin secretly with him for a long time, and then risks his ship and the whole crew getting too near land in a dangerous place, so that Leggat be able to leave the ship unnoticed, and swim safely to his salvation.

However, here, on the "Bellipotent," the paranoia of the Nore mutiny is always in the back of Vere's mind; the horror of a mutiny, of chaos being brought to his neat world of forms haunts him.

> That the unhappy event which has been narrated could not have happened at a worse juncture was but too true. For it was close on the heel of the suppressed insurrections, an aftertime very critical to naval authority, demanding from every English sea

commander two qualities not readily interfusable — prudence and rigor (p.380).

What should be Captain Vere's motto, *fiat justicia et pereat mundus*, for he knows that Billy is innocent, is replaced, *manu militari*, by his "the Angel must hang!," and thus, the trial is nothing but a farce. Vere is the only witness to the "mutiny" and the judge at the same time. He conducts the jury to provide the support for the sentence that he has already passed.

Vere is incapable of acting beyond the written law, but adheres to it to the last.

> Our vowed responsibility is in this: That however pitiless that law may operate in any instances, we nevertheless adhere to it and administer it (pp.387-388).

He is an example of rationalism taken too far, to the worst consequences. Nothing should be considered besides the crude fact that Billy has reacted against an officer of the King. It does not matter that the reaction was dictated by Nature, by self-defence. They have to apply the law of the King (the mind), and not the law of Nature (the heart). Vere reasons, "but do these buttons that we wear attest that our allegiance is to Nature? No, to the King" (p. 387).

Vere, like Claggart, is dominated by rationalism. He too has driven himself to believe that there is no salvation outside reason. He believes that even he himself can be nothing but an instrument of a higher ideal, a higher law that transcends the humanity of a "mere" individual, since it is collective.

> In receiving our commissions we in the most important regards ceased to be natural free agents. When war is declared are we the commissioned fighters previously consulted? We fight at command. If our judgements approve the war, that is but coincidence (p.387).

We have here a society (the warship) in times of war — the

individual is nothing, discipline is all. But that is a very conscious attitude. Vere himself admits that this whole philosophy is not genuine in the least, but merely appearance, merely demagogy, but he sticks to it.

> War looks but to the frontage, the appearance. And the Mutiny Act, war's child, takes after the father. Budd's intent or non-intent is nothing to the purpose (p.389).

Ares has replaced Eros. So, the intellect, reason, and cold decisions must replace the heart. Vere goes so far as to take for granted that not only him, but everybody, including his victim (Billy) must think the same way.

> I feel as you do for this unfortunate boy. But did he know our hearts, I take him to be of the generous nature that he would feel even for us on whom in this military necessity so heavy a compulsion is laid (p.390).

Captain Vere personally goes to Billy's cell to communicate the verdict of the court: guilty. He is locked with Billy for a long time, and the essence of their *rendez-vous* is never known, but it is certain that he convinces (or forces it to this simple-minded) Billy that he will die for the noblest of causes: that of the preservation of the social order and the status quo. Billy passively accepts his execution (*Fiat voluntas tua*) and, at his last moment, facing the whole crew assembled on deck, he pronounces his approval of his own execution: "God bless Captain Vere!" (p.400).

Some critics tend to see irony in Billy's words, and suggest that he actually means the opposite of what he says (*Maledicat Dominus!*). However, we know that Billy is incapable of double-meanings. In the narrator's description of the young sailor, early in the novel, he says, referring to Billy's farewell to the former ship,

> And yet, more likely, if satire it was in effect it was hardly so by intention, for Billy, though happily endowed with a gaiety of high health, youth, and a free heart, was yet by no means of a satirical turn. The will to it and the sinister dexterity were alike wanting. To deal in double meanings and insinuations of any sort was quite foreign to his nature (p.327).

So Billy's small intelligence cannot allow him to make use of irony which is an artifice of the intellect. Someone who lacks intelligence is unable not only to use irony, but to understand it as well. Billy is too simple-minded, innocent, and inexperienced for anybody to see irony in anything he says.

> And yet a child's utter innocence is but its blank ignorance, and the innocence more or less wanes as intelligence waxes. But in Billy Budd intelligence, such as it was, had advanced while yet his simple-mindedness remained for the most part unaffected. Experience is a teacher indeed; yet did Billy's years make his experience small (p.363).

Nature makes itself manifested in three different ways after Billy's death. It is well-known that when a man is hanged, he has spasms, an erection, and ejaculates. In Billy's case, it is noticed the total absence of such manifestations in his body. Of course the highly rational minds of the officers aboard try to find a rational explanation for the strange phenomenon. And the "logical" explanation is that perhaps Billy died not by the halter, but by "a species of euthanasia" provoked by his "will-power." Well, the absence of the common physical manifestations can, of course, be interpreted as a symbolic condemnation of Nature on Billy's denial of his inner forces and his submission to unnatural laws of the establishment. Suppressed, Eros fails to manifest himself, thus the lack of orgasmic manifestation in Thanatos's stroke.

The next phenomenon that occurs is strictly external to Billy's body — in Nature itself. When Billy expires,

> At the same moment it chanced that the vapory fleece

> hanging low in the East was shot through with a soft glory as if the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision, and simultaneously therewith, watched by the wedged mass of upturned faces, Billy ascended, and, ascending, took the full rose of dawn (pp.400-401).

As we see here, Billy's energy is described as joining and becoming one with Nature, as if Nature were now giving its testimony that that was still her son, after all. Then, when Billy's body is plunged into the sea, a group of large sea birds fly screaming to the spot where the body sinks, and that alarms everybody on the ship. but, whereas the common sailors see that superstitiously, the officers see it superciliously: "to such mariners the action of the seafowl, though dictated by mere animal greed for prey, was big with no prosaic significance" (p.404). Thus, the officers have found an explanation for this phenomenon too: "greed for prey."

In order to prevent the event from setting roots in the men's hearts, Captain Vere immediately gives orders to put all hands to work. The men must be sent at once to the routine of everyday tasks so as to be prevented from grasping the unusual. "'With mankind,' he would say, 'forms, measured forms, are everything'" (p.404).

Discipline restored, with the men jumping at orders like a single body, the "Bellipotent" goes to battle and defeats the French warship the "Athée." The names of the ships are always full of significance. The ship defending the world of order (Christian) defeats the representative of chaos (atheist). The narrator, subtly, makes also an ironic pun on the French Revolution here. The "Athée" was formerly a British ship, the "St. Louis," captured by the French navy. So here, we have a former monarchic regime (the "St. Louis") that is transformed into a chaotic — republican — one (the "Athée") by the Revolution, and is restored (through the "Bellipotent") to monarchy — Bonaparte's rule —, completing the circle. The narrator is very ironic concerning this circle and

the whole situation. The one who lives by the law (Captain Vere) dies, forgotten, ashore, and the last words he utters are Billy Budd's name; but, as the narrator says, not with "accents of remorse" — which indicates that he still has a not solved conflict in him. And the irony becomes really virulent when he describes an article that appears in an English newspaper reporting the events on the "Bellipotent." The article condemns Billy for "stabbing" Claggart, calling the reader's attention to the fact that "the assassin was no Englishman," and praising Claggart (now, certainly, an Englishman) for "his strong patriotic impulse." And here Melville, genially, makes the reporter write, referring to Claggart, that

> In this instance as in so many other instances in these days, the character of this unfortunate man signally refutes, if refutation were needed, that peevish saying attributed to the late Dr Johnson, that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel (p.407).

The narrator knows, and we know, that Claggart _is_ a scoundrel, and so that implies that Dr Johnson was right. Thus, the epithet of "scoundrel" can be extended also to Vere. The position of some critics who try to affirm that Vere stands for Melville is rediculous and absurd. This newspaper article proves that that association is impossible.

2. James Wait - Psychological and Political Implications.

In Conrad's _The Nigger of the "Nascissus_," we have the Negro James Wait, whose past, like Billy Budd's, is unknown. Nothing is known of Wait's origin, and the only mention of his past life is made by himself, just before his death, when talking to Donkin. Wait mentions a girl who "checked a third engineer of

Rennie Boat" for him (p. 125). The only comment he makes about the girl is that she used to cook oysters just as he liked. It is interesting his mentioning oysters which are creatures that have the alchemical capacity to transform ordinary matter into precious gems, grains of sand into pearls — like the muddy swamp that produces the lotus-flower (see Chapter II). Wait, like Budd, is the representative of the unconscious in Conrad's novel, but Conrad's treatment of him differs from Melville's treatment of his young sailor. Whereas Budd is mindless, but physically vigorous, Wait has mind, but he is a dying man. Wait's disease is symbolic — we never know exactly what his illness is; it appears to be tuberculosis, since he goes on coughing and getting thinner and thinner, but he is never said to spit blood, except when he dies and a thread of blood is described to ooze from the corner of his lips. Nevertheless, we cannot be sure, and the disease is kept mysterious. The fact is that when Wait first enters the "Nascissus," he looks anything but a diseased man; actually the descriptions show him as a colossus, full of energy, towering over the crew of the ship.

> The nigger was calm, cool, towering, superb. The men approached and stood behind him in a body. He overtopped the tallest by half a head (p.26).

Here, at the same time Wait is shown as an outstanding figure,with a striking identity, the other men are not singled out, but are described as an unidentified mass — they come towards him "in a body." Thus, the contrast is settled from the beginning: Wait is an individual apart (or he represents that individual who sets himself apart). Even Donkin, who has by this time been singled out in a previous description, is not mentioned now, implying that he is part of the crowd. And Wait's position towards that body of men is of Nietzschean disdain.

> He was naturally scornful, unaffectedly

> condescending, as if from his height of six foot three he had surveyed all the vastness of human folly and had made up his mind not to be too hard on it (p.26).

So, on entering the ship, Wait is strong; but just after his mixing with that body of men, the first sign of his symbolic illness is manifested in him: he coughs; but even his coughing is strong, so strong that the narrator makes use of a vigorous hyperbole to describe it.

> Suddenly the nigger's eyes rolled wildly, became all whites. He put his hand to his side and coughed twice, a cough metallic, hollow, and tremendously loud; it resounded like two explosions in a vault; the dome of the sky rang to it, and iron plates of the ship's bulwarks seemed to vibrate in unison, then he marched towards the others (p.27).

The worsening in Wait's disease is proportional to the increase in the men's denial of their individuality. Wait dies slowly, as the man become less and less individuals, more and more a mass.

As representative of the unconscious, Wait is more explicit than Billy Budd. Whereas Melville's Billy Budd is a blond, good-looking young man in his twenties, tanned by the sun, good-natured, easy-going, one who shows himself to the men on the ship in broad daylight(*), Conrad makes his James Wait black — the unscrutable darkness of the unknown. In order to intensify this idea, the Negro boards the ship during the night, and he keeps himself confined to his cabin during the whole trip. Everything is made even more explicit by the fact that the Negro boards the ship in Bombay, India. We will see, later on, in Heart of Darkness, that Conrad links his quester Marlow also with India, besides picturing

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(*)Note: It is very interesting to note that there are reasons to believe that Melville meant to write Budd black at one time. The first time Billy Budd is mentioned in the novel one has the impression that he is going to be pictured as a black man.

him in subtle descriptions sitting cross-legged, and mentioning his "ascetic" appearance when narrating his story. In the present case, the fact that Wait first appears in India is not merely by chance, but has the purpose of intensifying his symbolic characteristics.

Another interesting contrast is that in Billy Budd, whiteness (as in Moby-Dick) can stand for both good — or the unconscious or the instincts — (Billy), and evil (Claggart). In Conrad, the symbology of the colors is well settled: the unconscious, having the implication of being the unknown, is darkness — the black man James Wait. One of the first things Wait wants to know when entering the ship is whether the cook, the man supposed to "feed" him (it may be seen physically, by giving him food, or symbolically, feeding the instincts) is a "colored man," and "then a disappointed and disapproving 'Ah! h'm?' was his comment upon the information that the cook happened to be a mere white man" (p.27).

The cook and Wait have a tremendous row when the former essails the latter, who is weak in his death-bed, trying to convert him to Jesus — which here has the meaning of taming him into a commonly accepted order of things. While the cook "preaches" to him with "prayers vociferated like blasphemies and whispered curses" (p.100), Wait shouts, "You are a crazy fool!," and, when despairing to pacify the maddened and infuriated cook, Wait shouts for for help: "Go away! Murder! Help!" Of course, his crying "murder" is not merely to hurry up everybody who happens to hear the shouts, but it has a truly symbolic meaning here, for Wait, representing the instincts, is like an animal, and the taming of this animal into an organized Western religion standing for the status quo will kill part of him (see Nietzsche's opinion about "taming" in Chapter II). The narrator leaves that clear with his description of Wait when the captain and the crew invade the cabin

to rescue the Negro.

> He was afraid to turn his head, he shrank within himself; and there was an aspect astounding and animal-like in the perfection of his expectant immobility. A thing of instinct, the unthinking stillness of a scared brute (p.101).

Podmore, the cook, has the traditional way of thinking which we find in Western religion, considering any other religion as manifestations of the Devil. Previously, the cook thought that Wait was the Devil when he heard his greeting, after Wait learned that the cook was a mere white man. Podmore commented later, "The poor fellow had scared me. I thought I had seen the devil" (p.27). The cook is a good example of the traditional role of our established religions, keeping people not individualized and capable of self-assertion, ready to fight for their ideas and positions, but as obedient members of a well-behaved herd. Thus, the cook feels that, since Wait it ruled by the instincts and not by the law, he has to be exorcised, And, in case the conversion fails, the cook is ready, as it usually happens, to pass his *Anathema sit!* on the sinner.

In all the four books analysed here, we find this character who has the wisdom of the instincts, the wisdom acquired with the experience of direct contact with natural energy. We had the Dansker in Billy Budd, we have Old Singleton in The Nigger of the "Nascissus".

> Old Singleton, the oldest able seaman in the ship, sat apart on the deck, right under the lamps, stripped to the waist, tatooed like a cannibal chief all over his powerful chest and enormous biceps. ... With his spectacles and a venerable white beard, he resembled a learned and savage patriarch, the incarnation of barbariam wisdom serene in the blasphemous turmoil of the world (p.17).

How wonderful is the choice the narrator makes of the word "blasphemous" to depict our world, our civilized world! And he

contrasts this world with the "venerable white beard" of Old Singleton, his "barbarian wisdom," and his serenity in confronting our blasphemous world. Now, why blasphemous, since it is, at any rate, Christian? Conrad is, in fact, taking sides here. He is passing his condemnation on the world in comparison with the truer and more authentic world of the instincts, the world of the sea. Our civilized Western world is blasphemous towards Nature, for it is unnatural and artificial.

When asked by Wait his opinion about the ship (the ship equals the world), Old Singleton says, "Ship!... Ships are all right. It is the men in them!" (p.31). The problem is not in the world, but in man. It is nothing external, but an inner problem. And the old man has acquired this knowledge by observing Nature and what is natural in Man. After giving that answer,

> He went on smoking in the profound silence. The wisdom of half a century spent listening to the thunder of the waves had spoken unconsciously through his old lips (p.31).

Old Singleton is a man who lets the unconscious surface in him, and lets himself be led by it. He is compared to Chronos himself, as the text reads, "And alone in the dim emptness of the sleeping forecastle he appeared bigger, colossal, very old; old as Father Time himself" (p.31). And that, with all the implications of timelessness of Chronos and of the unconscious. Those implications are not found only in philosophy, but even in physics — after Einstein theorized about the relativity of Time, many physicists today advocate that Past, Present, and Future are not concepts that nullify one another, but coexist harmoniously at the same time. The same is thought in the East. Analysing Oriental philosophy in his The Masks of God, Joseph Campbell talks about

> The Profound Theory of Correlation, according to which all things coexist, simultaneously arising. They coexist, furthermore, not only in relation to

> space, but also in relation to time; for past, present, and future include each other[1].

Thus, the old man is not merely time, but the child of time, implying that he is not Past alone, but also Present and Future, and, being timeless, he has neither Past nor Future — all is relative.

> Yet he was only a child of time, a lonely relic of a devoured and forgotten generation. He stood, still, strong, as ever unthinking; a ready man with a vast empty past and with no future, with his childlike impulses and his man's passions already dead within his tatooed breast (p.31).

This timelessness is what allows a man to have glimpses of eternity and even mingle with it. The members of the crew cannot understand Old Singleton, for

> The men who could understand his silence were gone — those men who knew how to exist beyond the pale of life and within sight of eternity. They had been strong, as those are strong who know neither doubts nor hopes (p.31).

So, Old Singleton goes on observing, living, and caring little whether he is understood by men. His attitude is that of detachment. He says what he feels, and is not always understood, but he never interferes (just like the Dansker, in <u>Billy Budd</u>).

On examining <u>Billy Budd</u> and <u>The Nigger of the "Nascissus,"</u> one realizes that whereas Melville's emphasis is restricted to the psychological and social aspects of this life struggle, Conrad adds one more element: the political. Thus, in Conrad, besides the attraction exerted on the crew away from the hierarchical impediments and impositions of the establishment, and towards pure individualism (represented by the Negro James Wait), another trend is shown towards socialism (here represented by Donkin). The crew (representing humanity) feel a mixture of attraction and repulsion towards both of them. The crew dislike Donkin, because they do

not truthfully believe him; and they fear Wait, because they do not understand him. But Conrad reveals his position in relation to these two characters by the way he treats them in his writing. He apparently disapproves of Wait, for example, when the men go to the Negro to take care of him, after the officers smash the genesis of a quasi-mutiny aboard which was led by Donkin during the night. The narrator says,

> The problem of life seemed too voluminous for the narrow limits of human speech, and by common consent it was abandoned to the great sea that had from the beginning enfolded it in its immense grip; to the sea that knew all, and would on time infallibly unveil to each the wisdom hidden in all the errors, the certitude that lurks in doubts, the realm of safety and peace beyond the frontiers of sorrow and fear. And in the confused current of impotent thoughts that set unceasingly this way and that through bodies of men, Jimmy bobbed up upon the surface, compelling attention, like a black buoy chained to the bottom of a muddy stream. Falsehood triumphed. It triumphed through doubt, through stupidity, through pity,through sentimentalism (pp.116-117).

Here we have the undeniable fact that the men's pride has been crushed by the captain and the officers, and they have been once more reduced to the usual nothingness. There is also the undeniable fact that, in the quasi-mutiny, they were led not by Wait (this very name is full of meaning: Wait until you are prepared!), not by an individual realization of power, but by Donkin — the men were still acting collectively (socialism does not single anybody out). On the other hand, we have Conrad depicting Wait as "a black buoy chained to the bottom of a muddy stream." Again, mind the recurrent image of the lotus-flower, blossoming in muddy waters (the unconscious). Despite the sentence "falsehood triumphed," and the suggestion that the attraction towards Wait is due to pity and sentimentalism, it is undeniable that Wait's illness is genuine. In one of the rows Donkin has with Wait, he leads the sick man to confess that in a former ship he faked an illness to avoid work (p.96). However, the present

illness is far from being a fake, for the narrator's descriptions show Wait getting weaker and weaker, with bony cheeks and hollow eyes, until he actually dies of his mysterious malady. So, nobody can suggest that Wait is a fake. Conrad plays a game of true and false, as if suggesting that society is a world of appearances; appearances that are there to disguise the truth (this kind of criticism is a strong point in Heart of Darkness, as we will see later). Conrad has a keen eye to spot phoneyness in society, and here he is depicting it. What is genuine and what is fake? Take Old Singleton, for instance; when he first appears, the narrator pictures him with spectacles and a "venerable white beard," sitting on the deck of the ship, reading. The fact that he is reading is not merely mentioned, but the narrator emphasizes it by describing the book he is reading.

> He was intensely absorbed, and as he turned the pages an expression of grave surprise would pass over his rugged features. He was reading Pelham. The popularity of Bulwer Lytton in the forecastles of southern-going-ships is a wonderful and bizarre phenomenon. What ideas do his polished and curiously insincere sentences awaken in the simple minds of the big children who people those dark and wandering places of the earth? What meaning their rough, inexperienced souls can find in the elegant verbiage of his pages? What excitement? — what forgetfulness? — what appeasement? Mystery! (p.17).

So here we have the old man who is described as being profound throughout the entire novel, sitting in the sun, absorbed in reading a book that is anything except profound. Emphasis is given to the fact that the author of that book is superficial, his sentences are artificial, "polished," and "insincere." There is in those pages nothing more than "elegant verbiage." Thus, we have a profound man studying the artificialness and insincerity of society. The fact that he is seen reading a hollow book does not mean that he is hollow himself. And the really interesting thing comes at the end of the novel. After the ship docks in England, the sailors form a queue to get their money, and are paid by a clerk from the Board

of Trade.

> "Money right? Sign the release. There — there," repeated the clerk, impatiently. "How stupid those sailors are!" he thought. Singleton came up, venerable — and uncertain as to the daylight; his hands, that never hesitated in the great light of the open sea, could hardly find the small pile of gold in the profound darkness of the shore. "Can't write?" said the clerk shocked. Make a mark, then." Singleton painfully sketched in a heavy cross, blotted the page. "What a disgusting old Brute," muttered the clerk, Somebody opened the door for him, and the patriarchal seaman passed through unsteadily, without as much as a glance at any of us (p.140 - my underlining).

Now, how can the narrator first picture a character absorbed, reading a book, and now show that character so illiterate that he cannot even sign his name? Is this an example of careless writing produced by an untalented author? I doubt it. The fact, in my opinion, is that everything is done on purpose, and is part of the game of true and false played by Conrad. Old Singleton, who was a well of wisdom in his element, the sea, is now in a different element where there are different standards. There is a conflict of values, just like the difference of values Billy Budd experiences on the "Rights of Man" and on the "Bellipotent." The old man is now regarded and judged by a member of this other element; the dandy clerk who is paying off. The clerk and his element are thus described:

> The room was large, whitewashed, and bare; a counter surmounted by a brass-wire grating fenced off a third of the dusty space, and behind the grating a pasty-faced clerk with his hair parted in the middle, had the quick, glittering eyes and the vivavious, jerky movements of a caged bird (p.139).

As we see, the values of Old Singleton and the values of the clerk must be opposing. Whereas Old Singleton has as his element the vastness of the sea, with the unbarred horizon, or the infinite, as the limit, the clerk is confined to a bare, antiseptic room and, even in the room, his space is restricted by a "brass-wire grating"

fence — the man is literally compared to a "caged bird." Thus, Conrad presenting Old Singleton as illiterate in the eyes of the clerk has a symbolic meaning. While the clerk's values are forms (like Captain Vere's values), the old man's values are unconsciously set on the sea, on the instincts (like Billy Budd's, and the Dansker's, as well as Wait's). In this very passage, there is still another game of true and false, now with images of light and darkness. Old Singleton's hands, that "never hesitated in the great light of the open see," are now "uncertain as to the daylight," and the old man is unable to sign. Then, it is said that he can hardly find his gold in "the profound darkness of the shore." The scene takes place during daytime, in the morning, so, why this "profound darkness of the shore"? It is again symbolic, of course. And again, the conflict of values is striking. Darkness which, symbolizing the unconscious, means our ignorance of it, our ignorance of the unknown, is now seen from the other side: Old Singleton (an instinctive being) sees the clerk (reason, civilization, and repression of the instincts) — and the clerk is in the dark. We see the instincts and the "barbarians" who live by them as darkness or ignorance, whereas we call science enlightenment. On the other hand, those barbarians have another set of values, thus, what we see as light, they see as darkness; what we see as darkness, they see as light.

As a parallel to Old Singleton's inability to read or write when in contact with civilization, we have, in the beginning, Mr Baker, the mate, calling the roll aboard the "Nascissus" docked in Bombay, and unable to read James Wait's name: "... can't make out that last name. It's all a smudge" (p.25). So, the reverse is also true: civilization too becomes ignorance when in contact with barbarism. It is all a question of values, of points of view.

It has already been pointed out that Conrad, though apparently disapproving of Wait, reveals his sympathy towards the

Negro by presenting his illness as a true fact. However, Conrad's disapproving of Donkin is clear throughout. Donkin is presented from the start as trying to arouse the crew's sympathy and pity, collectively, towards him. From the beginning, the narrator exposes Donkin as nothing more than a good-for-nothing, and leaves explicit the idea that the whole crew share that view.

> They all knew him. He was the man that cannot steer, that cannot splice, that dodges the work on dark nights; that aloft, holds on frantically with both arms and legs, swears at the wind, the sleet, the darkness; the man who curses the sea while others work (pp.20-21).

Besides the clear statement of laziness, we have, between the lines, in references to his cursing the sea and swearing at the darkness, the implication of his abhorrance of the unconscious, of the instincts.

The narrator first pictures Donkin wearing the most ragged sort of clothes to arouse the crew's pity and sympathy towards him.

> He looked as if he had been cuffed, kicked, rolled in the mud; he looked as if he had been scratched, spat upon, pelted with unmentionable filth. ... The torn tails of his black coat flapped in fringes about the calves of his legs. He unbuttomed the only two buttoms that remained and everyone saw that he had no shirt under it. It was his deserved misfortune that rags which nobody could possibly be supposed to own looked on him as if they had been stolen (p.20).

Social-politically, the narrator describes him as follows,

> The pet of philanthropists and self-seeking landlubbers. The sympathetic and deserving creature that knows all about his rights, but knows nothing of courage, of endurance, and of the unexpressed faith of the unspoken loyalty that knits together a ship's company. The independent offspring of the ignoble freedom of the slums full of disdain and hate for the austere servitude of the sea (p.21).

This fact that Donkin knows his rights and fights for them, Conrad will show again later on, but always with the implication that

Donkin is the kind of man who knows all about his rights and nothing about his duties (Conrad, thus, takes a clear position against socialism); and Donkin's methods, in part, bring about the results he expects.

> He knew how to conquer the naive instincts of the crew. In a moment they gave him their compassion, jocularly, contemptuously, or surly; and at first it took the shape of a blanket thrown at him as he stood there with the white skin of his limbs <u>showing his human kinship through the black fantasy of his rags</u>. Then a pair of shoes fell at his muddy feet (p.22 - my underlining).

Thus, Conrad suggest that Donkin's method is to arouse the men's identification with him as sufferers who get much less than they deserve. And Donkin wants that identification to work in all possible senses: he expects the men to stand by him and defend him whenever necessary. But he is disappointed. There is this episode when Donkin, having refused to work at a night call, is hit by the chief mate, and loses a tooth. The crew ignore him, as the narrator says,

> We didn't at the time see anything of Donkin, and did not care. Had the chief officer thrown him overboard, no man would have said as much as "Hallo! he's gone!" But, in truth, no great harm was done — even if Donkin did lose one of his front teeth (p.44).

This unsympathetic attitude of the crew drives Donkin mad, and he blames Wait for that. Instead of acting collectively, as he had expected, and siding with him, not a single man gives any importance to the incident. So, he turns against Wait.

> From that day he became pitiless; told Jimmy that he was a "black fraud;" hinted to us that we were an imbecile lot, daily taken in by a vulgar nigger. And Jimmy seemed to like the fellow (p.44).

After all, Donkin is the only one (besides Singleton) who singles himself out, and has an independent, individualistic attitude in the ship. James Wait sees in him no serious threat. Maybe he

realizes that the men, seen under the rule of monarchy (the actual state of things on the ship), or under the rule of socialism, act basically the same (a collective being), and he thinks that they will finally come to him, that is, be under the inner rule of the instincts — be their own guides. So the situation rolls on like that between Donkin and Wait: one mistreating the other, and the other conciliating. "Donkin abused him to his face, jeered at him while he gasped; and the same day Wait would lend him a warm jersey" (p.47).

Donkin's socialist ideas are clearly stated by himself to the crew. He preaches to them a world of equality between men, without the tyrannical rule of the officers. The common, men, the sailors should have the control of the ship, the control of society. And, after he clears out of the scene, the crew go on ruminating on these images of power conquered by common men.

> Our little world went on its curved and unswerving path carrying a discontented aspiring population. They found comfort of a gloomy kind in an interminable and conscientious analysis of their unappreciated worth; and inspired by Donkin's hopeful doctrines they dreamed enthusiastically of the time when every lonely ship would travel over a serene sea, manned by a wealthy and well-fed crew of satisfied skippers (p.90 - my underlining).

Thus, a bunch of ruled men would be turned into a bunch or rulers — but remaining as a bunch. There would be a crew of masters — the mass in power.

From the beginning, James Wait presents signs of an illness concentrated in his chest (the container of the heart), and he stays, throughout the story, confined to his cabin, as if inside a womb. The men of the crew many times concentrate outside his door as if guarding him, or expecting him to be born (or die). And they chat while they wait. When their chatting becomes an argument, the row they make brings Wait to the door to complain about their inconsiderate behavior, since he wants to rest his tired, sick

body. And Wait makes use of the basest lamentations in order to arouse the men's sympathy (p.39) — he wants them to identify themselves with his sufferings. However, the response Wait expects from the men is different in essence from that which Donkin expects. Whereas Donkin, as we have seen, wants the identification of the crew with him to be collective — he wants the men to react like a single body guided by the leader (a revolution) —, Wait wants individual responses. And he sometimes manages to get them. We have, for example, the sailor Balfast stealing the officers' pie from the kitchen to give it to Wait (p.41). The officers are worried because of the incident.

> Such stealing in a merchant ship is difficult to check, and may be taken as a declaration by the men of their dislike for their officers. It is a bad symptom. It may end in God knows what trouble. The "Nascissus" was still a peaceful ship, but mutual confidence was shaken. Donkin did not conceal his delight. We were dismayed (p.42).

The reason for Donkin's delight is different from the reason for the officers' preoccupation. Donkin sees in the episode just a sign that the sailors are rebelling against their leaders — the prelude of a mutiny. The officers see in the incident the fact that one sailor at least is able to have initiative and not merely obey orders as sailors and soldiers must do. That is, of course, dangerous for military rule, a bad example.

Another sample of individual initiative takes place just after the rescue of James Wait who was trapped in his flooded cabin during a storm (we will examine this rescue in depth later on). After the rescue, the men are so tired that they are prostrated on the deck. Podmore, the cook, unexpectedly decides to go and make coffee for all. It is a strange situation that! With the kitchen, as well as all the cabins, full of water, the cook decides that he can produce coffee out of the flood. One may see his attitude as a philanthropic attempt to help improve the mood

of everybody, but it is, anyway, an individualistic position of Podmore. He singles himself out, and acts when everybody alse is inactive. And mind the fact that his individual initiative takes place right after the rescue of James Wait. The cook, on going to the kitchen, hears a man saying, "Cook's going crazy" (p.74), and replies, "Crazy, am I? I am more ready to die than any of you, officers incloosive - there! As long as she swims I will took! I will get you coffee" (p.74).

Still one more thing — and even more important — is the fact that one of the two Norwegians aboard starts to "act crazy" in the eyes of that bunch of men, when he catches sight of the setting sun with the waves leaping madly to reach it.

> One of the Norwegians appeared to catch sight of it, and, after giving a violent start, began to speak. His voice, startling the others, made them stir. They moved their heads stiffly, or turning with difficulty, looked at him with surprise, with fear, or in grave silence. He chattered at the setting sun, nodding his head, while the big seas began to roll across the crimson disc; and over miles of turbulent waters the shadows of high waves swept with a running darkness the faces of men (p.69).

As we see, this man is talking to the elements, talking to Nature (remember that Christ also talked to the winds and sea to calm them down). All the so-called savages — man who lead a highly instinctive life — have rituals to direct themselves to the elements of Nature. Mind the fact that here the sea casts darkness over the faces of the men...

The problem is that, though the Negro is for the moment saved by the men, the sailors do not become involved any deeper — even the cook does not, considering that his row with Wait takes places days after this episode. With the exception of Old Singleton, nobody on the ship is sure about the seriousness of Wait's illness. All the men are in doubt, and thus they feel a mixture of attraction and repulsion towards the Negro, a mixture

of disdain and reepect. Old Singleton spots the seriousness of the symbolic disease from the very beginning, and he passes his diagnosis unto Wait when the latter complains about a "cold" in his chest."'I have a cold in my chest,' gasped Wait. 'Cold! you call it,' grumbled the man; 'should think 'twas something more...'" (p.31). And he leaves it suspended... Singleton, like the Dansker in Billy Budd, is a kind of oracle, a prophet on the ship. He analyzes the present and foretells the future, but, the same way the men are in doubt in relation to Wait, they have their doubts in relation to Old Singleton too. They cannot be sure whether he is wise or stupid — the usual confounding dilemma we find when we go no deeper than the surface, the appearances. So, his detachment, the detachment of the wise, is sometimes confounded with mere stupidity.

> Singleton seemed to know nothing, understand nothing. We had thought him till then as wise as he looked, but now we dared, at times, suspect him of being stupid — from old age (p.44).

But they consult him, anyway. When they ask this oracle if Wait will die or not, he tells them that he will (p.45), and then, Donkin, using the rational logic of the world, calls the men stupid, and clarifies Singleton's riddle: "When Nilsen came to him with the news: 'Singleton says he will die,' he answered him by a spiteful 'And so will you — you fat-headed Dutchman'" (p.45). Of course, Singleton's answer has two meanings: Wait will die, like anybody else, but also he will die symbolically. Donkin takes just the first sense of the oracle. The men are taken aback, "We were appalled. We perceived that after all Singleton's answer meant nothing. We began to hate him for making fun of us" (p.45). But, of course, Singleton's answer was the right one for the question — simple, direct; a Solomonian answer. All oracles speak through riddles (Christ used riddles in all his preachings), and riddles require interpretation, and an alert mind is required to interpret them —

a ready man, one of the chosen. No one of the crew is this man; none of them can guess that Wait's illness stands for their own weakness, and that Wait's death will mean the suppression of their unconscious. Donkin contributes to bring in rationalism when instinctive illumination is required, thus, he spoils the process.

The process of gathering the herd around Donkin has to be political and rational, whereas the process of gathering individuals around the Negro confined to his cabin (the womb) has to be psychological and irrational. The very fact of the presence of the Negro aboard brings the greatest of conflicts to the men's souls — they are moved to and from him, and cannot be sure where to go. "He became the tormentor of all our moments; he was worse than a nightmare" (p.46). The image of a nightmare here is more than adequate, for dreams and nightmares are manifestations of the unconscious (we will see in Heart of Darkness that Marlow says that Kurtz is "the nightmare of my choice"). So the men's reason is in conflict with their unconscious. The officers are able to perceive this conflict and, "at last Mr Baker had to tell the captain that James Wait was disturbing the peace of the ship" (p.47). That is, this trend towards the instincts is putting in risk the order and the discipline of the establishment, of the status quo. And Wait knows how to maintain the men's attraction towards him, and fights to the end not to let that "fascination of the abomination" (an expression that Conrad will use in Heart of Darkness) vanish. As long as the men have doubts, it means that they still can go to his side. Wait demonstrates to the men the difference between him and them, that they are a bunch of cowards who are not able to grasp in their hands the reins of their own destiny and control fate.

> He fascinated us. He would never let doubt die. He overshadowed the ship. Invulnerable in his promise of speedy corruption be trampled on our self-respect, he demonstrated to us daily our want of moral courage;

he tainted our lives. Had we been a miserable gang of wretched immortals, unhallowed alike by hope and fear, he could not have lorded it over us with more pitiless assertion of his sublime privilege (p.48).

We have seen that Melville's symbology makes use of two different ships to represent society in peace and society in danger, in war. Conrad uses the same ship, and makes the difference of calm and toil external to the ship — the "Nascissus" sails in calm or tormented waters. When the elements press, the safety of the ship (society) is endangered, and the men are urged to work together to save the ship. Individuality is forsaken for the welfare of the social order. With problems, Wait is forgotten; he stays confined to his womb-cabin and waits. At such times, as the narrator says, "We took no notice of him; we hardly gave a thought to Jimmy and his bosom friend. There was no leisure for idle probing of hearts" (p.53). Always the recurrence of this Victorian idea of hard work to suppress the dangerous flights of the human heart.

When the ship faces the worst torment of all, the men are desperate lest they perish in the turmoil of the elements. The ship starts to incline dangerously seawards, and the men shout to Captain Allistoun to order the cutting of the masts in order to steady the vessel (p.57). The captain, however, wants to hear nothing of the sort, and the crew has to submit. Even Mr Baker is horrified at the captain's position, but he submits too. With his attitude, the captain asserts the idea that the ship (the social order) is more important than human beings. Donkin is the only one who rebels against the order to keep the masts intact.

> He shouted curses at the master, shook his fists at him with horrible blasphemies, called upon us in filthy words to "Cut! Don't mind the murdering fool! Cut, some of you!" (p.58).

When the danger to the ship is thought to have passed, though the tempest still roars on, Wait is discovered to be

trapped in the flooded under-deck without any possibility of escaping by himself. The men must help him out. Donkin does not care (he is the only one who can think by himself, in his way. He is already a rebellious character, and he does not need Wait). The captain sees nothing, takes part in nothing; he stands aloof. His worries are all for the ship: "Captain Allistoun saw nothing; he seemed with his eyes to hold the ship up in a superhuman concentration of effort" (p.61). Actually, Captain Allistoun is very different from Melville's Captain Vere. Whereas the latter was a participant, since he was representing Man who had to make his choice between the intellect and the instincts (the King was the one representing the law, the order), the former is himself the representative of reason, of the law, of the social order.

In order to reach the trap-door that opens to the under-deck where Wait is confined, the men have to throw overboard everything that is blocking the way (the storm has made a mass aboard). In Heart of Darkness, this motif is repeated when Marlow, before reaching the place where he will meet Kurtz (the unconscious), throws his shoes overboard. That symbolizes his getting rid of the superego, the social restraints, his getting rid of that part of the conscious which is governed by the social ethic. Melville's Ahab, in Moby-Dick, throws away his pipe for similar reasons — the pipe represents serenity and conformity.

Having cleared the way, the men reach Wait's door and hear him screaming inside. Blocking the trap-door, they find a thick layer of nails that have fallen from a turned barrel. Having thrown overboard even the tools, the men have to use their bare hands to sweep the nails aside. But "Suddenly Archie produced a crowbar. He had kept it back; also a small hatchet. We howled with satisfaction" (p.64). So, not all civilized implements have been thrown overboard — the crew never get rid of them entirely.

Wait's position is described as resembling a man who is dead, confined to his grave. That is always the idea: when there is a storm, the Negro is confined to the inner part of the ship, and forgotten. He is dead for a while. Here the storm has been so strong that he now has to be rescued; he cannot come out by himself.

> He was as quiet as a man inside a grave; and, like men standing above a grave, we were on the verge of tears — but with vexation, the strain, the fatigue; with the great longing to be done with it, to get away, and lay down to rest somewhere we could see our danger and breathe (p.65).

The operation of rescue that follows is pictured by the narrator with all the colors of a childbirth. Wait is experiencing a rebirth (or the crew through him). He is a child inside the womb (the place where he is is flooded), waiting to be delivered. The men strike at the planks with the crowbar and the hatchet, and they open "a splintered oblong hole" (the image is just too obvious!), and, from within, Wait "... pressed his head to it, trying madly to get out through that opening one inch wide and two inches long" (p.65). Finally, after the men enlarge the hole a bit, the Negro is produced just like a baby being born.

> Suddenly, Jimmy's head and shoulders appeared. He stuck half-way, and with rolling eyes foamed to our feet. We flew to him with brutal impatience, we tore the shirt off his back, we tugged at his ears, we panted over him; and all at once he came away in our hands as though somebody had let go his legs. With the same movement, without a pause, we swung him up (p.65).

Notwithstanding all this, the men's attitude towards Wait still reveals their doubts, thus the rebirth is not a strong fact, and James Wait goes on in his dying process. We can consider this rebirth as being not a rebirth of the crew — is terms of their changing their values and starting living differently —, but as a rebirth of the conflicts that had died during the storm and now

come back to life. The men still feel that mixture of attraction and repulsion towards the Negro, they still have a conflict within themselves. Worse still; they rationalize over the incident!

> For though at that moment we hated him more then ever — more than anything under heaven — we did not want to lose him. We had so far saved him; and it had become a personal matter between us and the sea. We meant to stick to him. Had we (by an incredible hypothesis) undergone similar toil and trouble for an empt cask, that cask would have become as precious to us as Jimmy was. More precious, in fact, because we would have no reason to hate the cask. And we hated James Wait (p.67).

Their rational minds never give way so that they can feel things instinctively too. No, they choose to remain wholly rational, and rationality brings more doubts, more suspicions, more hatred.

> His cantenkerous temper was only the result of the provoking invincibleness of that death he felt by his side. Any man may be angry with such a masterful chum. But, then, what kind of men were we — with our thoughts! Indignation and doubt grappled with us in a scuffle that trampled upon the finest of our feelings. And we hated him because of the suspicion; we detested him because of the doubt (pp.67-68 - my underlining).

As we see, even having been rescued by the men, Wait is still losing the battle. But he never gives up fighting. He has to keep the men's hearts in a turmoil, to see if it is possible for them to act by their hearts and not by their minds only. So, no sooner does Wait come to than he re-starts stinging the men in their pride. And it seems that that is what the men themselves are expecting. As the text reads,

> We were always incurably anxious to hear what he had to say. This time he mumbled peevishly. "It took you some time to come. I began to think the whole smart lot of you had been washed overboard. What kept you back? Hey? Funk?" (p.68).

The ship is still inclined, with her interior full of water, and the crew complain of the captain's attitude of risking their lives to keep the ship whole.

If the blamed sticks had been cut out of her she would be running along on her bottom now like any decent ship, and' giv'us all a chance," said someone, with a sigh. "The old man wouldn't have it... much he cares for us," whispered another (p.72).

To which the mate, Mr Baker, remarks that the captain has to care for no one but the ship, and "We are here to take care of the ship — and some of you ain't up to it" (p.72). Individuals are unimportant, and they have to pay for the preservation of the ship or the social order. As a result, the sailors have lost all their belongings, and their dwelling in the ship is a damp mess.

The beds were soaked; the blankets spread out and saved by some nail squashed under foot. They dragged wet rags from evil-smelling corners, and wringing the water out, recognized their propery (pp.83-84).

The elements having calmed down and life resumed its routine, the sailors have now to share what is left of clothes and blankets. Wait is forgotten once more and a peaceful camaraderie is aroused among the men. They are now sharing in penury.

Then in the yellow light and in the intervals of mopping the deck they crunched hard bread, arranging to "worry through somehow." Men chummed as to beds. Turns were settled for wearing boots and having the use of oilskin coats. They called one another "old man" and "sonny" in cheery voices. Friendly slaps resounded. Jokes were shouted (p.84).

As Wait loses his force and goes underground, Donking surfaces again. He now refuses to work, but is forced to by the officers (p.85). Vociferating, he has to submit. In this mood that is formed, Old Singleton shows up on deck.

Singleton stepped in, made two paces, and stood swaying slightly. The sea hissed, flowed roaring past the bows, and the forecastle trembled, full of deep murmurs; the lamp flared, swinging like a pendulum. He looked with a dreamy and puzzled stare, as though he could not distinguish the still men from their restless shadows (pp.85-86 - my underlining).

This is a wonderful passage! Conrad's genius makes the old man appear, showing, all of a sudden, that he bears the weight of all his years on his shoulders. The old man stands swaying, and here Conrad again brings in his playing with true and false images, the game of appearances. What is real? What is illusion? Is Singleton swaying because of his years, or is it because the ship is swaying? And now Conrad adds to the game the contrast of light and darkness. The lamp swings, and makes the men's shadows dance a *danse macabre* around them. This image possesses a tremendous symbolic force: the men are still (they are restrained by the external world), but their shadows are restless (their inner world is in turmoil). But Conrad's pessimism makes "the next oldest seaman in the ship" offer his pipe to Old Singleton and, when the latter stretches his arm to reach it, he falls flat on the floor. When helped to stand up, the old man comments "I am getting old... old" (p.86).

Donkin starts preaching, trying to arouse the men to a mutiny aboard the "Nascissus." He speaks against the officers whenever he has a chance to do it behind their backs. There is an officer, Mr Creighton, whom the men tied to the mast during the storm so that he would not be washed overboard.

> Behind his back Donkin would begin again darting stealthy, sidelong looks. "'Ere's one of 'em. Some of yer 'as made 'im fast that day. Much thanks yer got for it. Ain't 'ee a-drivin' yer wusse'n ever? ... Let'im slip overboard.... Vy not? It would have been less trouble. Vy not? He advanced confidentially, backed away with great effect; he whispered, he screamed, waved his miserable arms no thisker than pipe-stems — stretched his lean neck — spluttered — squinted (p.89).

A politician! And he knows how to move his audience. He is appealing to their feeling of being treated unjustly, of doing too much and getting too little. Though disliking Donkin personally, the men are attracted by his preachings, by his ideas — so,

everything is kept at the rational level.

> We abominated the creature and could not deny the luminous truth of his contentions. It was all so obvious. We were indubitably good men; our deserts were great and our pay small. Through our exertions we had saved the ship and the skipper would get the credit for it. What had he done? we wanted to known. Donkin asked: "What 'es could do without hus?" and we could not answer (p.89).

So, Donkin is able to gather the herd around him at the level of the ideas, by making them rationalize all the events, and then chanelling the emotions aroused by his words in the direction he wants — *ad captandum vulgus*, just words are enough. On the other hand, the Negro James Wait is unable to attract anybody, since he must keep it at the level of the instincts — the men would have to sense their own potentialities, but the crew are not ready for that. But, apparently, they are ready for Donkin. Donkin has now, all of a sudden, become the men's leader. One of the men even thinks about the claims to be made:

> Knowles deferentially and with a crafty air propounded questions such as: "Could we all have the same grub as the mates? Could we all stop ashore till we got it? What would be the next thing to try for it if we got that?" (p.89).

Now an apparently strange phenomenon starts to take place on the ship. Donkin starts to lead the men towards Wait. The men start to concentrate every night in Wait's cabin and around his door, sitting there, as if Wait were a kind of religious idol, and

> ... with their simple faces lit up by the projected glare of Jimmy's lamp. The little place, repainted white, had, in the night, the brilliance of a silver shrine where a black idol, reclining stiffly under a blanket, blinked its weary eyes and received our homage. Donkin officiated (p.92).

What exactly is Donkin doing here? Being an all-rational being, Donkin is now trying to lead the sailors to rationalize Wait. He

is turning the men's attraction towards the Negro, which should remain something spontaneous, instinctive, unconscious (until they had the realization of it), into something artificial; and official, since it is being officiated by a leader (Donkin himself) — Christianity was destroyed when it became official. The quickest and safest way to destroy any movement with underground characteristics is by bringing it to the surface, and making it official.

Once Wait becomes an official cult, Donkin can lead the men, rationally, wherever he wishes. So, what he really intends is to use Wait for his purposes. Slowly, he starts to pump in the idea that Wait's disease is a farce, and that the men are doing, besides their own work, the work that should be done by the Negro who, according to Donkin is in perfect condition.

> Donkin felt all over his sterile chin for the few rare hairs, and said, triumphantly, with a sidelong glance at Jimmy: "Look at 'im! Wish I was 'arf has 'ealthy as 'ee is — I do" (p.93).

He then pumps in the idea that that is the way to force the officers into a capitulation, into accepting their claims: everybody should go sick like Wait. In other words, they should start a strike on the ship. This idea, however, scares the men who, represented by Knowles, present the problem of the survival of the ship, of society, if the whole crew went on strike.

> Knowles, with surprising mental agility, shifted ground. "If we all went sick what would become of the ship? eh?" He posed the problem and grinned all round. "Let 'er go to 'ell," sneered Donkin. "Damn 'er. She ain't yourn" (p.94).

By putting such words in Donkin's lips, Conrad (through the narrator) reveals his position in relation to socialism: all that its leaders want is power, even with the sacrifice of the state. The order of things presented in the old state has to be abolished,

and it does not matter if there is nothing left in the end, with nothing to replace it, as long as they, the leaders, rise to power.

Right after that, there is that row between Donkin and Wait, in which Donkin accuses the Negro of being a farce. Wait is very thirsty and there is no water in his mug. He has a kind of daydream, a waking-vision, or mirage, which is highly symbolic. He sees Donkin in his vision, and it reveals Donkin's opportunism clearly, and also Wait's own position as representing the unconscious, the instincts rejected by men.

> It was hot in the cabin, and it seemed to turn slowly round, detach itself from the ship, and swing out smoothly, into a luminous, arid space where a black sun shone, spinning very fast. A place without any water! No water! A policeman with the face of Donkin drank a glass of beer by the side of an empty well, and flew away flapping vigorously. A ship whose mastheads protruded through the sky and could be seen, was discharging grain, and the wind whirled the dry husks in spirals along the quay of a dock with no water in it. He whirled along with the husks — very tired and light. All his inside was gone. He felt lighter than the husks — and more dry. He expanded his hollow chest. The air streamed in carrying away in its rush a lot of strange things that resembled houses, trees, people, lamp.... No more! There was no more air — and he had finished drawing his long breath. But he was in jail! They were locking him up. A door slammed. They turned the key twice, flung a bucket of water over him. Phoo! What for? (pp.97-98 - my underlining).

Wait's cabin, with Wait inside it, is here seen getting free from the ship (the world of forms, society), and flying towards a "black sun." Wait is going back to his origin, getting away from the world of appearances (the ship), and plunging into the real world that is beyond the grasp of common men (the unconscious). This idea that we live in a world of appearances, that even the image we have of a yellow sun is false, is not exclusively Conrad's. Other artists have suggested that. Lawrence, for instance, in his "The Ladybird," makes his character, Count Dionys, say something similar (Count Dionys represents the unconscious for the woman

Daphne in that book). He says,

> The true fire is invisible. Flame, and the red fire we see burning has its back to us. It is running away from us. ... Well, then, the yellowness of sunshine — light itself — that is only the glancing aside of the real original fire[2].

So, Wait's vision is an oracle foretelling his flying into this "original fire," the black sun, which will take place soon enough, when he dies — actually, this whole vision is premonitory. Donkin is seen as a policeman (the image of repression) with all the privileges of the ruling class: he drinks beer beside an empty well — the leader has all, and the followers nothing. We will see later that this is exactly what happens in the end, after the ship docks in England. Another image says that Wait's "inside" is gone, and that he feels light. Having been rejected, he is now free to go away. That is the pessimistic view of Conrad — the unconscious is unable to exert itself over men in highly civilized societies; and this idea is reinforced by the end of the vision: the Negro is locked with two turns of the key (he is repressed and confined for ever — dead), and a bucket of water is flung over him (after Wait's death, his body is buried in the sea). Everything he dreams comes to pass — a premonition.

With Donkin's campaign now to bring Wait to the deck to do his duty like everybody else, Wait changes his strategy: when the story began, he looked big and strong, but professed his illness; now he looks moribund, but professes his health. He tells the captain, "I've been better this last week... I am well... I was going back to duty... tomorrow — now if you like — Captain" (p. 102). However, his body is no longer commanded by his will. Even when willing to come to the surface, he cannot command his body to do so. "'I am coming out,' he declared without stirring" (p.103).

The captain prohibits Wait from leaving his cabin. So, now,

with the weakness of the unconscious in facing the Machiavellian tricks of rationality, Wait himself has become an example of Old Singleton's suggestion of "still men" with "restless shadows."

Donkin is now ready to lead a mutiny, and he takes Wait's own verbal assertion of health to move the men to his side: "We ain't goin' to work this bloomin' ship shorthanded if Snowball is all right — He says he is" (p.103). And the masses, as usual, follow any leader as sooner as he poses as such.

The mutiny starts at night. The crew fight the officers, and a tremendous row goes all over the ship. Donkin incites the men to use the darkness to conceal their identities and attack, and the men act in mass. "Donkin hissed: 'Go for them... it's dark!' The crowd took a short run aft <u>in a body</u> — then there was a check" (p.105 - my underlining). Here, Conrad knits two ideas together: that the leaders incite the men to act in the dark, thus avoiding responsibility — that is the position of the soldier: obeying orders, he is not responsible for his acts (the leader is) —, and the fact that the men act as a single body, nothing is done individually; and even if it were, it would be concealed by the darkness, anyway. As we see, Wait's hopes of arousing in the men their sense of individuality are now crushed by Donkin with his "revolution."

The men start throwing things at the officers, and an iron belaying-pin misses the captain's head by a hair.

Conrad brings the mutiny to an end with a touch of genius: he fulfils the idea implied in Donkin's words in the past that the ship could go to hell. He thus reinforces his position that the socialist leader (like all leaders) is worried about getting power at any cost, and that is all. With the confusion aboard, the helmsman leaves his post and the ship is left to herself, with the risk of collapsing.

> The "Nascissus," left to herself, came up gently to the wind without anyone being aware of it. She gave a slight roll, and the sleeping sails woke suddenly, coming all together with a mighty flap against the masts, then filled again one after another in a quick succession of loud reports that ran down the lofty spars, till the collapsed mainsail flew out last with a violent jerk. The ship trembled from trucks to heel; the sails kept on rattling like a discharge of musketry; the chain sheets and loose shackles jingled aloft in a thin peal; the gin blocks groaned. It was as if an invisible hand had given the ship an angry shake to recall the men that peopled the deck to the sense of reality, vigilance, and duty (p.106).

Thus, it results in the expected aftermath. The men, seeing the danger, lose their confidence, their courage, and their "ideal", and the captain, taking the chance to regain the comand, passes his orders quickly to keep the men moving — he is in the control again —, the restoration of the Victorian ethic of duty, the perpetuation of the status quo. How can this be explained? The fact is that the men were acting with their minds only, and not really with their hearts. Donkin's ideas were something with which they agreed at the level of reason, but they did not feel an inner command to uprising. The level of ideas, of rationality only, without deep roots in the instincts, is not enough to keep the men moving in the direction of freedom. There is no real motivation, and so the battle is lost (see Nietzsche's quotation of p.4).

Captain Allistoun has now to give his demonstration of force, and with the iron pin that has almost hit his head clasped in his hand, he accuses Donkin before the whole crew assembled on the deck in broad daylight. Donkin appeals once more to the men to stand by him, "'Are you goin' to stand by and see me bullied,' screamed Donkin at the silent crowd that watched him" (p.115). The men, of course, have been pushed back into "normality," and answer him nothing, nor do they stir.

James Wait, still alive, is a testimony against the weakness of the men, and he tells that to their faces. "If you

fellows had stuck out for me I would be now on deck" (p.119). But what they really want is that the Negro disappear forever so that they can rest in peace and continue to be common and resigned as ever. Old Singleton has told them (as a last oracle) that James Wait will die only at sight of land, and the men long for that moment.

> But we looked to the westward over the rail with longing eyes for a sign of hope, for a sign of fair wind; even if its first breath should bring death to our reluctant Jimmy. In vain! The universe conspired with James Wait (pp.120-121).

Wait dies when he is alone in his cabin with Donkin, who still mistreats him. During the process and after Wait's death is when the narrator paints Donkin with the most unflattering colors. Donkin now puts the blame for his "misfortunes" all on the men — and Wait's infuence on the men has caused them, according to Donkin —, and he suggests, furthermore, that he himself has been an innocent puppet. "I've been treated worser'n a dorg by your blooming back-lickers. They'as set me on, only to turn against me. I am the only man 'ere" (p.127). When Wait is about to die and too weak to offer any resistance, Donkin picks up the key that is under Wait's pillow, and steals his money. After he returns the key to its place and is about to leave, he sees the Negro dying. It is interesting that Donkin is so aware of what he has done and of what Wait represents, that he instinctively senses that something should change due to Wait's death and to his own action of robbing him.

> He stood motionless and perfectly astounded to find the world outside as he had left it; there was the sea, the ship — sleeping men; and he wondered absurdly at it, as though he had expected to find the men dead, familiar things gone for ever: as though, like a wanderer returning after many years he had expected to see bewildering changes (pp.129-130).

But nothing has changed. Nature itself testifies to Wait's death

with silence. Even the sea is silent, and Donkin only casts a supercilious glance at it.

> The ship slept. And the immortal sea stretched away, immense and hazy, like the image of life, with a glittering surface and lightless depths. Donkin gave it a defiant glance and slunk off noiselessly as if judged and cast out by the august silence of its might (p.130).

And that is the last defiance Donkin makes to the sea — it is his last trip. After getting his pay on land, he announces that he will never go back to sea. That is the fulfilment of Wait's dream-vision of the policeman who drinks beer beside an empty well and flies away.

When Old Singleton gets the news of Wait's death he is not surprised in the least, for his prophecy has been fulfilled: land is at sight." "Dead — is he? Of course,' he said, pointing at the island right abeam" (p.130). And more wonders are still to come. Just as we had Nature's manifestations in the case of Billy Budd, here too, in Wait's sea burial, it manifests itself. Wait's body is deposited on a plank from which it is to slide overboard — the traditional burial ceremony at sea. But the Negro's body refuses to go.

> Mr Baker read out: "To the deep," and paused. The men lifted the inboard end of the planks, the boatswain snatched off the Union Jack, and James Wait did not move. "Higher," muttered the boatswain angrily. All hands were raised; every man stirred uneasily, but James Wait gave no sign of going (p.133).

And they move the planks still higher, but the body does not slide into the sea. Then, one of the men, Belfast, the one who in the past stole the officers' pie to give to Wait, appeals to the body.

> "Jimmy, be a man!" he shrieked, passionately. Every mouth was wide open, not an eyelid winked. He stared wildly, twitching all over; he bent his body forward like a man peering at a horror. "Go!" he shouted, and sprang out of the crowd with his arm extended.

> "Go, Jimmy! — Jimmy, go! Go!" His fingers touched the head of the body, and the grey package started reluctantly to whizz off the lifted planks all at once, with the suddenness of a flash of lightning (P.133 - my underlining).

This is wonderful! Belfast does not act rationally — he does not, for example, shake the body to make it slide. No. He acts irrationally, and appeals to a dead body to slide away. Just mind the fact that Belfast, in order to appeal to the Negro, frees himself from the crowd — he acts here utterly individually. It takes an appeal from the heart to move the Negro James Wait. And the ship is said to roll "as if relieved of an unfair burden" (p. 133).

Just like after Billy Budd's burial in the sea, here Captain Allistoun immediately puts the men to work. It surprises even the mate, Mr Baker.

> "Square yards!" thundered a voice above his head. All hands gave a jump; one or two dropped their caps; Mr Baker looked up surprised. The master, standing on the break of the poop, pointed to the westward. "Breeze coming," he said (p.134 - my underlining).

Life is back to "normality," to routine, to rationality — the men are again reacting like a single body.

Again, just like in Billy Budd, a rational explanation has to be given to the strange phenomenon of Wait's body refusing to plunge into the waiting sea. Why? The Boatswain, matter-of-factly, gives a logical and scientific explanation for the phenomenon, and, taking the chance, he refers to the deceased Negro as a troublesome character.

> "The chap was nothing but trouble," he said, "from the moment he came aboard. ... Dam' nigh a mutiny all for him — and now the mate abused me like a pickpocket for forgetting to dap a lump of grease on them planks. So I did, but you ought to have known better, too, than to leave a nail sticking up — hey Chips?" (p.134).

Conrad ends up identifying land with a ship, and still implying the question of appearances and paradoxes of our society.

> The dark land lay alone in the midst of waters, like a mighty ship bestarred with vigilant lights — a ship carrying a burden of millions of lives — a ship freighted with dross and with jewels, with gold and with steel. She towered up immense and strong, guarding priceless traditions and untold suffering, sheltering glorious memories and base forgetfulness, ignoble virtues and splendid transgressions (p.135 - my underlining).

(In my underling, the eternal recurrence of the alchemical duplicity of base and noble things). And then he comes to link the "Nascissus" herself to the land. She is mingled with the land. She is the land.

> The "Nascissus" came gently into her berth; the shadows of souless walls fell upon her, the dust of all the continents leaped upon her deck, and a swarm of strange men, clambering up her sides, took possession of her in the name of the sordid earth. She had ceased to live (p.137).

Thus, Conrad passes his verdict upon the world on the social scale. On the political scale, he passes his verdict upon Donkin who now lives God-knows-where on land with Wait's money.

> Donkin, who never did a decent day's work in his life, no doubt earns his living by discoursing with filthy eloquence upon the right to labour to live (p.142).

A politician!

3. *De profundis*

De profundis claims the voice of the unconscious, but neither in Billy Budd nor in The Nigger of the "Nascissus" is this voice answered, for man, instead of acknowledging the voice as coming from within him, and the claim as his own inner claim,

represses the instincts, and goes on acting and reacting with reason only.

Both characters, Billy Budd and James Wait, are here representing the force of the unconscious, latent in every human being, and both authors present this force as unable to compete with rationality in a highly civilized, rational world, where men are urged, since early chidbood, to repress this force in themselves. In our Western world, children, from above seven years of age, are usually taught to repress their instincts and even their dreams, because dreams are irrational and unreal and we must live reality — and this is done while some men, like Jung, affirm that the rational and the irrational have equal right to exist.

> The irrationality of events is shown in what we call chance, which we are obviously compelled to deny, because we cannot in principle think of any process that is not causal and necessary, whence if follows that it cannot happen by chance. In practice, however, chance reigns everywhere, and so obtrusively that we might as well put our causal philosophy in our pocket. The plenitude of life is governed by law and yet not governed by law, rational and yet irrational. Hence reason and the will that is grounded in reason are valid only up to a point. The further we go in the direction selected by reason, the surer we may be that we are excluding the irrational possibilities of life which have just as much right to be lived[3].

All of us have the tendency and the capacity to be both rational and irrational, it is part of our nature; and children, before being corrupted by this social urge to be all reason and no instinct, are able to keep one foot on the rational and the other on the irrational, one foot on reality and the other on fantasy (blessed are they!). We must go back to this state that we have long forsaken — but we have a tendency to link "being a child" with the connotation of stupidity that there is in "being childish", as Jung says,

> Life has grown desiccated and cramped, crying out for the rediscovery of the fountainhead. But the fountainhead can only be found if the conscious mind

> will suffer iself to be led back to the "children's land," there to receive guidance from the unconscious as before. To remain a child too long is childish, but it is just as childish to move away and then assume that childhood no longer exists because we do not see it. But if we return to the "children's land" we succumb to the fear of becoming childish, because we do not understand that everything of psychic origin has a double face. One face looks forward, the other back. It is ambivalent and therefore symbolic, like all living reality[4].

Christ put salvation in terms of becoming again as a child. He said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). It is all an inner problem. It is all a question of inner discovery and change — salvation comes from within, and that is an Eastern thought throughout.

> It is not that the divine is every<u>where</u>: it is that the divine is every<u>thing</u>. So that <u>one</u> does not require any outside reference, revelation, sacrament, or authorized community to return to it. One has but to alter one's psychological orientation and recognize (re-cognize) what is within[5].

These are Eastern values, the values of the unconscious that we Westerners repress in ourselves when we should search for them in ourselves, and cherish them in ourselves. As Jung says, "We must get at the Eastern values from within and not from without, seeking them in ourselves, in the unconscious[6]. But Western thought and Western society deny that, to our misfortune.

Because both Melville and Conrad see this denial in man, and despair of a solution by the time of the present novels, they show, each in his own way, their representatives of the unconscious as weak characters. The difference lies only at the artistic level — a difference of treatment, and not a philosophical difference. Melville's Billy Budd is a fatalist, and his main weakness lies in his total innocence, his complete lack of malice when he has to deal with the Machiavellian machinations of Claggart. Conrad's James Wait is not innocent, but the crew's tendency towards

rationality and their weakness become manifested in him in the form of a mysterious illness that makes him weaker and weaker, unable to face the powerful forces that fight him: the social, the rational laws of society; and the political, the rational demands of Donkin's socialism. So, his weakness is a reflection of the crew's weakness, of their incapacity to acknowledge their unconscious. Thus, his death means the repression of the unconscious.

There is still another difference in treatment: Billy Budd, though representing the dark, unknown forces of the instincts, lives in the open, under the sun — his influence manifests itself in broad daylight; whereas the Negro James Wait is confined underdeck in the ship — he is a truly subterranean force. Billy Budd is intellectually inactive, but full of physical energy; Wait has an active mind, but a totally inactive body, so, he lays, *lentus in umbra*, in the underground.

What really proves that both Melville and Conrad are pessimistic in these two novels is the fact that those instinctive forces are totally repressed or die in the end, with the deaths of Billy Budd and James Wait. No heir, no disciple is left to pursue the quest for the unconscious; nobody has, at the end, any kind of illumination. No, the world is restored to its "normality" — the ordeal of those two characters is completely useless. Some time after Billy Budd's death, Captain Vere dies forgotten ashore, but he experiences no change, he is still the same man, sticking to his old world of forms, though with a conflict gnawing in his heart — but he already had that conflict before. The sailors are said to compose ballads for Billy Budd, but they are merely transforming the Handsome Sailor into a legend, making a cult to his memory — not a single one of the sailors is said to have experienced any change whatsoever, any illumination. In the case of James Wait, the same situation is found in the end, and not even

ballads are sung for him. The crew become apathetic and submissive again. Rationalism wins entirely, repressing the irrational instincts, and Wait is forgotten. Captain Allistoun, representing reason, law, is still in his post as a winner; Donkin also wins, in his way — which is Conrad's view, here politically "conservative," of socialism.

Furthermore, one cannot even say that the narrators of these two novels, the ones who are now presenting the story to the world, have experienced any illumination, since the narrators are not developed characters (as we will see later on, in Chapter VI); actually, they are not even individuals, since they lack the very first thing for anyone to be an individual: a name. These narrators are completely different from those we will find in Moby-Dick and in Heart of Darkness, who are identified characters, fully developed with psychological profoundity, and they clearly experience a change.

So, as we see, both novels end with a complete emptiness in terms of the force of the unconscious. It is really repressed, with no heir, with no disciples nor followers — with no hope. Pessimistically.

Due to this pessimistic position of both authors, in neither of the two works can we find a "superman," not even a potential "superman". The attainment of the state of transcendence of the ordinariness of the human being is impossible in a context of pessimism in relation to the force of individualism. The "superman," being a highly individualistic figure, can only sprout in a context of praise for the individual, where there is a struggle of the individual for self-assertion. There must be a complete plunge into the Self, the "journey within," which must have a full circle: the descent into "hell," the meeting with the powerful forces of the unconscious, the recognition of oneself in those forces, the incorporation of the unconscious, and the triumphant

return to the surface, surrounded by a halo of illumination.

These motifs are found neither in Billy Budd nor in The Nigger of the "Nascissus." However, we will find them shining in both Moby-Dick and Heart of Darkness, which, in terms of individualism, are much more optimistic works.

NOTES ON CHAPTER THREE

[1]Campbell, Joseph, "Oriental Mythology," vol. II, in The Masks of God, p.485.

[2]Lawrence, D.H., "The Ladybird," in Three Novellas, p.35.

[3]Jung, Carl G., Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, pp.59-60.

[4]idem, The Portable Jung, pp.337-338.

[5]Campbell, Joseph, op. cit., pp.12-13 - original underlining.

[6]Jung, Carl G., The Portable Jung, p.490.

CHAPTER IV

THE HERO AND THE HEROIC QUEST

From the moment one admits the existence of heroes, one is implying that there are superior beings, for what is a hero if not one who ascends above the conformity of the masses? What is a hero if not one who dares to step beyond commonness and to question the values of the ordinary human beings? What is a hero if not one who does not submit, but fights to the end to assert himself? What is a hero if not one who is bold enough to face his own loneliness and to look into himself? What is a hero if not one who is fit for the heroic quest? The ordinary human being does not and cannot do such things; he cannot rise above the ordinariness of the petty existence shared by all, he cannot face the consequences of being unique; the fear-hatred of the rabble who want to crucify him. The hero is a superman. Of course in between these two groups we have those human beings who are able to question traditional values, who have some self-awareness, but who are not entirely ready for the quest. The rabble are like caterpillars, and the heroes are the butterflies — the ones in between are the chrysalises.

Now, how is this heroic superman formed? I would say that there are two kinds: the one who has plunged into his own

unconscious, known the good and the evil that lie within himself, and has stepped beyond that — he has become illuminated. Buddha is the prototype of this kind of superman in the East. In literature, Faust would be an attempt to accomplish that, since the power he was seeking was the power to overcome himself, to be master over himself. The second type is that hero who is not satisfied with being master over himself only (and perhaps he has not had strength to master himself so utterly), and wants to extend his power and dominate others. This is — on the surface — the Nietzschean concept of the superman. And here I would suggest, as potential examples, several historical figures: Tamburlaine, Alexander, Bonaparte, etc, etc. It is well-known that Nietzsche had great admiration for Napoleon Bonaparte.

Nietzsche believed that superior human beings are naturally entitled to rule (to which I personally disagree), as he made his Zarathustra say,

> O blessed remote time when a people would say to itself, "I want to be master over peoples." For, my brothers, the best should rule, the best also want to rule. And where the doctrine is different, there the best is lacking[1].

But let us go to the formation of the hero, to the genesis. Our unconscious is made up of two parts: the personal and the collective. Jung says that

> We have to distinguish between a personal unconscious and an impersonal or transpersonal unconscious. We speak of the latter also as the collective unconscious, because it is detached from anything personal and is entirely universal, and because its contents can be found everywhere, which is naturally not the case with the personal contents[2].

The personal unconscious is the "storehouse" of everything that is repressed by our conscious mind which is forced to do so by religious and social standards (in other words, forced by the superego). And not only that, but it also stores all the millions

of pieces of information we bump into in our lives and that, being of no immediate use, are not exactly repressed, but put aside for being "superfluous," and thus, becoming part of the "storehouse." The behavior and tendencies that are part of man's nature, but are not compatible with the social standards and are repressed, come to form this other side of the individual's personality which is kept hidden inside him — the "shadow" — and only surfaces in extraordinary circumstances.

The collective unconscious is basically the instincts that are common to the whole species. It is what links all human beings, with no regard for the individuals or for race — there is only one race: the human race. The collective (conscious and unconscious) is based especially on "imitation," thus, common to men in general, and, *ipso facto*, inferior to the personal, since the personal (conscious and unconscious) is the strongest aspect in all the things that differentiate the individuals. Quoting Jung,

> ... the collective payche comprises the "parties inférieures"of the mental functions, i.e., that portion which is firmly established, is acquired by haredity, and exists everywhere; whose activity is, as it were, automatic; and which is in consequence transpersonal or impersonal. The personal conscious and unconscious comprise the "parties superieures" of the mental functions — that is, the portion that has been ontogenetically acquired and developed, and is the result of personal differentiation[3].

When one manages to raise one's unconscious, both the personal and the collective surface. If one is able to cope with his unconscious and step beyond it, he becomes illuminated (or a superman), as we have seen in Chapter II; Jung, however, sees this raising mostly in terms of the collective unconscious, and criticizes the state of mind one is in after the experience with the unconscious.

> A collective attitude is always dangerous to the individual, even when it is the response to a necessity. It is dangerous because it checks the personal differentiation and very readily suppresses it. It derives this characteristic from the collective psyche, which is itself a product of psychological differentiation, from the powerful gregarious instinct of man.
>
> His sense of identity with the collective psyche may, for example, make him try continually to impose the pretentions of his unconscious upon other people, for such an identification produces in him a feeling of universal validity ("godlikeness") which impels him completely to disregard the different psychological feelings of others[4].

So, according to Jung, this godlike state is due to the individual's identification with the collective unconscious — he is no longer one, but all, he has the whole species within him, hence the "illusion" of omniscience, of timelessness, and of power he feels. This feeling of superiority one feels in relation to others, Jung calls "inflation."

> It sounds almost grotesque to describe such a state as "godlike." But since each in his way steps beyond his human proportions, both of them are a little "superhuman" and therefore, figuratively speaking godlike. If we wish to avoid the use of this metaphor, I would suggest that we speak instead of "psychic inflation." In such a state a man fills a space which normally he cannot fill. He can only fill it by appropriating to himself contents and qualities which properly exist for themselves. What lies outside ourselves belongs either to someone else, or to everyone, or to no one[5].

On the other hand, Jung contradicts himself in an astonishing way: he says that coping with the unconscious is a necessity, since the individual living in society is "contaminated" by the collectivity — the collective standards of behavior and attitudes — and this contamination makes him one with the mass, more collective and less individual. He says,

> Here one may ask, perhaps, why it is so desirable that a man should be individuated. Not only is it desirable, it is absolutaly indispensable because, through his contamination with others, he falls into situations and commits actions which bring him into disharmony with himself[6].

Society wants individuals to act and to be led as a herd — like a single body — for that is easier to control. It is simpler to control a non-thinking mass than individuals capable of complex thinking and spontaneous inner attitudes and decisions. Such spontaneity is only possible when the individual is attentive to himself, to what goes on inside himself, and does not follow blindly the general behavior. So, society considers the individual worrying with himself as something "morbid" — a morbidness that deserves treatment. And the mass itself is in charge of watching one another to detect the individual who happens to "misbehave," that is, to behave in a way that is uncommon, bizarre in the eyes of the mass; thus, we become afraid of being different.

> The habit of rushing in to correct and criticize is already strong enough in our tradition, and it is as a rule further reinforced by fear — a fear that can be confessed neither to oneself nor to others, a fear of insidious truths, of dangerous knowledge, of disagreable verifications, in a word, fear of all those things that cause so many of us to flee from being alone with ourselves, as from the plague. We say that it is egoistic or "morbid" to be preoccupied with oneself; one's own company is the worst, "it makes you melancholy" — such are the glowing testimonies accorded to our human make-up. They are evidently deeply ingrained in our Western minds[7].

And Jung comes to agree that, in order to get rid of the mass and assert oneself, one has to look at one's unconscious face to face — and transcend it. He calls this joining the conscious and the unconscious and this stepping beyond both the "transcendent function." He says that describing a patient (and here, I think, lies the source of the whole problem: Jung bases all his theories in observation of patients, and neurotic patients under psychological treatment can hardly be used as models for analysing the superman):

> Through her active participation the patient merges herself in the unconscious processes and she gains possession of them by allowing them to possess her. In this way she joins the conscious to the

> unconscious. The result is ascension in the flame, transformation in the alchemical heat, the genesis of the "subtle spirit." That is the transcendent function born of the union of opposites[8].

As we see, here <u>ascension</u> is not "inflation," but the "subtle spirit," the "transcendent function." And as he goes further, he comes to agree that the individual experiencing this ex-inflation, now, "transcendent function," can be a real example of genius.

> And in so far as he is normally "adapted" to his environment, it is true that the greatest infamy on the part of his group will not disturb him, so long as the majority of his fellows steadfastly believe in the exalted morality of their social organization. No, all that I have said here about the influence of society upon the individual is identically true of the influence of the collective unconscious upon the individual psyche. But, as is apparent from my examples, the latter influence is as invisible as the former is visible. Hence it is not surprising that its inner effects are not understood, and that those to whom such things happen are called psychological freaks and treated as crazy. If one of them happened to be a real genius, the fact would not be noted until the next generation or the one after[9].

So he agrees that there are exceptions — great human beings may rise from this attainment of the "transcendent function." Although the majority of men persist in being just part of a mass of equal creatures, there are those who prefer differentiation, even knowing that they may have to pay a high price for their audacity. But *audaces fortuna juvat.*

> The vast majority needs authority, guidance, law. This fact cannot be overlooked. The Pauline overcoming of the law falls only to the man who knows how to put his soul in the place of conscience. Very few are capable of this ("Many are called, but few are chosen"). And these few tread this path only from inner necessity, not to say suffering, for it is sharp as the edge of a razor[10].

And here, as we see, Jung has really gotten Nietzschean. Great men are those who are able to be part of those few "chosen" ones. And they are great artists, great heroes —— they do not live only by the conscious, by the rational, but they acknowledge their

unconscious as well. That is why they are great. Pure rationality is something of utter importance for the technological progress of the world, but the wages we have to pay for that are very high: mediocrity.

> The definiteness and directedness of the conscious mind are extremely important acquisitions which humanity has bought at a very heavy sacrifice, and which in turn have rendered humanity the highest service. Without them science, techonology, and civilization would be impossible, for they all presuppose the reliable continuity and directedness of the conscious process. For the statesman, doctor, engineer as well as for the simplest labourer, these qualities are absolutely indispensable. We may say in general that social worthlessness increases to the degree that these qualities are impaired by the unconscious. Great artists and others distinguished by creative gifts are, of course, exceptions to the rule. The very advantage that such individuals enjoy consists precisely in the permeability of the partition separating the conscious and the unconscious. But, for those professions and social activities which require just this continuity and reliability, these exceptional human beings are as a rule of little value[11].

Gifted human beings tread on both the conscious and the unconscious.

Raising the unconscious, as we saw in Chapter II, is something dangerous, for one may be simply swallowed by it and plunge into madness,

> But if a man is a hero, he is a hero because, in the final reckoning, he did not let the monster devour him, but subdued it — not once but many times. It is in the achievement of victory over the collective psyche that the true value lies; and this is the meaning of the conquest of the treasure, of the invincible weapon, the magic talisman — in short, of all those desirable goods that myths tell of[12].

As Jung's disciple, Joseph Campbell too gives more power to the collective than to the personal unconscious (the "shadow"), but, unlike Jung who admits only contradictorily the actual power of the hero (not merely "inflation"), he asserts the possibility of one becoming a hero by plunging into the unconscious — what

he calls "willed introversion" — and rising then as a giant. He also talks about the dangers of this experience, the risk of total disintegration when one faces what lies hidden inside oneself (see the dangers of the kuṇḍalini in Chapter II). Campbell says,

> Willed introversion, in fact, is one of the classic implements of creative geniius and can be employed as a deliberate device. It drives the psychic energies into depth and activates the lost continent of unconscious, infantile and archetypal images. The result, of course, may be a desintegration of consciousness more or less complete (neurosis, psychosis: the plight of spellbound Daphne); but on the other hand, if the personality is able to absorb and integrate the new forces, there will be experienced an almost super-human degree of self-consciousness and masterful control. This is a basic principle of the Indian discipline of yoga. It has been the way also of many creative spirits in the West. It cannot be described, quite, as an answer to any specific call. Rather, it is a deliberate, terrific refusal to respond to anything but the deepest, highest, richest answer to the as yet unknown demand of some waiting void within: a kind of total strike, or rejection of the offered terms of life, as a result of which some power of transformation carries the problem to a plane of new magnitudes, where it is suddenly and finally resolved[13].

As we see, it is a dangerous adventure that can destroy one, but, if the person is a potential hero, he can go through the whole process, and succeed in mastering his unconscious.

> The adventure is always and everywhere a passage beyond the veil of the known into the unknown; the powers that watch at the boundary are dangerous; to deal with them is risky; yet for anyone with competence and courage the danger fades[14].

In myth, the dangers the hero has to face when penetrating his unconscious are mostly of a magic type. And they are so because they represent not physical dangers, but dangers to the soul. It is not a physical fight, but a psychological one; it is not a fight against outside monsters, but against those we have within us. As Campbell says,

> It is the business of mythology proper and of the fairy tale, to reveal the specific dangers and

> techniques of the dark interior way from tragedy to comedy. Hence the incidents are fantastic and "unreal": they represent psychological, not physical triumphs[15].

In general terms, the adventure of the hero consists in three phases: we have "a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return"[16]. The "separation from the world" is the person's freeing himself from the social (physically or psychologically), it is the isolation, or the "willed introversion." The "penetration into some source of power" means, of course, the plunge into the unconscious, the confrontation with the hidden energies of the mind. Then we have the hero's return, now as a complete being, with his conscious and his unconscious perfectly integrated. This return of the hero is necessary — he has to replant somehow the seed that will germinate and lead other "chosen ones" to follow that same path. This return represents also a new challenge and new dangers to the hero.

> The return and reintegration with society, which is indispensable to the continuous circulation of spiritual energy into the world, and which, from the standpoint of the community, is the justification of the long retreat, the hero himself may find the most difficult requirement of all. For if he has won through, like a Buddha, to the profound repose of complete enlightenment, there is danger that the bliss of his experience may annihilate all recollection of, interest in, or hope for, the sorrows of the world; or else the problem of making known the way of illumination to people wrapped in economic problems may seem too great to solve. And on the other hand, if the hero, instead of submitting to all of the initiatory tests, has, like Prometheus, simply darted to his goal (by violence, quick device, or luck) and plucked the boon for the world that he intended, then the powers that he has unbalanced may react so sharply that he will be blasted from within and without — crucified, like Prometheus, on the rock of his violated unconscious. Or if the hero, in the third place, makes his safe and willing return, he may meet with such a blank misunderstanding and disregard from those whom he has come to help that his career will collapse[17].

So, on returning, the hero may see humanity as an insoluble case,

and simply lose interest in it; or the hero may be considered by humanity as such a great danger for the stability of the social order that it will try to destroy him (see Christ's case).

According to Campbell, the hero may be seen as intended for a smaller group of for the whole of humanity.

> Tribal or local heroes, such as the emperor Huang Ti, Moses, or the Aztec Tezcatlipoca, commit their boons to a single folk; universal heroes — Mohammed, Jesus, Gautama Buddha — bring a message to the entire world[18].

However, I would not say that they come to save the entire world, for in this case too there are the "chosen ones." Although their preachings are intended to be wide spread, that means simply that they will have a world-wide scope, but not that all will answer or understand. All will hear, but few will answer. It is not just for all, but for those who are fit. Take Christ, for example: contrary to what has always been stated, he never said that salvation was for all — he too had his "chosen ones" and that is why he preached in parables so that just the ones who were fit would be able to understand. When his disciples asked him why he preached that way,

> He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he will have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and <u>their</u> ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed: lest at any time they should see with <u>their</u> eyes, and hear with <u>their</u> ears, and should understand with <u>their</u> heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Matthew 13:11-15 - original underlining).

So here we have the same viewpoint of Nietzsche's philosophy of

the higher men: salvation is for the rare, for the few "chosen ones" — those who are really fit for it. It certainly is <u>not</u> for those who want to remain forever common, eternally part of the mass. And mind the important emphasis given in the passage to the individualistic character of the conversion: it must be not merely through the preaching, but through an inner necessity.

Christ's real position has always been misinterpreted by religious people — and, I do believe, that has been done with the foulest intentions. He, like the Buddha or like the superman, is a path to be pursued boldly. He himself said that,

> I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him (John, 14:6,7),

which can be interpreted literally or, in a different way, symbolically (this is in fact another parable). There is here the implication that to reach the <u>Father</u>, one must first have the <u>Son</u>. To know the <u>Father</u>, one must first know the <u>Son</u>. If we consider that all of us are sons of God (and not only Christ), to understand God, we must first have self-understanding. To grasp the <u>Macrocosmos</u> (the universe, God), we must first grasp the <u>microcosmos</u> (man, ourselves). The Easterners have the feeling that, through self-knowledge, we can become as gods — a union of man and God, of the micro- and the macrocosmos, of the Son and the Father. Jesus made this rather explicit when he said "I and my Father are one" (John, 10:30). Jung quotes this sentence as the highest example of "inflation," but we have seen that it is not so. Campbell, his disciple, supports my idea. He says,

> Jesus, for example, can be regarded as a man who by dint of austerities and meditation attained wisdom; or on the other hand, one may believe that a god descended and took upon himself the enactment of a human career. The first view would lead one to imitate the master literally, in order to break through, in the same way as he, to the transcendent,

> redemptive experience. But the second states that the hero is rather a symbol to be contemplated than an example to be literally followed. The divine being is a revelation of the omnipotent Self, which dwells within us all. The contemplation of the life thus should be undertaken as a meditation on one's own immanent divinity, not as a prelude to precise imitation, the lesson being, not "Do thus and be good," but "Know this and be God"[19].

Becoming a god is a task for the hero. He is the one who leaves the world of Man as seen socially (the superego) to plunge into the world of the gods (the id, the unconscious). Formerly, the world of Man and the world of the gods were one, but man's rationality has split it in two. Now it is the task of the hero to restore it to its wholeness, for the hero is the one who has a foot in both worlds.

> The two worlds, the divine and the human, can be pictured only as distinct from each other — different as life and death, as day and night. The hero adventures out of the land we know into darkness; there he accomplishes his adventure, or again is simply lost to us, imprisoned, or in danger; and his return is described as a coming back out of that yonder zone. Nevertheless — and here is a great key to the understanding of myth and symbol — the two kingdoms are actually one. The realm of the gods is a forgotten dimension of the world we know. And the exploration of that dimension, either willingly or unwillingly, is the whole sense of the deed of the hero. The values and distinctions that in normal life seem important disappear with the terrifying assimilation of the self into what formerly was only otherness[20].

It must be again emphasized that this rising of man to the posture of a god is not to be extended at random to the whole species as Camus tried to pump into Nietzsche's philosophy when he analysed it. He said,

> It no longer suffices for the rebel to deify himself like Stirner or to look for his own salvation by adopting a certain attitude of mind. The species must be deified, as Nietzsche attempted to do, and his ideal of the superman must be adopted so as to assure savation for all[21].

That is not Nietzsche's position. On the contrary; he urges his

superior men to stay away from the "market place" where the rabble dwells. Nietzsche's position is very clearly bent to the establishment of an elite of superior beings who have the right to rule. But one should not deceive oneself: he did not believe in an aristocracy by birth, but in an aristocracy of the mind, and thus, he leaves the door open for all races and all castes from which the "chosen ones" will rise. But, anyway, it is an elite, and he makes that clear. He makes his Zarathustra say "I am the law only for my kind, I am not the law for all"[22]. And he adds,

> I learned to say; "Of what concern to me are market and mob and mob noise and big mob ears?"
> You higher men, learn this from me: in the market place nobody believes in higher men[23].

We can see that neither Christ nor Buddha believed in an aristocracy by birth as well. The fact that both of them were aristocratic by birth (Christ as a descendent of King David, and Buddha as a prince himself), but lived simply implies that.

Nietzsche knows the dangers of the unconscious too, and he says that dealing with it is not advisable for common men.

> In solitude, whatever one has brought into it grows — also the inner beast. Therefore solitude is inadvisable for many[24].

Nietzsche's is the philosophy of the strong. He despises the weak. He abhors men whose way of living is self-denial.

> There are those with consumption of the soul: hardly are they born when they begin to die and to long for doctrines of weariness and renunciation. They would like to be dead, and we should welcome their wish. Let us beware of waking the dead and disturbing these living coffins[25].

As we see, those who are not fit should never be forced into an awakening — this is a process that must come from within. Here, the dangers of the kuṇḍalini, the dangers of the awakening of the unconscious, are implied. Those who are not fit and ready for the

change should never try.

> You are no eagles: hence you have never experienced the happiness that is in the terror of the spirit. And he who is not a bird should not build his nest over abysses[26].

The image of the eagle that flies above the world is recurrent in Nietzsche. Also the effect this eagle causes on ordinary men: they fear and they hate the eagle-man, since they cannot understand him — what the ordinary men cannot understand for being above them, they fear, they hate, they crucify. Again, Zarathustra says,

> You force many to relearn about you; they charge it bitterly against you. You came close to them and yet passed by: that they will never forgive. You pass over and beyond them: but the higher you ascend, the smaller you appear to the eye of envy. <u>But most of all they hate those who fly</u>[27].

For Nietzsche, the superman is the man of the future — it is in the future that he will rise to power. Nietzsche abominates the social standards of his day, he abominates the State.

> State is the name of the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly it tells lies too; and this lie crawls out of its mouth: "I, the state, am the people." That is a lie! It was creators who created peoples and hung a faith and a love over them: thus they served them. ... But the state tells lies in all the tongues of good and evil; and whatever it says it lies — and whatever it has it has stolen. Everything about it is false; it bites with stolen teeth, and bites easily. Even its entrails are false. ... All-too-many are born: for the superfluous the state was invented. Behold, how it lures them, the all-too-many — and how it devours them, chews them, and ruminates!
>
> "On earth there is nothing greater than I: the ordering finger of God am I" — thus roars the monster. And it is not only the long-eared and shortsighted who sink to their knees[28].

And he affirms that the superman rises at the end of the state.

> Only where the state ends, there begins the human being who is not superfluous: there begins

> the song of necessity, the unique and inimitable tune.
> Where the state <u>ends</u> — look there, my brothers! Do you not see it, the rainbow and the bridges of the overman?[29]

As we see, Nietzsche's is the philosophy of the future. He does not see any superman in his time — that is a creature of the future. Men of his time are all too equal, they are all-too-human.

> Never yet has there been an overman. Naked I saw both the greatest and the smallest man: they are still all-too-similar to each other. Verily, even the greatest I found all-too-human[30].

So, this race of men must be overcome so that the superman may be reached. Zarathustra says, "<u>I teach you the overman</u>. Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?"[31]. And then he puts his superman at the level of a god. The superman will overcome the men of his time as the men of his time overcame the ape in the past — that first barrier which separated the ape from man has been overcome; in the future, the second barrier (that that separates man from the gods) will also be overcome, and the superman will appear — that is the idea in Nietzsche's philosophy.

> What is the ape to man? A laughingstock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the overman: a laughingstock or a painful embarrassment[32].

A philosophy of the future must be based on <u>hope</u>, but it is very interesting to note that Nietzsche does not feel comfortable with the idea of hope. He believes so strangely and so strongly that hope is a feeling for the weak that he goes as far as to create a misconception of the position of the Greeks in relation to hope. "The Greeks considered hope the evil of evils, the truly insidious evil: it remained behind in the barrel of evils"[33]. If we examine the myth of Prometheus, we see that that

is not true. This "barrel of evils" was a box that Zeus gave to Pandora so that she would give it to Prometheus to open. Prometheus sensed the trap and did not accept it, but his brother Epimetheus was less perspicacious. When Epimetheus opened Pandora's box and set free all the miseries of the world (such as Pestilence, War, Death, Old Age, Envy, Hatred, etc), a single entity remained at the bottom of the box. Empimetheus noticed this sole remaining entity and with a smile closed the box quickly. Zeus had made a mistake and could still be defeated, for there remained this one entity that could, perhaps, overcome all the others. Not everything was lost, after all. The human race could still be saved, for that remaining entity that lay at the bottom of the box was Hope. Zeus's intention in releasing evil into the world was to destroy humanity (Prometheus creation), but he failed for hope came together with evil to counterbalance it. Man could still overcome (or transcend) evil, and be like his creator — Prometheus.

Prometheus is the true inspiration for every poet or playwright or novelist who wants to portray a hero who is in opposition to power — especially divine power. Variants there are, of course, but the inspiration is doubtless this Greek hero, fascinating in his courage, his honesty with himself, his persistency, his force, his sensibility, his intelligence, his suffering, and his ability to bear his suffering without giving in, without bowing to power, without losing his dignity; always strong, always courageous, always proud, always imposing his individuality, and never accepting being grouped in a mass of depersonalized creatures without strong will, who bow to power and annul themselves. Prometheus asserted his individuality and imposed his will-power throughout. He was a truly Nietzschean hero, one who lived on the pinnacles, above the common. He could have tried to fight power like Melville's Ahad does — through

destruction —, but he chose his own way. He decided to defy power through creation, and, with that, he mocked Zeus to his face, and showed that he was strong in intelligence and sensibility and not in brute force; in reason and feelings, not in madness; in creation, not in destruction. His mockery was more than Zeus could bear, his wit was more than Zeus could parallel — and he won the fight. But Prometheus waited for a long time for the right occasion to assert himself — he too had hope for the future, but that did not mean submission to the present state of things. One can hope and fight — actually, why should one fight hopelessly? —, but that is what Nietzsche does not want to see. He connects hope with Christianity (the hope in a post-morten bliss).

Nietzsche's philosophy, being a philosophy of the future, is based on hope — hope in the superman. But I would not go so far as Eric Bentley does when analysing Nietzsche's philosophy: he says that it is based on hope, but he compares this hope with that in the Jewish Messiah. He says,

> The argument is against fatalism. We are enjoined to rely on Destiny and await the Superman. But is this really preferable to being enjoined, say, to rely on God and await the Messiah?[34]

To which I disagree entirely. The sense of hope in these two philosophies is not the same. Actually, they differ widely: if you want to consider the superman as a Messiah, Nietzsche does not preach waiting for one, but being one — and that makes all the difference. And here lies Nietzsche's main reason for despising Christianity, for, in his eyes, Christianity's main objective is to maintain men as a heard of weak creatures that *nunc et semper* have to be guided, since they cannot guide themselves. He says,

> Christianity has sided with all that is weak and base, with all failures; it has made an ideal of whatever contradicts the instincts of the strong

> life to preserve itself; it has corrupted the reason of even those strongest in spirit by teaching men to consider the supreme values of the spirit as something sinful, as something that leads into error — as temptations[35].

But the Christianity Nietzsche is referring to here is this one we see in the world today — the pseudo-Christianity of pretence that has been created by an official Church allied with the state. This Christianity that preaches that the offspring of man is "the product of sin!" and asserts that man is sinful *ab ovo*. It preaches that man must deny himself in order to find salvation. It preaches the eternal imperfection of man and affirms that man can never attain perfection — it puts an abyss between man and God. But we saw in the Chapter "Western and Eastern Concepts" that God himself admitted that man could be like Him. And we have seen in the present chapter that neither Christ preached this kind of rubbish, but actually affirmed man's latent capacity for the attainment of perfection. Christ too, like the Orientals, thought that man could transcend ordinariness, in life, and become like God — and he urged man to transpose the barrier and transcend commonness. Did he not say "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"? (Mattew, 5:48). As we see, this is Christ himself condemning Christianity.

NOTES ON CHAPTER FOUR

[1] Nietzsche, F.W., "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in The Portable Nietzsche, p.332 - original underlining.

[2] Jung, Carl G., Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, p.76.

[3] ibid., p.283.

[4] ibid., pp.285-286.

[5] ibid., p.152.

[6] ibid., p.237.

[7] ibid., p.213.

[8] ibid., p.236.

[9] ibid., p.163.

[10] ibid., p.251.

[11] idem, The Portable Jung, pp.274-275.

[12] idem, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, p.294.

[13] Campbell, Joseph, The Hero with A Thousand Faces, pp.64-65.

[14] ibid., p.82.

[15] ibid., p.29.

[16] ibid., p.35.

[17] ibid., pp.36-37 - original underlining.

[18] ibid., p.38.

[19] ibid., p.319 - my underlining.

[20] ibid., p.217.

[21] Camus, Albert, The Rebel, p.107.

[22] Nietzsche, F.W., "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in The Portable Nietzsche, p.397.

[23] ibid., p.398.

[24] ibid., p.404.

[25] ibid., p.157.

[26] ibid., p.217.

[27] ibid., p.176 - my underlining.

[28] ibid., pp.160-161.

[29] ibid., p.163 - original underlining.

[30]Nietzsche, F.W., "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in The Portable Nietzsche, p.205.

[31]ibid., p.124 - original underlining.

[32]ibid., p.124.

[33]idem, "The Antichrist," in The Portable Nietzsche, p.591.

[34]Bentley, Eric, A Century of Hero-Worship, p.145.

[35]Nietzsche, F.W., "The Antichrist," in The Portable Nietzsche, pp.571-572 - original underlining.

CHAPTER V

THE ASSERTION OF INDIVIDUALISM

1. Whiteness

In Melville's Moby-Dick we see Ahab through the eyes of Ishmael, the same way as in Conrad's Heart of Darkness we see Kurtz through the eyes of Marlow. Marlow is a gifted human being, full of that awareness that enables one to spot greatness when it manifests itself, even when no other eye can see it. Ishmael can be described in the same light: he is aware that, dealing with Ahab, he is dealing with someone who is in no way common, who is above, high above the average human being, one who is struggling to rid himself of what is oppressing him. Both Marlow and Ishmael at the end of their experience with those extraordinary samples of greatness in the human race, come out changed; actually, their experience is like a rebirth, they fly out from the ashes of their past experience with utterly new plumage and utterly new hearts and minds. Marlow, for example, is aware of Kurtz's importance in his life, the importance of this quasi-superman in the opening of his mind's eye.

> I did not betray Mr. Kurtz — it was ordered I should never betray him — it was written I should be loyal to the nightmare of my choice. I was

> anxious to deal with this shadow by myself alone — and to this day I don't know why I was so jealous of sharing with any one the peculiar blackness of that experience (p.141).

In the "blackness of that experience" he finds his lotus-flower.

This idea of rebirth is present throughout Moby-Dick. Going to sea is, for Ishmael, an experience of rebirth:

> This is the substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quickly take to the ship (p.12).

One has to experience death in order to have a rebirth. And death means getting rid of formal standards of morality and/or prejudices, burning up one's old Self and creating a new one out the ashes. In order to do it, one has to plunge inside oneself and examine what one sees there, stirring the dark waters of the unconscious with all its dangerous traps, and come out alive and greater — illuminated. Ishmael says,

> ... I have a way of keeping my eyes shut, in order the more to concentrate the snugness of being in bed. Because no man can ever feel his own identity aright except his eyes be closed; as if darkness were indeed the proper element of our essence, though light be more congenial to our clayey part (p.55).

Death is in Moby-Dick represented by the recurrent image of the coffin. Ishmael uses this image already in the opening chapter — actually, the opening page.

> Whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off — then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can (p.12).

The sea, of course, is the representation of the unknown, the unconscious.

> Why upon your first voyage as a passenger, did you yourself feel such a mystical vibration, when first told that you and your ship were now out of sight of land? Why did the Persians hold the sea holy? Why did the Greeks give it a separate deity, making him the own brother of Jove? (pp.13-14).

The owner of the inn in Nantucket where Ishmael stays before going to sea is called Peter <u>Coffin</u> (chapter 2). And it is at this inn that Ishmael meets Queequeg, who will, at the end, indirectly, and through a literal coffin, prevent Ishmael's drowning, restoring thus to him the gift of life. It is a rather rich symbolism. Queequeg is prey to a very high fever and asks the ship carpenter to make him a coffin. Although everything indicates that Queequeg is sure to die, he suddenly recovers because

> ... he had just recalled a little duty ashore, which he was leaving undone; and therefore had changed his mind about dying: he could not die yet, he averred (p.398).

So, as we see, the moment for one's death is for Queequeg just a matter of choice.

> In a word, it was Queequeg's conceit that if a man made up his mind to live, mere sickness could not kill him: nothing but a whale, or a gale, or some violent, ungovernable, unintelligent destroyer of that sort (p.398).

Which is also a Nietzschean concept, in his idea that one should "die haughtily when one can no longer live haughtily." Nietzsche said,

> One never perishes through anybody but oneself. But usually it is death under the most contemptible conditions, an unfree death, death <u>not</u> at the right time, a coward's death[1].

(Which is bitterly ironic if we consider the fact that Nietzsche went crazy and remained in that state for eleven years before dying).

Well, in any case, that is Queequeg's concept of life and

death, and when he decides that it is not his time to cease his association with the living,

> Many spare hours he spent, in carving the lid [of the coffin] with all manner of grotesque figures and drawings; and it seemed that hereby he was striving, in his rude way, to copy parts of the twisted tatooing on his body (p.399).

By transferring his tatooing to the coffin, Queequeg is actually transferring his personality to it, and the coffin becomes an extension of Queequeg's essence. It is Queequeg himself. Later on, when the ship loses her life-buoy, the coffin is used as one, and it is Queequeg himself who suggests it. Thus, the cannibal Queequeg, the savage, a purely instictive creature, a symbol of the unconscious is now to be dealt with as something like a life-keeper. It is interesting that the life-buoy (life-preserver) is replaced by the coffin (death-carrier) — they are interchangeable, according to the suggestion made here; death and life are the same. And it is very significant that, at the end of the novel, it is this same coffin/life-buoy that saves Ishmael's life whan the ship collapses and sinks after being attacked by Moby-Dick. The sinking of the ship drags every floating thing down along with it, as Ishmael, the only survivor of the wreck narrates,

> Round and round, then, and ever contracting towards the button-like black buble at the axis of that slowly wheeling circle, like another Ixion I did revolve. Till, gaining that vital centre, the black bubble upward burst; and now, liberated by reason of its cunning spring, and, owing to its great buoyancy, rising with great force, the coffin life-buoy shot lengthwise from the sea, fell over, floated by my side (p.470).

This is highly symbolic: gushing from the deep, dark sea, surfaces the symbol of life (which is here represented by a symbol of death), the lotus-flower that is going to save Ishmael's life. So, the coffin-Queequeg-the savage-the instincts-the unconscious <u>is</u> death and <u>is</u> life — the paradox of rebirth: death brings life.

But Ishmael "stands to Ahab as the shadow to the object which casts it"[2] for Ishmael is not a superman, not yet (he may eventually become one if he knows how to profit from this experience). He is more passive than active: he is plunged, like all the other characters, into the maelstron created by this superman-prototype, Ahab, from which he is able to escape alive through Queequeg. In terms of outside action, Ishmael is more of a witness than a performer. Ahab is the man of action.

Ahab only appears in the novel in the 28th chapter, but he is mentioned throughout the twenty-seven previous chapters and, by using this technique, Melville involves Ahab in an aura of suspense which suggests the importance of the character and arouses in the reader an enormous curiosity (it is worth noting that Conrad uses this same technique in Heart of Darkness in relation to Kurtz).Ahab is said to be recovering from a mysterious illness; the fact is that he keeps himself in isolation. Captain Peleg says,

> I don't know exactly what's the matter with him; but he keeps close inside the house; a sort of sick, and yet he don't look so. In fact, he ain't sick; but no, he isn't well either (p.76).

He is just in isolation. Even his going aboard the ship is done unnoticed by anybody except Ishmael, and in the ship he continues his isolation. In fact, the ship sails off in chaper 22 and Ahab only shows up before the crew in chapter 28. He hides himself in his cabin all this time. His cabin is like the "solitary grove" Doctor Faustus has to go in order to meditate.

When Ahab finally shows up, he is described this way:

> Captain Ahab stood upon his quarter-deck.
> There seemed no sign of common bodily illness about him, nor of the recovery from any. He looked like a man cut away from the stake, when the fire has overrunningly wasted all the limbs without consuming them, or taking away one particle from their compacted aged robustness. His whole high,

> broad form, seemed made of solid bronze, and shaped in an unalterable mould, like Cellini's cast Perseus. Threading its way out from among his grey hairs, and continuing right down one side of his tawny scorched face and neck, till it disappeared in his clothing, you saw a slender rod-like mark, lividly whitish. It resembled that perpendicular seam sometimes made in the straight, lofty trunk of a great tree, when the upper lightning tearingly darts down it, and without wranching a single twig, peels and grooves out the bark from top to bottom, ere running off into the soil, leaving the tree still greenly alive, but branded. Whether that mark was born with him, or whether it was the scar left by some desperate wound, no one could certainly say. By some tacit consent, throughout the voyage little or no allusion was made to it, especially by the mates. But once Tashtego's senior, an old Gay-Head Indian among the crew, 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....if ever Captain Ahab should be tranquilly laid out — which might hardly come to pass, so he muttered — then, whoever should do that last office for the dead, would find a birth-mark on him from crown to sole (pp.109-110 - my underlining).

If we analyze the underlined words and passages, we notice that something in Ahab is emphasized: a brand, a distinguishing mark that is something physical that distinguishes him from the common men (in Faustus's case, he cuts his arm to sign the contract, and that is bound to leave a mark). Ahab's mark is said to be a birth-mark, which is rather suggestive, because, speaking in terms of religion, marks, especially birth-marks, are usually associated with evil. Cain, for example, after killing Abel, receives a mark on his forehead, put there by God to distinguish him before men as one who has drawn his brother's blood and has to carry forever the weight of his guilt (Genesis, 4:10-15). There is also the Antichrist who is born with the number 666 marked somewhere on his body, for that is the number of the Beast.

> Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six (Revelation, 13:18).

Ahab's scar, as we have seen, is described as being a "rod-like mark" (but remember that rods are a symbol of prophets too); the description goes on and extends the image by joining to it the idea of a "lightning" tearing down a tree. So, if we join the images, we have a scar that resembles a "lightning-rod" (especially if we take in consideration the fact that Ahab's scar is said to extend from "crown to sole"), and this image will be very important to understand the difficult symbolism in chapter 119, called "The Candles," which I will analyze later.

Another distinguishing physical characteristic of Ahab is that he does not have one of his legs, and uses an artificial one made from a whale's jaw-bone. He has lost his leg in a battle with Moby-Dick, and this is the origin of his hatred towards the whale.

As we have seen, many traits distinguish Ahab from his fellow creatures. Captain Peleg says that

> ... 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 (p.76).

So, Ahab has had experience with colleges and cannibals, with civilization and savagery, with restraints and utter liberty, with the superego and the id. Apparently Ahab has put himself above the restraints of human morality. He too is above good and evil. Being superior, Ahab is above any close society with commoners, thus, "... socially, Ahab was inaccessible. Though nominally included in the census of Christendom, he was still alien to it" (p.134). And, to quote again Captain Peleg's description of Ahab, "He's a grand, ungodly, god-like man." Like Prometheus — ungodly, because defying the power of the gods, and god-like, because putting himself in a position equal to the gods. In his mind, Ahab projects a new race of man:

> I like to feel something in this slippery world that can hold, man. What's Prometheus about there? — the blacksmith, I mean — what's he about? ... Hold; while Prometheus is about it, I'll order a complete man after a desirable pattern. Imprimis, fifty feet high in his socks; then, chest modelled after the Thames Tunnel; then, legs with roots to 'em, to stay in one place; then, arms three feet through the wrist; no heart at all, brass forehead, and about a quarter of an acre of fine brains; and let me see — shall I order eyes to see outwards? No, but put a sky-light on top of his head to illuminate inwards. There, take the order, and away (p.390).

Ahab's new human race will not see outwards, but inwards — which is what is necessary for illumination. However, the problem I see here is that this race would be also in contradiction with Melville's own position: they would be all brains, and no hearts.

But Ahab does not have Prometheus's freedom to act. Even detesting the idea, he depends on the human beings around him, he is still part of the social order: he lacks a leg in order to be totally independent. And maybe that is reflected in his new human race: his new man's legs are "legs with roots to 'em."

> Oh, Life! Here I am, proud as a Greek god, and yet standing debtor to this blockhead [the carpenter] for a bone to stand on! Cursed be that mortal inter-indebtedness which will not do away with ledgers. <u>I would be free as air; and I'm down on the world's books</u>. I am so rich. I could have given bid for bid with the wealthiest Praetorians at the auction of the Roman Empire (which was the World's); and yet I owe for the flesh in the tongue I brag with. By heavens! I'll get a crucible, and into it, and dissolve myself down to one small, compendious vertebra. So (pp.391-392 - my underlining).

Unable to act like Prometheus and be creative, Ahab is forced to act like Ahab and be destructive. Instead of creating a new race to mock the gods, Ahab decides to destroy the gods through the symbol of divine manifestation — Moby-Dick. And that is the cause of Ahab's failure: his dependency on other human beings implies his inability to utterly free himself from the social context; so, in his descent into himself, he does not acknowledge

and incorporate *his own evil*, but keeps it external — in *Moby-Dick* — and thus he remains a puritan, a dualist, failing to attain the transcendence of the real superman.

We have descriptions of Moby-Dick which sound like descriptions of the manifestation of the gods. One, for instance, describes Moby-Dick rising majestically from the sea:

> But soon the fore part of him slowly rose from the water; for an instant his whole marbleized body formed a high arch, like Virginia's Natural Bridge, and warningly waving his bannered flukes in the air, the grand god revealed himself, sounded, and want out of sight (p.448).

And, like a god, the whale is seen transfigured, as in this passage in which it is shown "glorified by a rainbow,"

> And how nobly it raises our conceit of the mighty, misty monster, to behold him solemnly through a calm tropical sea; his vast, mild head overhung by a canopy of vapor, *engendered by its incommunicable contemplations*, and that vapor — as you will sometimes see it — glorified by a rainbow, as if Heaven itself had put a seal upon his thoughts (p.314 - my underlining).

Underlined, we have another image that is very interesting: that of the incommunicability of wisdom. Wisdom is something that always comes from within, never from without. The Easterners have always been aware of that. The sage cannot transfer his wisdom, he can only guide his disciple so that he himself awakens his wisdom; the wisdom that lies sleeping in his own unconscious. Christ himself never tried to transfer his wisdom. He always spoke in parables so that only the very few who were really prepared would reach the deep meaning of his message (vide Christ's explanation for speaking in parables on page 133). So the gods present two faces: a true one for those who can see further and deeper, and a false one, for those who are hollow — the esoteric and the exoteric. The whale is described in the same light, "the whale, like all things that are mighty, wears a false brow to the

common world" (p.293).

Well, and what is the whale, what is Moby-Dick to Captain Ahab? What does he see in it? What is it that the whale has that arouses this deep hatred in him? Moby-Dick is

> All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all subtle demonism of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby-Dick. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate he felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it (p.160).

The whale is thus everything that oppresses and limits the human being, everything that prevents the human being from transcending his condition of mere caterpillar into that of butterfly. By fighting against that force, Ahab is already in the transition: he is the crysallis.

Ahab has decided to chase Moby-Dick until he finds and kills it. Nothing can stop him, nobody can change his mind, no danger can shake him.

> Aye, aye! and I'll chase him round Good Hope, and round the Horn, and round the Norway Maelstrom, and round perdition's flames before I give him up (p.143).

And, with his majestic personality, he makes the whole crew (except Starbuck) join him in his mad frenzy of hatred. Ritualistically, he drinks and makes the crew drink wine from the harpoons, in a satanically blasphemous parody of the Last Supper.

> "Drink and pass" he cried, handing the heavy charged flagon to the nearest seaman. "The crew alone now drink.Round with it, round! Short draughts — long swallows, men; 'tis hot as Satan's hoof. So, so; it goes round excellently. It spiralizes in ye; forks out at the serpent-like eye. Well done; almost drained. That way it went, this way it comes. Hand it me — here's a hollow! Men, ye seem the years; so brimming life is gulped and gone. Steward, refil!" (p.145).

In this parody of the Last Supper, harpoons are used as chalices, and their content, the wine, represents blood. In the biblical sense, the blood was given by Christ willingly, whereas here, Ahab is suggesting that he will draw God's (the whale's) blood by force, using the harpoons. And the killing is seen as a kind of ritual:

> "Commend the murderous chalices! Bestow them, ye who are now made parties to this indissoluble league. Ha! Starbuck! but the deed is done! Yon ratifying sun now waits to sit upon it. Drink, ye harpooners! drink and swear, ye men that man the deathful whaleboat's bow — Death to Moby-Dick! God hunt us all, if we do not hunt Moby-Dick to his death." The long, barbed steel goblets were lifted; and to cries and maledictions against the white whale, the spirits were simultaneously quaffed down with a hiss. Starbuck paled, and turned, and shivered (p.146).

Starbuck is a contrasting figure in relation to Ahab. While Ahab is a rebel who never submits to the powers of Man or Nature or the gods, Starbuck is humble and submissive in this concern, he prefers to back off than to fight against the unknown, against the Olympian forces — he accepts the moral forms. Ahab defies the gods (the whale) who have deprived him of a leg.

> No, ye've knocked me down, and I am up again; but <u>ye</u> have run and hidden. Come forth from behind your cotton bags! I have no long gun to reach ye. Come, Ahab's compliments to ye; come and see if ye can swerve me. Swerve me? ye cannot swerve me, else ye swerve yourselves! man has ye there. Swerve me? The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul groove to run. Over unsounded gorges, through the rifled hearts of mountains, under torrents' beds, unerringly I rush! Naught's an obstacle, naught's an angle to the iron way! (p.147 - original underlining)

Not even the gods can stop him in his fight against the gods. His anger must run its course.

I have already associated the sea with the unconscious, and Ahab's adventure with a plunge he makes inside himself in order to try to control his own dark side. So, we can consider the gods Ahab is fighting against as both the external forces of

nature and/or society, and (with much more subtlety) as an interior fight to arouse and control the dark forces of his unconscious. As a reinforcement to this second possibility, we find in the novel a character who is kept hidden in Ahab's cabin through most of the voyage, appearing officially before the crew only when Moby-Dick is finally in sight. This character is Fedallah, a mysterious oriental figure who is shown as a kind of "guru" for Ahab. The fact that the man is an Oriental is very suggestive. The narrator emphasizes this aura of mystery that surrounds Fedallah when he speaks about him.

> But be all this as it may, certain it is that while the subordinate phantoms soon found their place among the crew, though still as it were somehow distinct from them, yet that hair-turbaned Fedallah remained a muffled mystery to the last (p.199).

Or this one,

> But one cannot sustain an indifferent air concerning Fedallah. He was such a creature as civilized, domestic people in temperate zone only see in their dreams, and that but dimly (p.199).

And Fedallah is discussed among the members of the crew. Stubb, for instance, sees Fedallah in this light:

> Aye, will I! Flask, I take that Fedallah to be the devil in disguise. Do you believe that cock and bull story about having been stowed away on board ship? He's the devil, I say. The reason why you don't see his tail, is because he tucks it up out of sight; he carries it coiled away in his pocket, I guess (p.275).

So, just like Faustus, Ahab, in order to fight against the divine forces of the gods (or God), allies himself with the underground forces of the devil who, according to Stubb, is here represented by Fedallah; thus, Fedallah is Ahab's Mephistopheles. But Ahab is different from Faustus in the sense that there is in Faustus an inner fight between continuing this association with the dark powers or going back to "normality" and the passive acceptance of

one's lower position in relation to the gods, whereas Ahab has no such conflict. As Matthiessen says,

> He is held to the end in this Faustian bond to the devil. Moreover, unlike both the sixteenth- and the seventeenth-century Faust, he never really struggles to escape from it[3].

There are some minor moments in which Ahab looks back at his peaceful past life with a kind of nostalgia, but that never really brings a real conflict within him, he never repents of the path he has chosen to tread.

This idea of associating Fedallah with the forces of evil (actually, the forces of the unconscious) can be made stronger with the evidence that Fedallah (like the "weird-sisters" in Macbeth) prophesies, and Ahab is impressed by these prophecies — which are eventually fulfilled. Ahab has been dreaming of hearses, and he tells Fedallah about it.

> "... I have dreamed it again," said he.
> "Of hearses? Have I not said, old man, that neither hearse nor coffin can be thine?
> "And who are hearsed that die on the sea?"
> "But I said, old man, that ere thou couldst die on this voyage, two hearses must verilly be seen by thee on the sea; the first not made by mortal hands; and the visible wood of the last one must be grown in America."
> "Aye, aye! a strange sight that, Parsee: — a hearse and its plumes floating over the ocean with waves for the pall-bearers. Ha! Such a sight we shall not soon see."
> "Believe it or not, thou canst not die till it be seen, old man."
> "And what was that saying about thyself?"
> "Though it come to the last, I shall still go before thee thy pilot."...
> "Take neither pledge, old man," said the Parsee, as his eyes lighted up like fire-flies in the gloom — "Hemp only can kill thee."
> "The gallows, you mean. — I am immortal then, on land and on sea," cried Ahab, with a laugh of derision; — "Immortal on land and on sea" (pp.410-411 - my underlining).

As we can see, the prophecies are divided in three parts: the first says that two hearses will be seen at sea before Ahab dies; the second says that the Parsee will die before Ahab; third, that

Ahab can only be killed by a rope.

The prophecies sound like Macbeth's witches' prophecies and, like those, they are really double-bladed swords. Ahab reacts exactly like Macbeth who thinks that the prophecies can never be fulfilled. When he hears the first part of the prophecies, Ahab says "Ha! Such a sight we shall not soon see," which means that, although it is impossible, he simply thinks he will not be touched by Death. When he hears the last part, he exclaims "I am immortal, then, on land and on sea," which shows that he now feels, just like Macbeth, that nothing can hurt him, and that he is immortal. When Macbeth hears that only a man not born of woman can kill him, and that he will only find death when "Great Birnam Wood to Dunsinane Hill shall come against him," he simply answers, "That will never be"[4], and becomes thus boastful, resolute, and fearless. This assurance of the prophecies concerning the "immortality" of Macbeth and Ahab has this psychological effect of adding an illusion of total security to the already strong character of the two heroes.

The similarities between Ahab and Macbeth do not cease there. Both of them react to the fulfilment of the prophecies and face death in the same way. Just before the prophecies come to a realization, Ahab is in a whaleboat boasting against the elements.

> Drive, drive in your hails, oh ye waves! to their uttermost heads drive them in! ye but strike a thing without a lid; and no coffin and no hearse can be mine; and hemp only can kill me! Ha! ha! (p.464).

When the whale attacks, Fedallah is dragged into the sea and is killed. He comes up to the surface again bound by ropes to the whale's body.

> Lashed round and round to the fish's back; pinioned in the turns upon turns in which, during the past night, the whale had reeled the involutions of the lines around him, the half torn body of the Parsee

> was seen; his sable raiment frayed to shreds; his distended eyes turned full upon old Ahab (p.464).

Ahab, on seeing the first two prophecies being thus fulfilled, reacts by saying that he has been fooled.

> "Befooled, befooled!" — drawing in a long lean breath — "Aye, Parsee! I see thee again. — Aye, and thou goest before; and this, this then is the hearse that thou didst promise. But I hold thee to the last letter of thy word. Where is the second hearse?" (pp.464-465).

And that is just like Macbeth: when he hears that Birnan Wood _is_ coming toward Dunsinane, he says,

> I pull in resolution, and begin
> To doubt th' equivocation of the fiend
> That lies like truth[5].

and in the same way, he still holds to the completeness of the prophecy:

> "What's he
> That was not born of a woman? Such a one
> Am I to fear, or none[6].

The whale now, instead of attacking Ahab's fragile whaleboat, turns and charges against the ship, and Ahab realizes that the sinking ship is the second hearse prophesied by Fedallah. "'The ship! The hearse! — the second hearse!' cried Ahab from the boat; 'its wood could only be American!'"(p.468).

Seeing now that he is bound to die, Ahab, even so, does not despair — he is bold and defying till the end. He shouts at the whale,

> Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale 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 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! (p.468),

and he throws the harpoon. Macbeth has the same reaction: instead of cowering, he faces his death fighting to the very end. When he discovers that the last prophecy is fulfilled — that Macduff is not born of a woman — he says

> Though Birnam Wood be come to Dunsinane,
> And thou opposed, being of no woman born,
> Yet will I try the last. Before my body
> I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff;
> And damned be him that first cries "Hold, enough!"[7]

When Ahab throws the harpoon, its rope catches him around the neck, and he is dragged into the sea, and thus finds his death — and the last part of Fedallah's prophecies is fulfilled.

Ahab's greatness is shown everywhere. He is the outstanding figure of the Man who is not satisfied with being merely a man. When he attaches a golden coin on the main mast, saying that that will be the reward for the first man who spots Moby-Dick, he thinks,

> There is something ever egotistical in mountain-tops and towers, and all other grand and lofty things; look here, — three peaks as proud as Lucifer. The firm tower, that is Ahab; the volcano, that is Ahab; the courageous, the undaunted, and victorious fowl, that, too, is Ahab; all are Ahab (p.359).

So, Ahab is the volcano. The mountain-top where wisdom dwells, where the eagle ("the courageous, the undaunted, and victorious fowl") dwells, that is Ahab's dwelling.

> And we want to live over them [the common men] like strong winds, neighbors of the eagles, neighbors of the snow, neighbors of the sun: thus live strong winds[8].

Ishmael suggests that to write about the Leviathan (sea-monster, Moby-Dick, the gods, God) one has to use, for so huge a task, huge tools. "Give me a condor's quill! Give me Vesuvius' crater for an inkstand" (p.379), that is, in order to defy the

gods, one has to be god-like.

After ordering a special harpoon to be made in order to kill Moby-Dick, Ahab receives it from the blacksmith and there is a long ritual which is another parody of a Christian ceremony. It is an inverted baptism which resembles a kind of Black Mass. Ahab baptizes the harpoon in quite a satanic way.

> "No, no — no water for that; I want it to be the death-temper. Ahoy, there! Tashtego, Queequeg, Daggoo! What say ye, pagans. Will ye give me as much blood as will cover this barb?" holding it high. A cluster of dark nods replied, Yes. Three punctures were made in the heathen flesh, and the White Whale's barbs were then tempered (p.404 - my underlining).

Here, instead of water, Ahab uses the blood of three pagans to baptize the harpoon. And, mind, the same as in Faustus, human blood is drawn for ritualistic purposes. Ahab's words are also a parody of the baptismal words, "Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli!" (p.404).

Perhaps Ahab's greatest dramatic moment in the whole novel, the moment in which he is utterly god-like (or satanic) and fills his crew's hearts with awe is seen in the chapter called "The Candles." There we read that the approaching storm leaves the atmosphere around the ship full of electricity, and that produces the phenomenon known as "corpusants," which is an aura of light around the masts of the ship.

> "Look aloft!" cried Starbuck. "The corpusants! the corpusants!"
>
> All the yard-arms were tipped with a pallid fire; and touched at each tri-pointed lightning-rod end with three tapering white flames, each of the three tall masts was silently burning in that sulphurous air, like three gigantic wax tapers before an altar (p.415).

Ahab compares himself with the light produced by the electricity in the air. "Light though thou be, thou leapest out of darkness;

but I am darkness leaping out of light, leaping out of thee!" (p.415).

The crew are struck with panic, and getting out of control, when Ahab seizes the special harpoon that is ablaze with corpusants, and wields it before the awe-stricken crew.

> But dashing the rattling lightning links to the deck, and snatching the burning harpoon, Ahab waved it like a torch among them; swearing to transfix with it the first sailor that but cast loose a rope's end. Petrified by his aspect, and still shrinking from the fiery dart that he held, the men fell back in dismay (p.418).

Brandishing this aura-surrounded harpoon, Ahab resembles a god, a powerful god who has the elements under his control, a kind of Thor, God of Thunder, controlling the fury of the storm. This is Ahab's transfiguration. Just as the whale is "glorified by a rainbow," Ahab is here glorified by the corpusants. The harpoon surrounded by corpusants that he holds high in his hand also makes him resemble a living lightning-rod. Just remember that, as we have seen previously, Ahab has a whitish mark in his body that resembles a lightning-rod — that is the mark of his power, the sign of his god-like character.

That is Ahab, a man who has ceased to be a mere human being and is trying to reach the scope of a god. He is defeated in his attempt, but his value nevertheless remains, for he has tried. He has tried to be more than common. In order to transcend one's own human baseness, one has to set oneself apart from and above the common mass of depersonalized men. However, Ahab never succeeds, due to his dependency on the social. He dies without attaining the transcendence, for he is prevented by his flaw: he remains, deep inside, dualistic.

Nevertheless, Ahab's defiance of the gods is felt throughout. He shouts at Starbuck,

> Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me. For could the sun do that, then could I do the other; since there is ever a sort of fair play herein, jealousy presiding over all creatures. But not my master, man, is even that fair play. Who's over me? (p.144).

Ahab thus takes his individualism to the furthest extent. The problem with Ahab is that in his maddened hatred of all evil, he sees evil only outside and never inside himself, and that crazy individualism of his paradoxically ends up destroying his own individuality, when he dies submerging forever in the sea (the unconscious). He is actually defeated by himself, by his inner struggle with his "shadow." In a terrible row he has with Starbuck, the latter is able to spot this danger Ahab is in. Starbuck says,

> Thou hast outraged, not insulted me, sir; but for that I ask thee not to beware of Starbuck; thou wouldst but laugh; but let Ahab beware of Ahab; beware of thyself, old man (p.394).

Even though meaning it in terms of the Western morality of crime and punishment, Starbuck is close to the truth — truth which Ahab is unable to grasp. Ahab only sees the value for which Starbuck stands: the conciliation with and submission to the external power. He criticizes bitterly this weakness in Starbuck's character: "Stand up amid the general hurricane, thy one tost sapling cannot, Starbuck!" (p.144).

Analyzing the hero and the heroic attitude, Jung says,

> But we know that there is no human foresight or wisdom that can prescribe direction to our life, except for small stretches of the way. This is of course true only of the "ordinary" type of life, not of the "heroic" type. The latter kind also exists, though it is much rarer. Here we are certainly not entitled to say that no marked direction can be given to life, or only for short distances. The heroic conduct of life is absolute — that is, it is oriented by fateful decisions, and the decision to go in a certain direction holds, sometimes, to the bitter end[9].

And Ahab has certainly taken such an attitude, for he says, in his defiance of the gods,

> What I've dared, I've willed; and what I've willed, I'll do! They think me mad — Starbuck does; but I'm demonic, I am madness maddened! (p.147).

Ahab certainly goes to the "bitter end," and Ishmael is a witness to the whole jorney.

Some critics tend to see Ishmael as the equivalent to the chorus in the Greek tragedies — the public opinion, the average man — but Ishmael is not meant to stand for such. Far from it. Of course, he is not outwardly active like Ahab, but his inner world is volcanic. We have seen that, from the beginning, Ishamel takes attitudes that are not those of the average man — his reasons for going to sea are a clear example of that. And he actually urges us to have a powerful interior life, vast as the interior of a whale.

> It does seem to me that herein we see the rare virtue of a strong individual vitality, and the rare virtue of thick walls, the rare virtue of interior spaciousness. Oh, man! admire and model thyself after the whale! Do thou, too, remain warm among ice. Do thou, too, live in this world without being to it. Be cool at the equator; keep thy blood fluid at the Pole. Like the great dome of St. Peter's, and like the great whale, retain, O man! in all seasons a temperature of thine own.
>
> But how easy and how hopeless to teach these fine things! Of erections, how few are domed liks St. Peter's! of creatures, how few vast as the whale! (p.261).

That means: "Be one of the chosen!" But he despairs of it for the common man.

In his relationship with Queequeg, Ishmael criticizes society bitterly, and condemns (like Marlow in Heart of Darkness) the pretence, the false morality of our Western "Christian" world. Speaking of Queequeg, Ishmael says,

> There he sat, his very indifference speaking a

> nature in which there lurked no civilized hypocrisies and bland deceits. Wild he was; a very sight of sights to see; yet I began to feel myself mysteriously drawn towards him. And those same things that would have repelled most others, they were the very magnets that thus drew me. I'll try a pagan friend, thought I, since Christian kindness has proved but hollow courtesy (p.53).

This is certainly not an average man speaking. Ishmael sees Queequeg as Nietzsche sees all pagans — "Pagans are all those who say Yes to life, for whom 'god' is the word for the great Yes to all things"[10].

Ishmael attacks strongly the mask we Westerners usually wear that hides our own true nature. He makes that clear when he talks about Queequeg's origin and the fact that true feelings are usually alien to us. "Queequeg was a native of Kokovoko, an island far away to the West and South. It is not down in any map; true places never are" (p.56).

In isolation, Ishmael merges into himself, and that shows clearly his Zarathustrian detachment from the woes of the world.

> In the serene weather of the tropics it is exceedingly pleasant — the mast-head; nay, to a dreamy meditative man it is delightful. There you stand, a hundred feet above the silent decks, striding along the deep, as if the masts were gigantic stilts, while beneath you and between your legs, as it were, swim the hugest monsters of the sea, even as ships once sailed between the boots of the famous Colossus at old Rhodes. There you stand, lost in the infinite series of the sea, with nothing ruffled but the waves (pp.136-137).

Once in the pinnacles, one no longer sees what is small, as Nietzsche's Zarathustra says, "Whoever climbs the highest mountains laughs at all tragic plays and tragic seriousness"[11].

We can see that Ishmael gets Nietzschean many times, and we can find in him some of Ahab's traits. He too is proud and considers his individuality untouchable and sacred for him. He says things that sound like a defiance.

> Methinks my body is but the lees of my better being. In fact take my body who will, take it I say, it is not me. And therefore three cheers for Nantucket; and come a stove boat and stove body when they will, for stave my soul, Jove himself cannot (p.41).

And he raises strength aesthetically to the category of beauty — and that is truly Nietzschean:

> Real strength never impairs beauty or harmony, but it often bestows it: and in everything imposingly beautiful, strength has much to do with the magic (p.315).

Ah, Ishmael is certainly <u>not</u> a member of the chorus, a member of the mass. Actually, he makes it clear that he condemns man as a mere part of the depersonolized mass, and he praises individualism as the source of man's strength. This passage leaves that quite clear:

> Seat thyself sultanically among the moons of Saturn, and take high abstracted man alone; and he seems a wonder, a grandeur, and a woe. But from the same point, take mankind in mass, and for the most part, they seem a mob of unnecessary duplicates, both contemporary and hereditary (p.387).

Yes, dealing with Ahab — this demigod, this quasi-superman —, Ishmael seems to have learned something.

2. Darkness.

Throughout Conrad's <u>Heart of Darkness</u>, there are several hints which enable us to link Marlow to this age-old quest for the unconscious, and to consider him as somebody who may have attained illumination. The very first time Marlow is introduced to us, the narrator shows him as resembling a Buddha or an Oriental ascetic.

> Marlow sat cross-legged right aft, leaning against the mizzenmast. He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol (p.66).

There are other descriptions in which he is literally compared to Buddha,

> ... lifting one arm from the elbow, the palm of the hands outwards, so that, with his legs folded before him, he had the pose of a Buddha presaching in European clothes and without the lotus-flower (p.69).

And again, at the very very end, as if to leave in us this impression of asceticism and illumination, "Marlow ceased and sat apart, indistinct and silent in the pose of a meditating Budda" (p.157).

In order to add emphasis to this feeling, the fact is also mentioned that Marlow has just returned from the East, when he has this experience which changes his life.

> I had then, as you remember, just returned to London after a lot of Indian Ocean, Pacific, China Seas — a regular dose of the East — six years or so (p.70).

But the description is not only physical, it also refers to Marlow's character, suggesting that he is not a common seaman. He is a "wanderer." He is never satisfied with simple, matter-of-fact answers, but goes deep into the matter to get satisfying answers out of it. As the text says, "He was the only man of us who still 'followed the sea.'" (p.67)

At the beginning of his narrative, Marlow gives his listeners a hint of the dangers of that descent into the pit where the unconscious mind lies, by making an analogy with the Roman conquerors in the savage England of the past. He uses a "decent young citizen in a toga" as the protagonist of that adventure. He says that the man would

> Land in a swamp, march through the woods, and in some inland post feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had closed round him — all the mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men. There's no initiation either into such mysteries. He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work upon him. The fascination of the abomination — you know, imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate (p.69).

Now, let us examine this passage. Marlow denies "initiation" in the sense of there being a teacher and a disciple, and he is utterly correct in this concern, because, since wisdom (or illumination) is attained by means of self-observation, self-knowledge, and self-awakening, and that that can only be possible through the contemplation of the inner world of the person, the notion of a teacher transferring wisdom to a pupil is unthinkable. The pupil must acquire it alone.

> Wisdom is not communicable. The wisdom which a wise man tries to communicate always sounds foolish. ... Knowledge can be communicated, but not wisdom[12].

Here, knowledge means everything we learn from books, from the environment, or from teachers, and wisdom what we attain through self-awakening. Some thinkers have real doubts concerning the value of "knowledge" in the face of "wisdom" as, for instance, in this passage in which Siddhartha is talking to himself about himself.

> Yes, he thought breathing deeply. I will no longer try to escape from Siddhartha. I will no longer devote my thoughts to Atman and the sorrows of the world. I will no longer mutilate and destroy myself in order to find a secret behind the ruins. I will no longer study Yoga-Veda, Atharva-Veda, or asceticism, or any other teachings. I will learn from myself, be my own pupil; i will learn from myself the secret of Siddhartha[13].

That is the key: to attain wisdom, one must examine himself, go

deep into his heart, his mind, his soul. Through the unconscious — by bringing it to the surface and incorporating it — man can become whole. This is done in solitude, alone. With detachment also: no worry for "the sorrows of the world." Each one of us has to find his own way, at the proper time, and follow it.

> The river has taught me to listen, you will learn from it, too. The river knows everything; one can learn everything from it. You have already learned from the river that it is good to strive downwards, to sink, to seek the depths[14].

The river. What could the river be if not the unconscious mind into which we plunge to grasp the meaning of the Universe? In Heart of Darkness there is a river too, the Congo River which Marlow ascends in order to search his wisdom. And Marlow compares that river with a snake (the kuṇḍalini serpent again?),

> But there was in it one river especially, a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled. ... It fascinated me as a snake would a bird — a silly bird. ... The snake had charmed me (p.71).

The river, the unconscious, is the door to illumination. But "the decent young citizen in a toga" in Marlow's analogy, when experiencing the rising of the unsconscious, feels "growing regrets," "longing to escape," "powerless disgust," "surrender," "hate." Why? Let us remember that that man was not seeking his illumination, he was just a conqueror. He could never have understood the "serpent" and its power, because he did not have enough inner strength to cope with it, and the "serpent," instead of rising, was certainly bound to descend, and control him until he lost his own identity. That is what happens with two other characters in literature: Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll, and Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein. They too are dwarfed by the creation of their minds, the almighty, uncontrollable power they have awakened. It may be interesting to recall that both Dr.

Jekyll and Frankenstein are physicians and, as such, they are, we may suppose, much more aware of body manifestations than of those of the soul. And they fail. Victor, after he loses control over his "Creature" and it starts to kill, cries desperately, "I have lost my soul!" Both, Frankenstein and Dr. Jekyll have brought their unconscious into light, but cannot cope with it. The creatures are stronger than their creators and defeat them.

There are, however, in literature, other characters who are able to experience such danger with more successful results. Even before Heart of Darkness, Conrad presents us with a character in The Secret Sharer who goes through the experience with success. The captain in that story finds his "double", his unconscious, out at sea, grasping the ladder hanging from his ship's rail.

> I had somehow the impression that he was on the point of letting go the ladder to swim away beyond my ken — mysterious as he came. But, for the moment, this being appearing as if he had risen from the bottom of the sea (it was certainly the nearest land to the ship) wanted only to know the time[15].

Immediately after helping the man aboard, the captain starts to feel a strong attraction towards that mysterious being, who like a Triton, has risen from the sea — and he starts to identify himself with the man.

> The shadowy, dark head, like mine, seemed to nod imperceptibly above the ghostly gray of my sleeping suit. It was, in the night, as though I had been faced my own reflexion in the depths of a somber and immense mirror[16].

The captain hides this man in his cabin for a long time — he is the only one aboard to know of the existence of the man — and the "double" informs him that he has killed another man aboard the ship he has come from. The captain protects him and hides him until they have land at sight. The captain then takes the ship

dangerously near land to enable his "double" to swim safely to the shore. The captain thus, besides risking his own reputation, puts in danger not only his life but the lives of his crew. After this experience, he, who in the beginning was very much insecure as a captain, becomes much surer of himself — he has seen his own "shadow," his own dark personality.

Experiencing evil (or, at least, being a witness of its manifestation) is part of the phenomenon as a whole. Only, if the person is not strong enough, he will surely succumb to it. In Heart of Darkness, the former skipper of the steamboat, Freslen, in Marlow's narrative, used to be "the gentlest, quietest creature that ever walked on two legs" until the day he "whacked the old nigger mercilessly", and found death, wounded by a spear (p.72). And that is a good example of unpreparedness for the quest. The quest for the unconscious is not a task for fools. It seems that one must have one's eyes open, that knowledge is necessary for one to be aware of its emptiness, and despise it in favor of something higher — the inner Self, one's "essence." When Siddhartha decides (as we have seen) to examine himself and forget the books, he has already tried the other way around without any results. But, nevertheless, one usually tries that first. The fool and the unconscious deny or destroy each other. Marlow is aware that the fool and the serpent do not match:

> I take it, no fool ever made a bargain for his soul with the devil; the fool is too much of a fool, or the devil is too much of a devil — I don't know which (p.122),

with all the implications of double meanings that that sentence may have. It is all a matter of the conscious being alert and open enough to accept the existence of the unconscious and the power that it possesses. We have, since childhood, been bonded by prejudice, using it as a shield against anything that is not

"rational," so, since the unconscious is primarily irrational, we have always been urged to dispise it, but "The potential Buddha exists in every sinner. ... The potential Buddha must be recognized in him, in you, in everybody"[17]. However, in order to do that (and that is the difficult part), one would have to be ready to dispise all the social and religious ideas of morality, of crime, of punishment, and accept the unconscious as it is — amoral —, and not try to fight it. What makes the unconscious emphasize this side of dark violence in itself is exactly our fighting against it. As Jung says,

> It would be wrong, however, to dwell only on the unfavorable side of the unconscious. In all ordinary cases the unconscious is unfavorable or dangerous only because we are not at one with it and therefore in opposition to it. A negative attitude to the unconscious, or its splitting off, is detrimental in so far as the dynamics of the unconscious are identical with instinctual energy. Disalliance with the unconscious is synonumous with loss of instinct and rootlessness[18].

Let us remember that while the "Creature" in the Frankenstein story thinks that it is accepted as it is, without restrictions, it has one kind of behavior, but as soon as it discovers its creator's disgust, it becomes enraged, and turns against him.

The unconscious has a light of its own which makes it too strong and independent to bow to the restraints of the repressive and repressed society and its pretences. The "idealism" of Kurtz, in the beginning of his adventure in Congo is the pseudo-idealism of society, and Kurtz is unable to keep it when he descends into the pit of the unconscious, where all pretence is spotted and crushed. Once that happens, all the devils of that pretence rise and carry him away into "utter sevagery" from which he is unable to escape, because of the fascination that all the things which have always been repressed throughout his life exert in him. The "fascination of the abomination" which Marlow refers to is

exactly that. As long as Kurtz or any person is unaware of the pretence, he can pass for virtuous and really believe he is so, but as soon as the pretence is revealed as such, and he faces the "devils" he has inside himself, he must be strong in character in order not to be overcome by them. That revelation and the power to cope with it and incorporate it as part of ourselves is what can be said to be Human in essence. It is at moments of real danger to one's integrity as a human being that one's true character is revealed. "The Oriental notions of 'human' refer in general to something that may come to the surface only under exceptional circumstances"[19].

Now, and what is the concept of the "fool" in all this? He is the one who lacks this character, this strength, this integrity, and fails to attain something higher than pretence. Without this energy, he can never make it. And where is this energy to be found? The unconscious has and _is_ the answer — the instincts which we are born with but are taught to despise for the sake of the rational mind. Those instincts are the energy.

> Let the fools gape and shudder — the man _knows_, and can look on without a wink. But he must at _least_ be as much of man as these on the shore [the savages — purely instinctive]. He must meet that truth _with his own true stuff_ — _with his inborn strength_. Principles won't do (p.106 - my underlining).

The process of driving this inner strength to the surface is in reality a process of rebirth. One goes into the pit hell (the unconscious), and rises again a new man.

Examining _Heart of Darkness_, we can see that there are veiled and not-so-veiled references or analogies to the Greek concept of Hades and a descent into it in order to experience rebirth or to bring life out of it (like Herakle's descent to rescue Alkestis from the bony hands of Thanatos and return her to her husband Admeto as a payment for his hospitality to him).

When Marlow's adventure begins, he finds himself in a place in Europe, referred to as "sepulchral city," which, in everything, reminds us of an antechamber to Hades, the gates of Erebus.

In an office in "sepulchral city," Marlow finds two secretaries, dressed in black and knitting black wool (making shrouds?), and the whole atmosphere in the place Marlow describes as "ominous" (p.74). The house is said to be "as still as a house in the city of the dead" (p.75). The secretaries and even the doctor work in that place wearing slippers, as if they were about to go to sleep (the eternal slumber?) (pp.74-75). The description Marlow makes of a secretary is like that which we would expect of a witch, including a conspicuous wart on the cheek.

> Her flat cloth slippers were propped on a foot-warmer, and a cat reposed on her lap [the cat has, for ages, been associated with witches]. She wore a starched white affair on her head, had a wart on one cheek, and silver-rimmed spectacles hung on the tip of her nose. She glanced at me above her glasses. The swift and indifferent placidity of that look troubled me. Two youths with foolish and cheery countenances were being piloted over, and she threw at them the same quick glance of unconcerned wisdom. She seemed to know all about them and me, too [detachment and omniscience]. An eerie feeling came over me. She seemed uncanny and fateful (p.74 - my underlining).

There is an atmosphere of death hanging over the whole scene. Immanent death for Marlow himself or anybody bold enough to attempt the task of the pursuit of the unconscious. And Marlow confirms that he himself feels the doom hanging there, by crying to himself, "Ave! Old knitter in black wool. Morituri te salutant!" (p.74). The woman who, when he arrives, leads him into the building, is described as "wearing a compassionate expression," and with "a skinny forefinger beckoned me into the sanctuary" (p. 74). A skinny forefinger, like that of Charon stretching his hand (!) to receive a coin as the payment for taking a soul across the Styx.

And that image is not gratuitous, because there actually is a crossing of waters just after that: Marlow goes to Africa — crossing the Atlantic by boat and ascends the Congo River. Marlow says that "for a second or two, I felt as though, instead of going to the centre of the continent, I were about to set off for the centre of the earth" (p.77), where Hades is supposed to be. And the descent is described in the following terms: "It was like a weary pilgrimage amongst hints for nightmares" (p.78).

Reaching land, at the central station, Marlow discovers a huge hole,

> I avoided a vast vertical hole somebody had been digging on the slope, the purpose of which I found it impossible to divine. It wasn't a quarry or sandpit, anyhow. It was just a hole (p.81).

Nearby, he finds, to his amazement, a grove, a little inferno where negroes, who are being worked to death as slaves of the colonists, withdraw to die. And they die slowly of starvation and diseases.

> Nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in greenish gloom. ... and all about others were scattered in every pose of contorted collapse, as in some picture of a massacre or pestilence (pp.82-83).

That is the equivalent to Tartarus in Greek mythology — the abyss into which the Titans were thrown by Zeus. A place of suffering, from which no one ever escapes.

The experiencing or at least the witnessing of evil starts to exert its effects on Marlow, and he says, "I felt I was becoming scientifically interesting" (p.86), for, as the descent proceeds, he starts to perceive his own primitiveness, which has been hidden from his sight all his life, stuck in some cavern in his unconscious,

> We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an

> earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. ... we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign — and no memories" (p.105),

and identifying himself with that side of his mind that was unknown to him: his instinctive mind, his unconscious — identifying himself with the so-called "savages," who are mainly instinctive,

> No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it — the suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity — like yours — the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but <u>if you were man enoguh you would admit to yourself</u> that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you — you so remote from the night of first ages — could comprehend. And why not? <u>The mind of man is capable of anything — because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future</u> (pp.105-106 - my underlining).

Well, the "remoteness" is really much less acute, as Marlow will have to admit later on. But not now, not yet. He is just beginning. The "serpent" is just beginning to uncoil its rings. Nevertheless, the key here is "if you were man enough," and we might as well refer back to the analogy of "the fool" who cannot attempt such an enterprise as finding himself. Only a human being who has this interior awareness of his hidden capacities can do that. There is something else that strikes one here, and that is the end of the passage: "The mind is capable of anything," which is something very strong for a Westerner to say, for we are taught to believe in the "smallness" of man in the face of Nature or God. That "capable of anything" has in it the notions of Macro- and microcosmos — one holds the other and vice versa. Also, "because everything is in it, the past as well as the future" can strike one as strange (refer back to page 88). Jung says that the

instincts we find in a child are inherited. They have been passed on from generation to generation, in spite of the repressions, since the beginning of time. That is what he calls the "collective unconscious." Being "timeless," the unconscious is capable of contacting the past as well as the future — it is what is called in many circles the Cosmic Memory. I have already said that when the unconscious is brought to the surface, it comes complete, that is, the personal and the collective contents. The personal gives the quester power over himself, and the collective gives him timelessness or omniscience, for the Cosmic Memory holds in itself the past, the present, and the future. That is how, in <u>The Nigger of the "Nascissus</u>," the representative of the unconscious (James Wait) has that premonitory dream-vision about himself, about Donkin, and about the future of both. Talking about premonitory dreams, Jung says that,

> This kind of dream may come out of nothing and we ask ourselves what has motivated it. If we could know the future facts depicted in its message as such, we would, logically, solve its causes. Because it is only our conscious mind that still knows nothing about them; the unconscious is informed about them and has already come to a conclusion — which is expressed in the dream[20].

Having raised his unconscious, the quester becomes, in Oriental terms, illuminated, for he has knowledge about himself (the micro), about the Universe or God (the Macro), and, becoming timeless, he has knowledge of the past and of the future (omniscience). All these are atributes of the gods — that is why this state is called "god-like".

As Marlow's journey proceeds up the Congo River, his boat is suddenly enveloped by a fog,

> What we could see was just the steamer we were on, her outlines blurred as though she had been on the point of dissolving, and a misty strip of water, perhaps two feet broad, around her — and that was all. The rest of the world was nowhere, as far as

> our eyes and ears were concerned. Gone, disappeared, swept without leaving a shadow behind (p.110).

The fog surely represents a womb in which Marlow has been received in order to be born again — a new man. The fog is even described as "very warm and clammy and more blinding than the night" (p.110). No doubt about it. And it is a long description, too. The action (or the absence of it) goes on for four pages.

This idea of entering a symbolic womb in order to represent a rebirth is common in most rites of initiation among tribes of indians in South and North America, as well as in Africa, Australia, etc.

> The ritual makes the novice return to the deepest levels of the critical identity that exists between the mother and the child, or between the ego and the Self, forcing him thus to know the experience of a symbolic death. In other words, his identity is temporarily destroyed or dissolved into the collective unconscious. He is then solemnly saved from this state through the rite of a rebirth[21].

After the fog lifts, the boat is attacked by the natives. Marlow's shoes get soaked with his helmsman's blood and Marlow gets rid of them by throwing them overboard. That is the symbolic representation of Marlow's getting rid of his old self, and bringing forth a new one, which will soon become whole with the incorporation of the dark side of his mind, represented by Kurtz.

Marlow's identification with the wilderness (with the natives — with the unconscious) keeps growing stronger and stronger. When he reaches the post where Mr Kurtz dwells, Marlow discovers some stakes in front of Kurtz's window. With a magnifying glass to give him a closer view, he finds out that on the top of each of the six stakes there is a human head. At this, Marlow throws his head back in surprise, but he thinks that

> They would have been even more impressive, those

> heads on the stakes, if their faces had not been turned to the house. Only one, the first I had made out, was facing my way. I was not so shocked as you may think. The start back I had given was really nothing but a moment of surprise (p.132).

No, he is not shocked. He is already getting himself above good and evil, and these things cannot shock him. He himself is becoming more and more aware of this fact. He is changing, becoming a new man, and he (and we) confirm that further on in the narrative, when Kurtz, in order do escape from a return to civilization, is trying, on all-fours, to reach the wilderness, and Marlow grabs him. Marlow says, recalling his feelings at that moment, "I remember I confounded the beat of the drum with the beating of my heart, and was pleased with its calm regularity" (p. 142). Here, his identification with Nature, with the wilderness, with the "savages," with instincts, is complete. Marlow placidly accepts this fact, is aware of it, and in peace with himself. His unconscious is under control.

Since we are dealing with a "descent into hell," and as Kurtz can be easily identified with Hades (in relation to Marlow), a figure representing Hades's wife, Persephone, is necessary for the consistency of the whole image. But, in fact there surely is such a figure, and that is the Negro woman who appears downwards from the place where Marlow is standing soon after he arrives at the inner station. The whole description of the woman is one which could perfectly be applied to a queen (or a goddess), if only for the garments she is wearing, and the atmosphere of doom hanging about. But the majesty is certainly there. All over her.

> And from right to left along the lighted shore moved a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman.
>
> She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high; her hair was done in a shape of helmet; she had brass leggings to the knee, brass wire, gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek, innumerable necklaces

> of glass beads on her neck; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch-man, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step. She must have had the value of several elephant tusks upon her. She was savage and superb, wildeyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul (pp.136-137).

A real image of majesty, of power, of dominance, of ascendency. She also seems to see Kurtz as the king of the land, her king, and when Kurtz is being taken away, she comes, with all her subjects backing her, in a last attempt to protect him, to keep him in his kingdom. But they do not attack, since the king does not seem to be being carried away by force. And when Marlow blows the whistle of the steamer (the sound of the gods: fearful), all the natives are prey to panic, but not her. She stays there, erect, stately,

> I pulled the string of the whistle. ... I pulled the string time after time. They broke and ran, they leaped, they crouched, they swerved, they dodged the flying terror of the sound. The three red chaps had fallen flat, face down on the shore, as though they had been dead. Only the barbarous and superb woman did not as much as flinch, and stretched tragically her bare arms after us over the sombre and glittering river (p.145).

She is doubtless a queen — majestic, untouchable, unafraid. A goddess worthy of Hades/Kurtz.

In Jungian terms, this woman can be said to be Kurtz's "anima."

> The projection-making factor is the anima, or rather the unconscious as represented by the anima. Whenever she appears, in dreams, visions, and fantasies, she takes on personified form, thus demonstrating that the factor she embodies possesses all the outstanding characteristics of a feminine being[22].

Due to Kurtz's conflict, the anima's wish is to drag him

indefinitely towards a total and irreversible plunge into his unconscious, a total loss of identity. Kurtz cannot cope with this dragging force, as we shall see, and he succumbs.

Kurtz is surely Marlow's alter-ego, the representation of his unconscious which he has to meet face to face, to know, and to incorporate. Kurtz, being the unconscious, is kept as a mystery throughout most of the story, with only hints to indicate his existence (the same technique Melville uses in Moby-Dick), and only appears when Marlow is prepared to face him.

As Marlow goes on in his journey, ascending the river towards the roots of his being, he grows aware of his inner world, of his instincts which he sees represented by the wilderness, by the natives, by the "savage" customs with which he identifies himself more and more. He sees that they are part of every human being, that society has not been able to make those instincts disappear at all, and that they are only sleeping, disguised, deep inside us. He can see that, even though he is working hard on the boat and not exactly sitting placidly, lost in self-contemplation. In his case, he has to do both things at the same time, and he is quite aware of the difficulty of the task,

> When you have to attend to things of that sort, to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality — the reality. I tell you — fades. The inner truth is hidden — luckily, luckily. But I felt it all the same (p.103 - my underlining).

Having realized that, he is ready for a real confrontation with himself, he is ready for Kurtz.

Kurtz had come into this place with a lot of "idealism" — the pretences of colonialism — and he lost himself when confronting his own unconscious in the wilderness. He was not prepared. Now he is probably unaware of that consciously, but his unconscious knows that, of course, and has revealed this fact

to him (symbolically) in the painting that he has made and left at the central station. This painting is seen and described by Marlow:

> I rose. Then I noticed a small sketch in oils, on a panel, representing a woman, draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch. The blackgound was sombre — almost black. The movement of the woman was stately, and the effect of the torchlight on the face was sinister (p.92).

The woman is, of course, Kurtz himself — a clear representation of the anima. He has the light of illumination (the torch) in his hands, but it is completely useless, since he is blindfolded. He has all the means to attain his illumination, but the restrictions exerted by society's morality and prejudices (the pretences) do not let him <u>see</u> it. The background, "sombre — almost black," is his own life at that moment, or his future. He has no way out — the balckness of the background is the blackness of the unconscious into which he has plunged. The movement of the figure is said to be "stately" (the movement of the Negro woman on the shore is also "stately") and, truly, he <u>is</u> a king among the natives. However, the face is "sinister," as a reflexion of his own soul — which is lost. His only destiny has to be death, physical death, since his Self is already dead, overcome by his unconscious which has gone mad (Mr Hyde, the "Creature"). He cannot escape. He cannot even go back to civilization, to his old life. The wilderness has a spell on him (the "fascination of the abomination").

That fascination is illustrated by a conversation between the manager and his relative which has been overheard by Marlow. They talk about how Kurtz has once come out of his station, being "bare of goods and stores," and that, after coming three hundred miles, suddenly decided to return. Nobody could understand that.

> It was a distinctive glimpse: the dugout, four

> paddling savages, and the lone white man turning his back suddenly on the headquarters, on relief, on thoughts of home — perhaps; setting his face towards the depths of the wilderness, towards his empty and desolate station, I did not know the motive (pp.100-101 - my underlining).

But the reason is clear: the attraction, the spell, the "fascination of the abomination."

After Marlow finds Kurtz and is about to bring him back, again he tries to escape.

> I glanced casually into the little cabin. A light was burning, but Mr Kurtz was not there. ... As soon as I got to the bank I saw a trail through the grass. I remember the exultation with which I said to myself, "He can't walk — he is crawling on all-fours — I've got him" (p.141).

Kurtz is unable even to walk, but is trying to reach the wilderness on "all-fours." That is the mesmeric attraction exerted by the unconscious — it can become a real trap.

Marlow has felt a natural attraction towards Kurtz long before he actually comes to meet him. Natural because it is an attraction towards his own unconscious, his own "shadow" which, he guesses, Kurtz represents. Marlow is fascinated by the man when he meets him, and that is the most dangerous part of the whole process. But Marlow's character, as we haver seen, has become strong through self-observation and through his identification with the wilderness, and he can even criticize aspects of Kurtz's character.

> You should have heard him say, "my ivory". Oh, yes, I heard him say, "My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my —" everything belonged to him. It made me hold my breath in expectation of hearing the wilderness burst into a prodigious peal of laughter that would shake the fixed stars in their places (p.121).

But, even so, the attraction is enormous and, if he were not strong enough, to keep a critical eye (the conscious has to be kept

alert), he could very well, in identifying himself with his unconscious (Kurtz), lose his own identity entirely and become like the Harlequin.

The Harlequin is there mostly as a reminder to Marlow of what he might become: a being entirely dependent on Kurtz (his alter-ego), without any identity of his own. The Herlequin admires Kurtz to exaltation.

> "But when one is young one must see things, gather experience, ideas, enlarge the mind." "Here!" I interrupted. "Here I met Mr Kurtz," he said youthfully solemn and reproachful (pp.127-128).

Marlow notices how utterly without any identity the Harlequin is:

> I almost envied him the possession of this modest and clear flame. It seemed to have consumed all thought of self so completely, that even while he was talking to you, you forgot that it was he — the man before your eyes — who had gone through these things. I did not envy his devotion to Kurtz, though. He had not meditated over it. It came to him, and he accepted it with a sort of eager fatalism. I must say that to me it appeared about the most dangerous thing in every way he had come upon so far (p.129 - my underlining).

That shows that Marlow is aware of the dangers of a total identification with the unconscious, and the Harlequin is, in fact, a walking reminder that Marlow has all the time before his eyes.

There is also, to show Marlow that the Harlequin has lost all notions of self-respect, the episode of the "small lot of ivory" which the Harlequin has been given by "the chief of that village near my house." Kurtz demands that he give him the ivory and clear out or he (Kurtz) will shoot him. "I gave him the ivory. What did I care! But I didn't clear out. No, no, I couldn't leave him" (p.131), cries the Harlequin. And then the Harlequin tries to find all possible excuses to explain Kurtz's behavior. He is prey of a really abject, dog-like devotion to the man, and

Marlow, of course, notices that — that is the danger of awakening the unconscious when one is not ready for it: instead of becoming "god-like," one becomes "dog-like."

The Harlequin can go as far as the natives in his devotion, considering Kurtz as a kind of god — almost perfection personified.

> "You don't know how such a life tries a man like Kurtz," cried Kurtz's last disciple. "Well, and you?" I said. "I! I! I am a simple man. I have no great thoughts. I want nothing from anybody. How can you compare me to...?" (p.134).

Even suffering in Kurtz's hands, the Harlequin remains devoted to him, taking care of him in his illness, keeping himself as a shadow of the other man.

Having the Harlequin nearby, Marlow does not run the risk of falling under the same spell. The attraction, however, is strong. After all, Kurtz and Marlow are one, deep inside, and Marlow is aware of that indentification, and he even turns to it for help, to gather strength.There is an episode in which such an event occurs and, in the danger of that close identification, Marlow is saved by the Harlequin's presence. That happens when Marlow is quarreling with the manager about Kurtz's "methods:"

> "Oh," said I, "that fellow — what's his name? — the brickmaker, will make a readable report for you." He appeared confounded for a moment. It seemed to me I had never breathed an atmosphere so vile, and I turned mentally to Kurtz for relief — positively for relief (p.138).

Turning to Kurtz, he is identifying himself with him. It is a strong and clear identification with the unconscious, because, then, he extends it also to the wilderness, as if to mean that Kurtz and the wilderness are one, and that he is one with both. And here he is almost losing control over his feelings and over the whole situation.

> I found myself lumped along with Kurtz as a partsan of methods for which the time was not ripe: I was unsound! Ah! but it was something to have at least a choice of nightmare.
> I had turned to the wilderness really, not to Mr Kurtz, who, I was ready to admit, was as good as buried. And for a moment it seemed to me as if I also were buried in a vast grave full of unspeakable secrets. I felt an intolerable weight oppressing my breast, the smell of damp earth, the unseen presence of victorious corruption, the darkness of an impenetrable night... The Russian Harlequin tapped on my shoulder (pp.138-139 - my underlining).

Saved! After that, he resumes his touch with reality and finds himself saying, "As it happens, I am Mr Kurtz's friend in a way" (p.139). That settles it. Friend. Not a disciple or a blind follower. Just a friend. The sight of the Harlequin and what he represents brings Marlow back to his senses. It restores his integrity.

When the Harlequin is about to leave, he asks Marlow if he does not have an extra pair of shoes to give him, since the soles of his own shoes are gone. Marlow gives him a pair of his own.

> At the door of the pilot-house he turned round — "I say, haven't you a pair of shoes you could spare?" He raised one leg, "Look." The soles were tied with knotted strings sandalwise under his bare feet. I rooted out an old pair at which he looked with admiration before tucking it under his left arm (p.140).

The whole episode is symbolic. The shoes stand for one's self (as the shoes Marlow threw overboard after the attack represented his old self). The Harlequin's personality (or his self) is wrecked. He has lost it in abject adoration of Kurtz, in utter self-denial. Marlow's presence has restored, partially, his personality by dragging the poor devil out of Kurtz's hands and influence. Through Marlow (Marlow's strong presence), the Harlequin has been able to turn his back on Kurtz. Marlow's giving the Harlequin a pair of shoes is like (symbolically) restoring his identity back to him, like mending his integrity as a human being — which has been cracked.

There is something else that Marlow restores to the Harlequin: a book. The Harlequin has left his book, whose title was "An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship," in a small hut fifty miles down the river, where he stayed before coming to Kurtz's post. Marlow has found the book on his way up-river.After examining the book, Marlow commented:

> Not a very enthralling book; but at the first glance you could see there a singleness of intention, an honest concern for the right way of going to work, which made these humble pages, thought out so many years ago, luminous with another than professional light (p.108).

The book, of course, symbolizes restraints and the idea of duty which the Harlequin left behind when ascending the river. Marlow restoring this book to the Harlequin stands for sending him back to civilization with its norms and restraints — the Harlequin is not fit for the quest.

One thing that calls for one's attention when reading Heart of Darkness is that Kurtz is, most of the time, just a voice for Marlow. Kurtz's voice is what is most emphasized in the descriptions of him in several passages. For instance, after the attack on the boat, Marlow thinks that Kurtz must be dead. And he says when he recalls this part of his adventure:

> I had never imagined him as doing, you know, but as discoursing. I didn't say to myself, "Now I will never see him," or "Now I will never shake him by the hand," but, "Now I will never hear him." The man presented himself as a voice (p.119 - my underlining).

Sometimes, not only Kurtz is a voice, but everybody related to him.

> Oh, yes, I heard him more than enough. And I was right, too. A voice. He was little more than a voice. And I heard — him — it — this voice — other voices — all of them so little more than voices — and the memory of that time itself lingers around me, impalpable, like a dying vibration of one immense jabber, silly, attrocious, sordid, savage, or simply mean, without

> any kind of sense. Voices, voices — even the girl herself — now — (pp.120-121 - my underlining).

Or this passage — the first time Marlow hears Kurtz's voice. Kurtz says, after reading a letter of recommendation concerning Marlow, "I'm glad," and Marlow describes his feeings at that moment:

> The volume of tone he emitted without effort, almost without the trouble of moving his lips, amazed me. A voice! It was grave, profound, vibrating, while the man did not seem capable of a whisper (p.136).

The voice seems to be stronger than the body. The voice calling Marlow for his initiation. The voice of his own unconscious that has, since the beginning, resounded in his ears, in his brain, in his soul; warning, showing, guiding.

Kurtz's struggle to get free from the spell of the wilderness never ceases, though in vain. When he is being taken back home, in the boat, he is suddenly unable to bear looking at the wilderness that surrounds him,

> "Close the shutters," said Kurtz suddenly one day. "I can't bear to look at this." I did so. There was a silence. "Oh, but I will wring your heart yet!" he cried at the invisible wilderness (p.146).

It is very interesting that Marlow describes Kurtz at the moment of his death showing his descent from a condition of power to that of nothingness. He says, "I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror — of an intense and hopeless despair" (p.147). And Marlow continues,

> Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision — he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath. "The horror! The horror!" (p.147).

Now, what can Kurtz be seeing at the moment of his death? Probably not a vision of the Christian Hell, but something much subtler, much more personal: he must have realized at this moment what he has become. He must be seeing his own nothingness. He must be having a glimpse of his own Self, of his wrecked personality, of the emptiness of his soul. A glimpse of a void. Yes, Kurtz is gone, but Marlow remains. Just like Ishmael, he survives; and just like Ishmael, he has learned a lot from a quasi-superman; just like Ishmael, he has learned that the individual is the key to the superman.

> There are two forms of evolution: one is the mass-evolution which mankind as a whole takes part in without any real thought or understanding on his part; the other is that which man engages consciously, because only through it can be develop the innate powers which are his by Divine right, i.e., his birth right as a human entity in the great Cosmic Plan of Creation.
> The latter and more fundamental type of evolution is essentially individual[23].

There is no way of attempting the attainment of illumination dragging behind oneself a mass of friends and relatives. It is a lonely road which must be followed alone, once one's eyes are open to see it. This is an inner road, really, and, as such, it can only be followed by means of self-observation. The pursuer of wisdom is always lonely. As Marlow says, "We live as we dream, alone" (p.95). However, Western society and religion condemn any lonely quest as a sign of "selfishness," and condemn if with nuances of moral terminology, because

> The institutionalized religions are not so much concerned with the religious or mystical experience of individuals, as with society, ethics, morality, and the continuation of the status quo[24].

In order to receive social approval, one must think socially. But that is just pretence, because the leaders of the nations are the first to show (concealed or openly) their selfishness and love of

power. True reforms in society will never happen as long as the mentality of the individuals does not change. It will only happen through the evolution of the individual members of society — isolatedly —, never if the attempt at changing is imposed. If the reverse were true, the countries that have adopted the communist regime, for example, would be a real model of tolerance, liberty, communal richness (material and intellectual), for that is the ideal throughout the philosophy of Karl Marx. But we can easily see that that does not exist — anywhere. Society, everywhere, disguising its purposes behind various euphemisms, frequently drives its members into performing acts which are against the very "principles" on which it is based. And it acts for the sake of the ones who have the power at the moment.

> We live the shameful slavery to which man sees himself dragged by the war! Isn't it horrible to be compelled by the community to perform acts which every one, before his conscience, considers criminal? Nevertheless, few are those who revealed such greatness of soul that refused to perform them. However, in my opinion, they are the true heroes of the World War[25].

People can be driven by mass-propaganda into doing anything really. In a mass, any identity vanishes, there is no individuality — it is just "the mass." A man who has the power of rhetoric and a magnetic personality can drive the mass into a frenzy, and then it can be told to do anything — that is the secret of Hitler and many others. In his condemnation of Wagner, Nietzsche says that the late Wagnerian ideal is the ideal of decadence, and that

> It merely requires <u>virtue</u> — meaning training, automatism, "self-denial." Neither taste, nor voice, nor talent: Wagner's stage requires one thing only — <u>Teutons</u>!— Definition of the Teuton: obedience and <u>long legs</u>. —
>
> It is full of profound significance that the arrival of Wagner coincides in time with the

> arrival of the "Reich:" both events prove the very same thing: obedience and long legs[26].

Of course he is not talking about the Third Reich, but it is, nevertheless, a Reich. Jung generalizes this precept a little bit, saying that

> ... the building up of prestige is always a product of collective compromise: not only must there be one who wants prestige. That being so, it would be incorrect to say that a man creates prestige for himself out of his individual will to power; it is on the contrary an entirely collective affair. Since society as a whole needs the magically effective figure, it uses the needful will to power in the individual, and the will to submit in the mass, as a vehicle, and thus brings about the creation of personal prestige. The latter is a phenomenon which, as the history of political beginning shows, is of the utmost importance for the community of nations[27].

The leader's power is rooted in the lack of identity of the mass. A person has an identity only when he is alone or, at least, when he thinks alone.

> Maybe someday solitude will be adequately recognized and appreciated as the mother of the personality. The Easterners have known that for a long, long time. The person who has had the experience of solitude does not become easy prey of the suggestion of the masses[28].

"Worrying" about the social is an imposition of society,of the rational mind, of the morality of pretence (no sooner one leaps into a position of power, he conveniently forgets all about the noble purposes he used to preach as the very "truth" guiding his life). Marlow, in Heart of Darkness, is socially-conscious — he is aware of colonialism, aware of the pretence of the European "idealism" of going down there to the colonies in order to "Christianize" or/and "civilize" the "savages," aware of the injustices, and he criticizes all that ironically and bitterly (a "voice calling from the wilderness"). However, he is not socially-engaged — he is not a social militant, for he does not

make any attempt to change anything or anybody. He knows that it is useless. In fact, when he sees a group of slave Negroes (down the "Tartarus") connected one to the other by chains, walking like ghosts, followed by a white man carrying a rifle, he does nothing to impede it. He just gets out of the way: "My idea was to let that chain-gang get out of sight before I climbed the hill" (p.81). That white man conducting the slaves would never understand that what he is doing is against all the ideas he thinks he shares every Sunday, sitting in a church and singing beatifically a number of hymns. Analogously, when Galileo presented his discovery that the Earth was not the center of the Universe (as the anthropocentric pretenders of that time believed), the very domes of the Vatican were shaken by the uproar of wild and stupid protests that followed his exposition. Threatened with the bonfire, Galileo withdrew and denied his discovery in order to stay alive. Is that cowardice? No, that is simply a matter of good-sense. Galileo knew that that, before him, screeching like beasts, was just a bunch of fools (the "fools" again) who knew nothing besides their foolish pretences and prejudices, their stupid feeling of grandeur based on error which they chose to insist on. Fools who were not prepared for the truth. So, Galileo ignored them and went his way, alone with his truth. He knew that he would never succeed in teaching them the truth, because those men were dead and did not know it — "Let the dead bury their dead" (Matthew, 8:22). He too must have known that the truth, the realization, the illumination, is incommunicable. Anything he said whatsoever would be only words, words.

> But one cannot love words. Therefore teachings are of no use to me; they have no hardness, no softness, nor colors, no corners, no smell, no taste — they have nothing but words[29].

Well, at this point, somebody might (horrified) say that this theory is inconsistent, and raise the point that only the

the side of the white man conducting the slaves is being considered, but not that of the "chain-gang" — the Negroes who are being enslaved by the white man —, they should be protected. Not exactly, I would say, because that would be, at any rate, interference; for the good or for the bad, but, anyway, interference. The "chain-gang" have to be conscious of their right to freedom, and of their own inner power to acquire it. They have to have that inner necessity to fight for themselves, like the Negro who penetrated and killed Freslen (Kurtz's precursor) in order to save his father who was being beaten by the white man. That Negro knew he had a right to freedom and respect, and he fought for it, defending his own flesh, his old father. He had strength of character enough to fight back when he saw his house invaded and his own flesh beaten. Anybody else fighting for him would be patronage. Maybe this aspect of the argument would be clarified by this piece of conversation, taken from Lawrence's Women in Love, stressing the value (which is hardly ever recognized) of individuality:

> "But I should like them to like the purely individual thing in themselves, which makes them act in singleness. And they only like to do the collective thing."
>
> "And I," said Gerald grimly, "shouldn't like to be in a world of people who acted individually and spontaneously, as you call it. We should have everybody cutting everybody else's throat in five minutes."
>
> "That means *you* would like to be cutting everybody's throat," said Birkin.
>
> "How does that follow?" asked Gerald crossly.
>
> "No man," said Birkin, "cuts another man's throat unless he wants to cut it, and unless the other man wants it cutting. This is a complete truth. It takes two people to make a murder: a murderer and a murderee. And a murderee is a man who is murderable. And a man who is murderable is a man who in a profound if hidden lust desires to be murdered[30].

That is exactly the point: if there is a man who subjugates another one, it is because there is one man who permits another

one to subjugate him. He does not know he has a right to be free (or he is afraid to know it). If you set him free, he will certainly be prey to another subjugator soon after that. The same principle is applied to nations. One person or a nation must fight for his or its own freedom. Interference is patronage. That means that, if you interfere, without the other asking for help, you are considering yourself superior to the one you are freeing (after all, you are deciding that you know what is good for him), and he, the one you have freed, sensing that, will go on being inferior and subjugated — a vicious circle, really. Nietzsche too has something interesting to say about this problem.

> And learning better to feel joy, we learn best not to hurt others or to plan hurts for them.
> Therefore I wash my hand when it has helped the sufferer; therefore I wipe even my soul. Having seen the sufferer suffer, I was ashamed for the sake of his shame; and when I halped him, I transgressed grieviously against his pride[31].

The one who accepts subjugation without reacting against it has no pride and no self-respect. And here Nietzsche adds a more bombastic statement: "He who cannot obey himself is commanded"[32].

In addition to all the arguments which have been presented so far, there is an extra and important one: it seems that the true reason for how the moral standards (or the pretence of them) have been maintained by society throughout the centuries is that they are not really based on virtue, but on fear. And Conrad, through Marlow, spots and criticizes that marvelously. Marlow says,

> He [Kurtz] had taken high seat among the devils of the land — I mean literally. You can't understand. How could you? — with pavement under your feet, surrounded by kind neighbours ready to cheer you or fall on you, stepping delicately between the butcher and the policeman, in the holy terror of scandal and gallows and lunatic asylumns — how can you imagine what particular region of the first ages a man's untrammeled feet may take him into by the way of solitude — utter solitude without a policeman — by

> the way of silence — utter silence, where no warning voice of a kind neighbour can be heard whispering of public opinion? These little things make all the great difference (p.122 - my underlining).

They indeed do. So, what is morality? The "holy terror of scandal," "the policeman" (prison), or "the gallows" (punishment, death). There is no virtue in this at all. It is all pretence. That is really what has always maintained the law: fear and pretence — the basis of the social order.

Marlow possesses an extremely acute sense in detecting immediately what is genuine and what is fake in ideas, people, or things, and thus, he can easily spot pretence. When he goes to this city in Europe (Brussels), in the beginning of the story, a city that is the center from which the "idealism" of colonialism is propagated, he senses the imposture right away. The pretence of "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways" (as his dear aunt says on p.76) is nothing but a mask to disguise the true reason of the enterprise, which, honestly, can only be described plainly as pillage and slavery. Marlow associates this city with a"whited sepulchre" (p.73), and this association with the passage in the Bible is perfect. There we read,

> Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outside, but are within full of dead man's bones, and of all uncleanness (Matthew, 23:27).

I sincerely believe that no better definition could be found for the "idealism" of the colonialists or other kinds of pretence of society. That is it, exactly: without, the beauty of the noblest of the ideas and purposes; within corruption and decay.

However, once one is dealing with the unconscious, everything is different. The unconscious is not tied up by conventions and by the false morality of society. It is above all that. The person who has attained wisdom is above all that, too.

He spits on pretence, and, of course, arouses the fury of his "neighbours". Marlow experiences that many times. One example is when he gets rid of the corpse of the man who has been killed in the attack on the boat. He experiences the disapproval of his "fellow creatures," the pilgrims.

> All the pilgrims and the manager were then congregated on the awning-deck about the pilot-house, chattering at each other like a flock of excited magpies, and there was a scandalized murmur at my heartless promptitude. What they wanted to keep that body hanging about for I can't guess. Embalm it, maybe (pp.124-125).

Marlow really feels he is above this bunch of chattering hens. He knows better. Einstein too expressed this opinion, when referring to the "wise man," "Morality does not arouse, for him, problems with the gods, but just with men"[33].

When Marlow, at the end of his odyssey, returns to "civilization," he feels (it really strikes him) how apart from the average human beings he is. Indeed, he feels superiority in relation to those little ants wandering about in their silly tasks, covered by a net of moral standards which have been imposed on them, kept blind to the true inner potentialities they possess, since the awakening of those potentialities certainly means arousing also the wild disapproval of the watch-dog of "social ethics" which protects citizens as long as they do not attempt to escape from the labyrinth in which they have been cast and kept.

> They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretence, because I felt so sure they would not possibly know the things I know. Their bearing, which was simply the bearing of common place individuals going about their business <u>in the assurance of perfect safety</u>, was offensive to me like the outrageous flauntings of folly in the face of a danger it is unable to comprehend. I had no particular desire to enlighten them, but I had some difficulty in restraining myself from laughing in their faces so full of stupid importance (pp.149-150 - my underlining).

One might well say that this is a plain demonstration of pride. So be it! However, that attitude of disdain is smoothed later on, for now, when he is narrating his odyssey to these people gathered around him on the boat anchored on the Thames, he does not feel any Olympic contempt for them, but tolerance. And again, we can feel that there is also some detachment here, for, when he finishes his narrative, he returns to his own thoughts, "Marlow ceased, and sat apart, indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha" (p.157). As we see, Marlow does not seem eager to know the effects (if any) his narrative has caused on his listeners — if their eyes have been opened or not. He has fulfilled his task. The rest is solely their problem. They themselves and by themselves have to raise their own questions and find their own answers. Marlow is not preaching any morals. He simply throws the seeds — it will depend on the kind of soil they fall upon for them to germinate.

3. Sowers and Seeds — *Homo Novus*

> Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stone places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit. ... Who hath ears to hear, let him hear (Matthew, 13:3-9).

Here we see the always recurrent idea of the "chosen ones." Only very few have ears to hear, have deepness of soul to understand. Christ chose this way to try to awaken in man the desire for the quest — he used parables. But, nevertheless, everybody could hear, though just the "chosen ones" would be able to grasp the

meaning of the parables. However, there are other sowers who do not transform their pearls into parables and cast them to both pigs and not-pigs to see who can gather them. Coleridge's Ancient Mariner is a good example of that kind of sower: he can sense the fitness and readiness of a man once he sets his eyes on him, and then, he takes him aside and narrates his story. One must have this "inner necessity," as Nietzsche says, for the quest. Nietzsche's Zarathustra said that

> For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred "Yes" is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world[34].

But that, of course, is easier said than done. Only a very, very small portion of the human race will ever be able to leave the world and conquer their world, putting themselves in a higher level than that of the common, the equal, the repetitious (the "superfluous," as Nietzsche says), and see the world from above. This is a privilege for those few spirits who have this fire inside them that enables them to be the conquerors of themselves. They are able to discover this dual quality of good and evil everybody has inside, and arouse this evil side, dominate it, and use it for their good, instead of repressing it. They can bring the id to the surface so that it will fight the superego on equal terms. And the result is complete human beings who can have total control over themselves and be the owners of their own destinies; who are godlike creatures, above good and evil, beyond the petty reason and small understanding of the common mass who are tied to the earth, who never dare to grow wings and fly like Daedalus,for fear of the sun melting the wax of their wings and their consequent fall like Icarus's. These common men prefer to behave like Starbuck, reverencing power, bowing to the unknown, and never becoming an Ahab who defies everything and boldly tries to assert himself for he believes in his own inner power, for he believes he

is a god. When a man ceases to bow and, instead, raises his head, he is on the way to become a god. And this is something difficult for the Western mind to accept. Like in the past, Western man still remains tied up — only that now, many are no longer tied up to the humbleness demanded by religious dogmas, but to the power of technology and science, and to the power of the rulers. However, Easterners believe that man and God are the same, that God is "within us," and that we can become gods — if we are brave enough to run the risks, for there are risks. And, for the Easterners, this power is aroused exactly by bringing the unconscious to the surface, coping with it, and thus becoming whole. The symbol of this, as I have mentioned previously (Chapter II), is the lotus-flower — perfection rising from muddy waters (the unconscious).

The fight that Ahab and Kurtz go through can be seen as a fight against the external, oppressive powers of society and governments, and also the external powers of the gods and Nature. But it can also be seen as a fight to cope with one's own inner power of the instincts against the repressions of "conscience," and the final recognition that one is able to have this conciliation between these two forces in order to grow as a complete human being, and transcend this very humanity and become a godlike creature — a superman. Thus, any man might eventually become a god. It is Zarathustra again who says, "... if there were gods, how could I endure not to be a god! Hence there are no gods"[35]. Of course, he is talking about the merely external god. Man has the deity in himself, therefore, man is (or can be) a god.

Nietzsche tries to assert the superman's right to place himself above good and evil because the superman is in reality the Cosmic Man. Condemning the Cosmic Man, one is condemning the Cosmos itself.

> One is necessary, one is a piece of fatefulness, one belongs to the whole, one is in the whole; there is nothing which could judge, measure, compare, or sentence our being, for that would mean judging, measuring, comparing, or sentencing the whole. But there is nothing besides the whole [36].

As we see, according to Nietzsche, the superman is above judgement, because he is above morality. The superman has had the opportunity to face his own dark side, the Mr Hyde of his personality, and has assimilated this "shadow," integrated it in his personality as a whole, and grown stronger, and wiser, and superior. He is the light and he is the darkness, the good and the evil — an integration of both forces. He is the heir of the earth.

We have seen that neither Ahab nor Kurtz is able to attain the fullness of this integration of conscious and unconscious, and each of them fails due to his own flaws. Ahab never recognizes evil as part of himself; he keeps it always outside, as an external entity, thus he maintains this duality that characterizes Western man — he remains a puritan. He never allows good and evil, conscious and unconscious, lead and gold to melt in his inner crucible for the alchemical transformation (the "transcendent function") to take place; Ahab raises his unconscious, but he cannot acknowledge it, and so it turns against him and drags him to the deep.

With Kurtz, something different happens: he too raises his unconscious, but he acknowledges it, he sees that it is part of his own nature. Well, if that is true, one may ask, then why does the process come to a standstill? Why is he unable to transcend, to reach the "transcendent function?" The fact is that Kurtz has gone to Africa filled with that idealism of the Western world, the belief in the supremacy of the "Christian" values over the pagan ones, and when the unconscious unmasks the whole pretence, and reveals the shallowness of the false idealism, Kurtz realizes that

he himself is part of that pseudo-idealism. He cannot cope with the revelation and he cracks — the unconscious turns against him and drags him into utter savagery (the opposite of the "idealism"). The words he utters *in extremis:* "The horror! The horror" reveal the extent of his inner conflict.

It is interesting that Ahab has a sea burial (the whale drags him to the deep) — the sea is here like a womb taking him back, enveloping him (back to the unconscious). Kurtz, in his turn, is buried in a "muddy hole," as Marlow says: "But I am of course aware that the next day the pilgrims buried something in a muddy hole" (p.148). We see that it is not a sandy hole, or just any hole — the hole is a <u>muddy</u> one. So, dampness is there, enveloping him.

Ahab and Kurtz fail in their quest and find their deaths, but the seeds they have thrown "fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit:" Ishmael and Marlow have witnessed their struggle, have followed the journey, and have profited psychologically from the experience. But that only happens because they are fit, they are samples of the "chosen ones". The other sailors witnessed and experienced the same journey, but profited nothing — actually, in Ahab's case, they succumbed.

Ishmael and Marlow cannot, in any way, be regarded as "common" men, for they do not compromise with the status quo, on the contrary, they are extremely individualistic beings who see themselves as — to use a Nietzschean expression — "higher men."

The problem of the quest in these two books can be seen on two levels: on the first level, there is the quest Ahab and Kurtz go through and fail. They are on an interior journey to meet their "shadow," their unconscious. In Ahab's case, it is the whale, and the evil he sees in Moby-Dick is the dark side of his own personality which he fails to recognize, incorporate, and

transcend. Kurtz's case is similar, he goes up the Congo River and there he has to face his unconscious represented by the savages and by the wilderness. He is able to recognize evil in himself, but that recognition destroys his ego, his conscious mind, and he succumbs. It is Murray Krieger who says that,

> Like Kurtz, the tragic visionary may at the critical moment search within and find himself "hollow at the core," but only because he has suddenly been seized from without by the hollowness of his moral universe, whose structure and meaning have until then sustained him. What the shock reveals to its victim — the existential absurdity of the moral life — explodes the meaning of the moral life, its immanent god and ground. And there can be no post-crisis meaning and god except in defiance of reason, in acknowledgement of the impossibly paradoxical nature of moral existence[37].

The second level we can consider is the interior journey Ishmael and Marlow venture for the same purpose. And where is their unconscious? In this case, Ahab stands for Ishmael's dark side, and Kurtz represents Marlow's. And here, nobody can say that the journey is a failure. Are, in this case, Ishmael and Marlow, "superman?" That is hard to affirm. I would say that, in strictly Nietzschean terms, they are not, since for Nietzsche there is another important aspect in his superman: power, domination. However, in Jungian terms, they fulfil all the requisites and steps of the "journey within:" they go there, they meet their "shadow," they face the dangers, they incorporate their "shadow," and they come back — they survice. They both experience a rebirth, and their rebirth is their transcendence. The fact is also undeniable that they are above, far above common men. They have certainly found their illumination.

NOTES ON CHAPTER FIVE

[1] Nietzsche, Friedrich W., "Twilight of the Idols," in The Portable Nietzsche, p.537 - original underlining.

[2] Sedgwick, W.E., "Ishmael vs Ahab," in MOBY-DICK - A Norton Critical Edition, p.642.

[3] Matthiessen, F.O., American Renaissance, p.456.

[4] Shakespeare, William, Macbeth, IV, i.

[5] ibid., V, vi, 42-44.

[6] ibid., V, vii, 2-4.

[7] ibid., V, viii, 30-34.

[8] Nietzsche, F.W., "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in The Portable Nietzsche, p.211.

[8] Jung, Carl G., Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, p.38.

[10] Nietzsche, F.W., "The Antichrist," in The Portable Nietzsche, p.641.

[11] idem, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in The Portable Nietzsche,p.153.

[12] Hesse, Herman, Siddhartha, p.142.

[13] ibid., p.39.

[14] ibid., p.105.

[15] Conrad, Joseph, "The Secret Sharer," in Heart of Darkness & The Secret Sharer, p.25.

[16] ibid., p.27.

[17] Hesse, Herman, op. cit., pp.142-143.

[18] Jung, Carl G., Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, p.126.

[19] Staal, Frits, Exploring Mysticism, p.56.

[20] Jung, Carl G., O Homem e Seus Símbolos, p.78 - my translation.

[21] Henderson, Joseph L., "Os Mitos Antigos e o Homem Moderno," in O Homem e Seus Símbolos, p.130 - my translation).

[22] Jung, Carl G., The Portable Jung, p.151.

[23] Benjamin, Harry, Basic Self-Knowledge - An Introduction to Esoteric Psychology, p.18 - original underlining.

[24] Staal, Frits, op. cit., p.165 - my underlining.

[25] Einstein, Albert, Como Vejo o Mundo, p.78 - my translation.

[26] Nietzsche, F.W., "The Case of Wagner," in The Birth of Tragedy & The Case of Wagner, p.180 - original underlining.

[27] Jung, Carl G., Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, p.160.

[28] Einstein's letter to Elizabeth of Belgium, in As Idéias de Einstein, pp.17-18 - my underlining - my translation.

[29] Hesse, Herman, op. cit., p.146.

[30] Lawrence, D.H., Women in Love, p.27 - original underlining.

[31] Nietzsche, F.W., "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in The Portable Nietzsche, pp.200-201.

[32] ibid., p.226.

[33] Einstein, Albert, Como Vejo o Mundo, p.23 - my translation).

[34] Nietzsche, F.W., "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in The Portable Nietzsche, p.139.

[35] ibid., p.198 - original underlining.

[36] idem, "Twilight of the Idols," in The Portable Nietzsche, pp. 500-501.

[37] Krieger, Murray, "Tragedy and the Tragic Vision," in TRAGEDY: Vision and Form, pp.29-30 - my underlining.

CHAPTER VI

THE NARRATIVE AND THE AUTHORS' VIEWPOINT

The narrative is a very important point in all these novels I examined here. The novels are narrated in the first person (singular and plural), but only in two of them (Moby-Dick and Heart of Darkness) the narrators have a name — the other narrators are not identified. We will see that many critics agree (and we have seen that in the Review of Criticism too) that the authors in all these four novels speak through their narrators, and thus we may assume that the criticism these narrators pass on certain characters as well as on social institucions and on the standards and behaviors of society are a reflection of the authors' own position in relation to those institutions and in relation to the social ethics.

Through Melville's and Conrad's personal letters it will be proved that the position I have spotted in the novels and assumed to be theirs is actually the position they reveal in real life.

The narrative is an aspect of these four books which is very much criticized, for neither Melville nor Conrad sticks to the norms of narrative point of view. In all the four books we have a narrator, and in all the four books (not quite so in Heart

<u>of Darkness</u>) the narrator becomes omniscient in many parts of the narrative, and describes scenes which he could not have possibly witnessed; sometimes he plunges into the character's mind, describing the person's thoughts and feelings. This kind of mistake is bound to arouse the anger of the structuralist critics in particular, as well as of many other critics. Critics condemn this kind of mistake in a writer, as we have seen in the chapter on Review of Criticism — the part dealing with <u>The Nigger of the "Nascissus"</u>. <u>Moby-Dick</u> also is criticized in this aspect. The critic R.P. Blackmur, for instance, says that Melville,

> ... in <u>Moby-Dick</u>, after setting up a single consciousness to be inside of, he shifted from that consciousness at will without sense of inconsistency, and therefore, which is the important thing, without making any effort to warrant the shifts and make them credible. Ignorance could not have excused him, because he had the example of Hawthorne, who was adept at shifting his compositional centers without disturbing his gravity,plumb in front of him. Not ignorance, but ineptitude and failure to discriminate[1].

But then, the critic comes up with a justification and ends up saying that Ishmael is in fact Melville's alter ego.

> The only error Melville made is that he failed to distinguish between what Ishmael saw and what the author saw on his own account. If an author is to use digressions, which are confusing but legitimate by tradition, he ought to follow Fielding and put them in inter-chapters, and especially where the narrative is technically in the first person. Otherwise, as with Ishmael, the narrator will seem to know too much at a given time for the story's good: it will tend to tell itself all at once, and the necessary modicum of stupidity in the operative consciousness will be blighted by excess intelligence. As Ahab said to the carpenter who handed him a lantern: "Thrusted light is worse than presented pistols." Ishmael of course is Melville's alter ego, which explains why so much is imputed to him, but does not condone the excess[2].

Other critics, however, justify the author's position in giving omniscience to the narrator by stating that that is because the author wants to be seen as being the narrator. Analysing <u>Billy</u>

Budd, William Braswell says that

> ... there is no reason for doubting that Melville intended himself to be thought of as the narrator. As such, he uses a shifting point of view, looking now into the mind of one character, now into the mind of another, making general comments from time to time, and presenting scenes of dramatic action, but also shutting himself off from a scene entirely when he chooses[3].

(And that, I think, can be applied to Conrad too). Feidelson too defends Melville in this concern. Dealing with Moby-Dick, he says, that

> Ishmael, unlike most fictive narrators, is not merely a surrogate for an absentee author. Behind him, always present as a kind of Doppelgänger,stands Herman Melville. As Ishmael the narrator enters more deeply into his symbolic world, he increasingly becomes a presence, a visionary activity, rather than a man; we lose interest in him as an individual, and even Ishmael the sailor almost drops from the story. Ishmael the visionary is often indistinguishable from the mind of the author himself. It is Melville's own voice that utters the passage on the heroic stature of Ahab. This apparent violation of narrative standpoint is really a natural consequence of the symbolic method of Moby-Dick. The distinction between the author and his alter ego are submerged in their common function as the voyaging mind[4].

Concerning Conrad, Ian Watt spots the author's flaw of pumping his own opinion into the narrator's speeches. He says that "Conrad's tendency to editorialize, to force the reader to accept his way of seeing things in an obtrusive and insistent way, has been widely attacked"[5]. And it is true in Conrad that the narrator knows much more than he should. A striking example is the narrator's description of the *tête-à-tête* that the Negro James Wait has with Donkin inside the former's cabin — conversation which ends with Wait's death, and to which there is no witness, not even the narrator.

In Heart of Darkness, however, there is nothing so serious in terms of narrative-point-of-view-shifting. The narrator's point of view is more carefully maintained.

Like Feidelson and Blackmur, I too tend to justify the authors' mistake — if we may thus call it — of shifting the narrative point of view from the narrator-character to themselves, with the idea that the narrator and the author in these four books are actually intertwined.

In Billy Budd and The Nigger of the "Nascissus," which show a more pessimistic view in terms of the possibility of the assertion of individuality, the narrators' names are not even mentioned. The only way of considering these men as apart from the ordinary members of the crew (humanity in general) is by considering the fact they are narrating the story. And if we consider that they criticize bitterly the ideals of society and the status quo (of course it is the authors through them), we may tend to think that they are really above the common, that they have really profited from the journey. But one cannot say that, due to this simple fact that they remain nameless, with no identity, and thus, depersonalized. Even though they are narrating the story, they remain merely as one-of-the-crew, one-in-the-crowd. Now, did Melville and Conrad intentionally keep their narrators nameless? I think that nobody can affirm that, but, nevertheless, the fact is that these narrators differ widely from those we find in Moby-Dick and Heart of Darkness. It is the authors who speak through Ishmael and Marlow too, but here, the narrators are standing in a much more positive light: they have a name, an identity, a personality of their own which profits psychologically from the journey, that becomes greater with the quest.

Melville and Conrad have a lot in common. They were both sailors in their youth and travelled all over the world. They both see the sea as a kind of salvation, as a means of getting away from the petty problems of land life, and plunging into a journey within. Like Melville's Ishmael who goes to sea to experience rebirth, Conrad himself has a feeling of anxiety when he does not

have sea water at sight, and he longs to go back to his element: the sea. He writes in a letter to Margerite Paradowska, while travelling in Congo:

> Je me sens assez faible de corps et tant soif peu demoralisé, et puis ma foi je crois que j'ai la nostalgie de la mer, l'envie de revoir ces plaines d'eau salé qui m'a si souvant bercé, qui m'a souri tant de fois sous le scintillement des rayons de soleil par une belle journée, qui bien des fois aussi m'a lancé la menace de mort a la figure dans un tourbillon d'ecume blanche fouettée par le vent sous le ciel sombre de Decembre .

Both Melville and Conrad have opinions that can be regarded as very anti-democratic. Melville, for example, in a letter, says

> So, when you see or hear of my ruthless democracy on all sides, you may possibly feel a touch of a shrink, or something of that sort. It is but nature to be shy of a mortal who boldly declares that a thief in jail is as honorable a personage as Gen. George Washington. This is ludicrous. But Truth is the silliest thing under the sun. Try to get a living by the Truth — and go to the Soup Societies. Heavens! Let any clergyman try to preach the Truth from its very stronghold, the pulpit, and they would ride him out of his church on his own pulpit banister. It can hardly be doubted that all Reformers are bottomed upon the truth, more or less; and to the world at large are not reformers most universally laughing-stocks? Why so? Truth is ridiculous to men. Thus easily in my room here do I, conceited and garrulous, reverse the test of my Lord Shaftesbury[7].

As we see, Melville is able to spot the greatest mistake of democracy: the tendency to pretend that all men are equal, when, as a matter of fact, they are not. Nietzsche makes his Zarathustra say:

> I do not wish to be mixed up and confused with these preachers of equality. For, to me justice speaks thus: "Men are not equal." Nor shall they become equal! What would my love of the overman be if I spoke otherwise?[8]

And it is indeed ridiculous to think otherwise. Men are as equal as their fingerprints are equal. Each man is a universe apart, and it is a violence to force human beings into a uniform mass — if

one acts this way, he is not demonstrating his love for man, but his wish to destroy human kind. The mass is not Man. It is merely that — the mass. Again, it is Melville who says,

> It seems an inconsistency to assert unconditional democracy in all things, and yet confess a dislike to all mankind — in the mass. But not so[9].

Conrad, in his letters, says things which are very similar to what Melville has said. He spots the pretence in the idea of "human fraternity," and says that if there must be something like fraternity, it should start not in large scale (fraternity among nations), but in a small scale (fraternity between neighbors, between individuals), and then grow larger to grasp the whole world.

> L'idée democratique est un très beau phamtome (sic), and to run after it may be fine sport, but I confess I do not see what evils it is destined to remedy. It confers distinction to Messieurs Jaurès, Liebknecht & Co. and your adhesion confers distinction upon it. International fraternity may be an object to strive for, and, in sober truth, since it has your support I will try to think it serious, but that illusion imposes by its size alone. Franchement, what would you think of an attempt to promote fraternity amongst people living in the same stret, I don't even mention two neighbouring streets? Two ends of the same street[10].

Since he cannot see this individual fraternity, and doubts that it may appear with the present mentality of men, he despairs of it, and assumes a "rational egoism."

> Aussi, souvent, je n'y pense pas. Tout disparaît. Il ne reste que la vérité, — une ombre sinistre et fuyante dont il est impossible de fixer l'image. Je ne regrette rien, — je n'espère rien, car je m'aperçois que ni le regret ni l'espérance ne signifient rien à ma personalité. C'est un égoisme rationel et féroce que j'exerce envers moi-même. Je me repose là-dedans. Puis, la pensée revient. La vie recommence, les regrets, les souvenirs et un désespoir plus sombre que la nuit[11].

And he is right. If each one started to concentrate the efforts to change in oneself, the real fraternity would one day be reached

— the genuine one, not the pretence. So, he adds,

> Comprenez-vous? Vous qui dévouez votre enthousiasme et vos talents à la cause de l'humanité, vous comprendrez sans doute pourquoi je dois — j'ai besoin, — de garder ma pensée intacte comme dernier hommage de fidélité à une cause qui est perdue. C'est tout ce que je puis faire. J'ai jeté ma vie à tous les vents du ciel, mais j'ai gardé ma pensée. C'est peu de chose, — c'est tout, ce n'est rien, — c'est la vie même[12].

In his writings, Conrad denounces the moral pretences of the world in a very strong way. He attacks things like colonialism, which is nothing but looting disguised behind the pretence of "humanitarianism." As Guerard says,

> Heart of Darkness is a record of things seen and done. But also Conrad was reacting to the humanitarian pretences of some of the looters precisely as the novelist today reacts to the moralism of cold-war propaganda. Then it was ivory that poured from the heart of darkness; now it is uranium. Conrad shrewdly recognized — an institution amply developed in Nostromo — that deception is most sinister when it becomes self-deception, and the propagandist takes seriously his own fictions[13].

Conrad demolishes the pretences of the colonialists even in short stories such as "An Outpost of Progress." He does the same, in a furibund way, through Marlow, in Heart of Darkness; and what makes the denouncing, in this case, sound even stronger is that it is based on a true fact.

> In September 1876, behind a blinding smokescreen of proclaimed noble intentions and international good will, the Association Internationale pour l'Exploration e la Civilisation en Afrique had been formed in Brussels at the instigation of Leopold, with himself as president. He proclaimed to the delegates to the Conférence Géographique Africaine, among them some of the most illustrious explorers and geographers in the world: "Le sujet qui nous réunit aujourd'hui est de ceux qui méritent au premier chef d'occuper les amis de l'humanité. Ouvrir à la civilisation la seule partie du globe où ele n'a pas encore pénetré, percer les ténèbres qui enveloppent des populations entières, c'est si j'ose ie dire, une croisade digne de ce siècle progrès." The first aim of the Association was to establish stations across central Africa, and for this task Leopold employed Henry Morton Stanley, who had already become famous on account of his expedition in

> 1876-7 through the most impenetrable area of Africa from Zanzibar to the Lower Congo. Gradually the disguises of internationalism and philanthropy were dropped; by 1885, with the ironic title of Souverain de l'État Indépendant du Congo, Leopold had become the master of vast territories bordering on the second largest river in the world, possessing apparently inexhaustible resources, which he was ruthlessly exploiting to satisfy his greed for wealth and power[14].

Man in a mass, accepts pretence and never questions it: but the individual is able to spot it — if he thinks not only with his head (pretences are intellectually engendered), but with his heart as well. That is why Melville states in a letter to Hawthorne,

> I stand for the heart. To the dogs with the head! I had rather be a fool with a heart, than Jupiter Olympus with his head! The reason the mass of men fear God, and at bottom dislike Him, is because they rather distrust His heart, and fancy Him all brain like a watch[15].

Due to his realization that Moby-Dick is a testimony against pretence, and a praise of individualism, and due to his realization that the novel urges man to stand on his own feet and not to lean on the morality of the social order, Melville writes in a letter: "I have written a wicked book, and I feel spotless as a lamb"[16]. Now, if the book is "wicked," how can he feel "spotless"? The fact is that the book is wicked for the morality of the mass; and since he is writing from his heart, since he knows that his position is the right one, that the individual's quest should be man's perpetual goal, he is able to feel "spotless." However, it is a book for the strong, because it is "satanic" in terms of of our Western morality, as Melville himself says, again in a letter to Hawthorne:

> Shall I send you a fin of the Whale by way of a specimen mouthful? The tail is not yet cooked — though the hell-fire in which the whole book is broiled might not unreasonably have cooked it all ere this. This is the book's motto (the secret one), —

> Ego non baptiso te in nomine — but make out the rest yourself[17].

Because of that, Melville suggests that Moby-Dick should not be read by all, but by some (again, the idea of the "chosen ones"). He advises Sarah Huyler Morewood not to read the book.

> Dont you buy it — dont you read it, when it does come out, because it is by no means the sort of book for you. It is not a piece of fine feminine Spitalfields silk — but is of the horrible texture of a fabric that should be woven of ships' cables & housers. A Polar wind blows through it, & birds of prey hover over it. Warn all gentle fastidious people from so much as peeping into the book — on risk of a lumbago & sciatics[18].

Thus, "gentle" people should keep themselves away from the book, at a respectful distance from the quest.

Since wisdom is not communicable, but must come from within, the really superior should not attempt to shock the common man with the revelation of Truth (as Melville said in a previous quotation, "Truth is ridiculous to men"). Nietzsche thought the same: some people are not prepared for the Truth — and these must be spared. Paul Lanzky, a friend and admirer of Nietzsche, narrates that on a certain Sunday, a young woman asked Nietzsche if he had been to the temple. The philosopher answered politely: "I didn't go today." Surprised by that answer, Lanzky asked him why he had said that. Nietzsche explained himself, saying: "Not all truths are good for all — if I had disturbed that young lady, I would be desolate now"[19]. It is very interesting to see that both Melville and Nietzsche thought the same way about this. And also Conrad had the same position, if we attend to the fact that Marlow does not tell the Intended the truth about Kurtz. No, he cannot do that. He spares the girl, because he knows she is too fragile in her little world to understand what Kurtz had become before dying. So, Marlow shamelessly lies to her — it is a *pia fraus*. He cannot reveal the truth, because it would make her crack, and he knows

that. He confesses: "But I couldn't. I could not tell her. It would have been too dark — too dark altogether..." (p.157).

One can see in these quotations above that the human beings who are not prepared for the truth are all women. That is not mere coincidence, since both Melville and Conrad are somewhat misogynistic. But to what extent are they really proposing an ideal with that or are crudely depicting things as they see them in the real world?

Furthermore, in all the novels analyzed in this dissertation, Melville and Conrad describe life aboard a ship — a "world of men" — and, at that time, it would have been an incongruence to have female characters aboard a ship, for they would be misplaced, since that would be unusual and unreal.

Notwithstanding that, it is undeniable that these authors take a misogynistic attitude in their work: women are not supposed to be adventurous, or to pursue any quest, but merely to be man's shadow — an inferior creature. It is a reflection of society, but this position in individuals leads to the perpetuation of this state of things at both the social and the emotional levels.

In the case of Conrad's Heart of Darkness, we have two kinds of women depicted: on the one hand, we have the Intended, who is a fragile creature, limited in her perception and in her horizons, and unprepared to face "dark" truths; on the other hand, we have the savage Negro woman up the Congo River, who has nothing fragile about her, but, quite the contrary, is stronger and more courageous than the savage men. The problem is that both these women are very much idealized (in different directions, of course), they are not developed or (least of all) developing characters — they are what they are; and they are ideals.

In Nietzsche's works, the misogyny of his position is rather

explicit. Nietzsche clearly separates men from women. His superior human being (the "superman") is explicitly a male, and Nietzsche would never admit the possibility of a woman being or becoming superior. That, however, is an intellectual position, for, in real life, the only woman Nietzsche ever fell in love with (Lou Salomé) was exactly the type of woman capable of self-assertion — he even proposed to her, but was turned down. Such an intellectual position in man is usually dictated by self-defense: the fear of being overcome or overruled by a woman, and of being forced to acknowledge that (in Nietzsche's case, we must keep in mind the fact that he was raised by women only — his mother and two aunts — and of the traditional type). To make things worse, there is also the mystery of conception and giving birth — Nature has chosen women for the perpetuation of the species (man cannot conceive). It is by and in the woman really that the foetus is created. Man only plants the seed, but the seed is little compared with the rest of the process — one always remembers that the umbilical cord links the foetus to the woman and not to the man. That is actually the root of the awe and the fear: creation is a privilege of the gods, and the woman _is_ capable of creation. And that may be the reason why we men have always concentrated our efforts at intellectual creation to make up for our physical incapacity for creation. But such fear and such a position bring about contradictions. Let us take the Greeks for example. The gods were men's intellectual creation, but we cannot say that there actually is a discrimination of power between the gods and the goddesses of the Greek pantheon. We can see a balance there. Of course one can argue that the trilogy of gods — Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades — are all male, but are they really more powerful than the goddesses? That would really be hard to prove. When Odysseus took to Ithaca, after the Trojan War was over, he fell in disgrace when he killed Poseidon's son, the Cyclops

Polyphemus. Poseidon swore to destroy Odysseus and did his best, trying to accomplish that. Odysseus, however, had the protection of the goddess Athene, and she outwitted Poseidon and delivered Odysseus safely to Ithaca and to Penelope. Here I can assert that the goddess was more powerful and more artful than the god. But there are other myths in which the reverse is true. Hera, for instance, tried by all means she could get hold of to destroy Perseus and Andromeda, but the mortals had the protection of Hera's husband, Zeus. Zeus outwitted the goddess, and Perseus and Andromeda survived. As we see, there is an equilibrium between the forces in the pantheon. The paradox lies in the fact that men created the gods as a projection of the world, but the equilibrium in the Olympus failed to have its reflection also in man's society, since women were discriminated against in Greece. Take the theater as an example: the theater was an intellectual creation of the male to which the female had no access. Women were prohibited not only to write or act, but they were prohibited to even attend the theatrical performances. Thus, while the male (men and boys) were allowed to such intellectual creations, women and girls were forced to stay home and envy them.

The development of the personality is <u>not</u> a privilege of men. All human beings are latently capable of self-assertion and of transcendence. Thus, the "superman" can be both women and men — it is a "super-human-being," regardless of sex or race. Let us just forget for a moment Nietzsche's misogyny and attend to what he says in this last quotation in which he explains his position concerning the young lady who asks if he has been to the temple. Nietzsche does not say "Not all truths are good for <u>women</u>," which would be very specific and very explicit. No. He says "Not all truths are good for <u>all</u>," which is much more general, including all races and both genders.

NOTES ON CHAPTER VI

[1] Blackmur, R.P., "The Craft of Herman Melville: A Putative Statement," in MELVILLE - A Collection of Critical Essays, pp. 81-82.

[2] ibid., p.82.

[3] Braswell, William, "Melville's BILLY BUDD as 'An Inside Narrative,'" in Melville's BILLY BUDD and the Critics, p.97.

[4] Feidelson, Jr., Charles, Symbolism and American Literature, p. 31.

[5] Watt, Ian, CONRAD and the Nineteenth Century, p.97.

[6] Conrad's letter, in Baines, Jocelyn, JOSEPH CONRAD: A Critical Biography, p.150.

[7] Melville's letter, in MOBY-DICK - A Norton Critical Edition, pp.556-557.

[8] Nietzsche, F.W., "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in The Portable Nietzsche, p.213 - original underlining.

[9] Melville's letter, in MOBY-DICK - A Norton Critical Edition, p.557.

[10] Conrad's letter, in Baines, Jocelyn, op. cit., p.246.

[11] ibid., p.247.

[12] ibid., p.248.

[13] Guerard, Albert J., Conrad the Novelist, p.35.

[14] Baines, Jocelyn, op. cit., pp.136-137.

[15] Melville's letter,in MOBY-DICK - A Norton Critical Edition, p.559 - original underlining.

[16] ibid., p.566.

[17] ibid., pp.561-562.

[18] ibid., p.564.

[19] Note in the Brazilian Portuguese translation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, p.17 - The English version of the note is my responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Ahab and Kurtz are, each in his own way, potential supermen. Both attempt their mighty quest for the assertion of their individuality, the quest for transcendence, even though they do not exactly succeed. Though each in his own way, they both fail for the same reason: they are not able to get rid thoroughly of the common man's morality (or false morality). Ahab's keeping evil as an outside force means that he remains a puritan after all. The image revealed by the ship's name confirms that: the "Pequod" was an American Indian tribe that was exterminated by the pious Puritans in the Seventeenth-Century, and this present Pequod tribe (the ship of which Ahab is captain) finds its destruction through Ahab.

Kurtz, we have seen, succeeds in visualizing his own evil, but he despairs with the knowledge and is crushed by its weight. It is too much for Kurtz to recognize as part of himself the evil he, as representative of "civilization", was supposed to fight in Africa. Instead of acknowledging that evil and transcending it, Kurtz starts to have a Titanic inner conflict trying to fight his own tendencies. His unconscious, being thus reproved and fought against, destroys Kurtz. Thus, in both cases,

Ahab's and Kurtz's, the external, general morality prevails and prevents the heroes from attaining their transcendence.

Ahab's most evident reason for trying the quest is revenge, and in this aspect only can he be compared to Prometheus, for that Titan's main reason for defying the Olympic powers was exactly that: revenge. The great difference lies in the fact that Prometheus did that creatively, whereas Ahab attempts it in a destructive way — in his struggle to destroy the gods, Ahab ends up in self-destruction, dragging behind him the "Pequod" with her entire crew, except for one sole man: Ishmael. Ahab is bold, strong, and he dominates his crew utterly. However, his one deficiency, his one flaw (his whale-jaw-bone leg) has forced him to depend on his men for help. Knowing that his men are unprepared for the quest, Ahab tries to arouse their unconscious through satanic rites.

> The rites are attempts to abolish the separation between the conscious mind and the unconscious, the real source of life, and to bring about a reunion of the individual with the native soil of his inherited, instinctive make-up[1].

And, of course, all he manages to do is to mesmerize the crew who follow him blindly — thus the wreckage, physical and mental.

Kurtz's too is a dominant character. The savages follow him as a dark god, and they cannot be of any help when Kurtz's own darkness overshadows him.

Now, why do I call the chapter dealing with Billy Budd and The Nigger of the "Nascissus" "The Repression of Individualism," and this chapter dealing with Moby-Dick and Heart of Darkness "The Assertion of Individualism" if there we find the deaths of Billy Budd and of the Negro James Wait, and here we have also the deaths of both Ahab and Kurtz? Why do I say that the first two novels are pessimistic, and the second two optimistic? To explain

that, we have to recall the image of the sower and the seeds that opens the third section of Chapter Five. Though representing the unconscious, neither Billy Budd nor James Wait is able to arouse in any of the individuals aboard the ships any desire for the quest. With their deaths, life goes back to the "normality" of the old system — it is the perpetuation of the status quo. However, the view in the second case is widely different: Ahab and Kurtz die, but Ishmael and Marlow are there to pursue the quest. If, instead of considering Ahab and Kurtz as the questers we choose Ishmael and Marlow to stand as such, then the optimism is still greater, for both of them are reborn like Phoenixes out of the ashes of the fire of the unconscious.

Have Ishmael and Marlow really attained this transcendence? Have they really gone beyond the ordinary human being? Constrasted with Ahab, Ishmael is pictured by Melville as much less active. Ishmael is mostly floating in his inner world, and, due to this tremendous introspection, his awareness of what goes on without and within him is very acute. And we have seen that Ishmael's attitudes and thoughts are not those of an ordinary human being; on the contrary, he can get very Nietzschean really.

Conrad, in his turn, does his best to picture his Marlow in really Buddhistic colors — in his detachment, in his attitudes, thoughts and postures.

The Nietzschean superman, as I have already said, is also interested in power — that is what Nietzsche states most of the times. Notwithstanding that, it is Nietzsche himself who states that

> If one spends oneself for power, for power politics, for economics, world trade, parliamentarianism, and military interests — if one spends in <u>this</u> direction the quantum of understanding, seriousness, will, and self-overcoming which one represents, then it will be lacking for the other direction[2].

So here, he is saying the opposite — that self-overcoming is more important than overcoming others. And it is. One who seeks to dominate others, to assert his power over others is not, in reality, trying to prove anything to the others, but to oneself. If one is really superior, he knows that and that is enough for him. If not, then he is still groping in the dark. And it is Nietzsche again who says that "What must first be proved is worth little"[3]. And that is exactly the point. In my opinion, the true power is the power within, but which is kept within. When one feels this compulsion to externalize power, he is not a *mahatma*, but a tyrant. Self-assertion is what counts — the inner power to refuse to bend before external power. But to do that one has to individualize oneself.

> Verily, I also do not like those who consider everything good and this world the best. Such men I call the omni-satisfied. Omni-satisfaction, which knows how to taste everything, that is not the best taste. I honor the recalcitrant choosy tongues and stomachs, which have learned to say "I" and "yes" and "no"[4].

That is what distinguishes superior men from common ones. And the ones who are humble cannot understand the bold ones, for the latter are walking testimonies against the formers' stupidity and baseness.

The superman is the man of the future. He cannot be understood by this common human race. He can only be understood be those whom Nietzsche calls "the higher men" — men who already put themselves above the common, beyond the ordinary. These men also cannot be fully comprehended by the mass, for, as Nietzsche says, they are "posthumous."

> Posthumous men — I, for example — are understood worse than timely ones, but heard better. More precisely: we are never understood — hence our authority[5].

So, according to this philosophy, there is no salvation for man, unless he places himself much higher than he usually does, unless he be removed to the pinnacles and contemplates everything from above. "As long as you feel the stars as something 'above you', you will not possess the clairvoyant's eye"[6].

Well, and then? Would the the superman be the aim, after all? Not quite, because... could we not transcend even the superman? According to Nietzsche, we not only could, but should, for, when one reaches one's utmost goal in life, the tendency is to become accomodated, and that is the most horrible thing — the end of the quester.

> What becomes of the "Wandering Jew" whom a woman adores and makes stable? He merely ceases to be eternal; he gets married, he is of no further concern to us[7].

Of course, he is speaking figuratively here. Getting married means simply "settling down." That could be simply any other social state of stability. By becoming "stable," one ceases to be "eternal." Thus, the superman should be transcended too. Through his Zarathustra, Nietzsche says that "Even in the best there is still something that nauseates; and even the best is something that must be overcome"[8]. And here we can quote Melville. In one of his letters, he says,

> Lord, when shall we be done growing? As long as we have anything more to do, we have done nothing. So, now, let us add Moby-Dick to our blessing, and step from that. Leviathan is not the biggest fish; — I have heard of Krakens[9].

So, man should never stop growing, nor should the quest ever cease. The stronger man becomes, the bigger become the challenges he has to face.

NOTES ON THE CONCLUSION

[1] Jung, Carl G., The Portable Jung, p.386.

[2] Nietzsche, F.W., "Twilight of the Idols," in The Portable Nietzsche, pp.508-509.

[3] ibid., p.476.

[4] idem, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in The Portable Nietzsche, p. 306.

[5] idem, "Twilight of the Idols," in The Portable Nietzsche, p.468 original underlining.

[6] idem, Além do Bem e do Mal, p.88 - my translation.

[7] idem, "The Case of Wagner," in The Birth of Tragedy & The Case of Wagner, p.161.

[8] idem, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in The Portable Nietzsche, p. 317.

[9] Melville's letter, in MOBY-DICK - A Norton Critical Edition, p. 567.

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