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**Department of English**

**Haunted Hunters: A Comparative Study of**  
**Moby Dick and Heart of Darkness**

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fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in English  
Literary and Cultural Studies*

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***In Memory of Prof. BENRABAH Mohamed. God Rest His Soul.***

## ***Dedication I***

*This work would have never been possible without the love and support of my beautiful Mother and wonderful Father, I wouldn't be the man that I am today without their constant care.*

*My Brother and Sister, Thank you.*

*My Best friend, My soon-to-be Wife, thank you for making the past five years unforgettable, the Best is yet to come.*

*BENSAID Habib*

## ***Dedication II***

*My Dearest Mother, Thank you for supporting me I am Grateful; Forever and Always.*

*My Friends, My Second Family; Thank you for being part of my life.*

*KETTAB Said*

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## Abstract

This dissertation consists of a comparative study between Moby Dick (1851), written by the American writer Herman Melville, and Heart of Darkness (1908), written by the Polish author Joseph Conrad. In spite of the distance which dissociates those two works both in time and in space, a number of affinities make them similar to a significant extent. Thus the present study offers to bring the various affinities, but differences as well into light, and discuss them thoroughly.

The comparative approach to the two narratives is based on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory which considers that a text is absorption of and reply to another or other texts. Our study may also be supported by Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality or the transposition of one system of signs into another.

In this sense, our comparative analysis will first discuss the themes and worldview which are unfolded through the two works. After that, the stylistic and symbolic aspect of the two works will be studied.

Finally, both similarities and differences noted between the two narratives along the precedent analysis will be assessed in the light of Harold Bloom's theory of influence. Thus we shall explain the nature of the relationship between Moby Dick and Heart of Darkness or how that Conrad has been influenced by Melville's Moby Dick. In other words, we shall demonstrate how that Heart of Darkness shows both the expression of Melville's strong influence on Conrad and the latter's attempt at freeing himself from haunting spirit of the White Whale.

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# **General Introduction**

## General Introduction

The core of this comparative study stems from a commonly noted affinity between the American author Herman Melville (1819-1891) and the Polish writer Joseph Conrad (1857-1924). Despite the distance which separates them, both in time and in space, the similarity between the two writers has drawn the attention of many critics. This acknowledged similarity relates mainly to characterization, symbols, and themes in the two authors' works. Thus the works of both Melville and Conrad deal generally with the sea adventures of a lonely young sailor, who goes through a kind of spiritual, metaphysical and philosophical initiation. In this sense, the two writers draw near one another in their symbolical treatment of the sea and in their handling of the adventure story as a physical quest which is heavily fused with philosophical meanings.

While an important number of Melville's and Conrad's works may be a subject of comparative studies, our dissertation is concerned with their two major works, Moby Dick and Heart of Darkness which present numerous similarities. The affinity between the two works may even be supported by the proved fact that Conrad did read Moby Dick and did not like it. In this sense, the present comparative study brings to light this resemblance between the two narratives, Moby Dick (1851) and Heart of Darkness (1902), examines it on the basis of a number of theoretical tools and critical evaluations, and finally explains the nature of the relationship between the two works. This comparative study comprises two Chapters: themes and world view, and formal and stylistic analysis. These two parts are preceded by an introduction which presents a brief note on the methodological approach underlying the study is based on two theories: Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of "dialogism" and Julia Kristeva's notion of "intertextuality".

Throughout this work an assessment will disclose the kind of connection relating Melville's MD with Conrad's HD. In other words, this work will shed light on how Conrad revises, re-writes and completes Melville, i.e. on how Melville haunts Conrad in HD.

## General Introduction

In the present study, the two concepts of transformation (Bakhtin) and transposition (Kristeva) suggest a similar notion which accounts for the presence of one or many texts in another text. Thus our study suggests that Conrad's HD may be said to hold an intertextual relationship with Melville's MD. The subsequent comparative analysis is therefore formulated on the consideration that Conrad's text is an absorption, transposition and antithetical revision of Melville's. This form of relationship is mainly illustrated through similarities, but also disparities noted between the two works. In other words, while the similarities which are identified through out the study make us assume that MD is present in HD both in content and in form, the discrepancies show that Conrad corrects or rectifies Melville in various aspects which the second chapter attempts to highlight.

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## Chapter One: Themes and World View in *Moby Dick* and *Heart of Darkness*

### 1.1. Introduction

Many critics have noted that the main topic of the two novels is man's search for his meaning and place in the universe. Besides the fact that *MD* abounds in metaphysical speculations of all kinds; Ishmael repeatedly mentions such figures as Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Coleridge and Descartes. Even if this occurs more subtly in *HD*, it is clear that both narratives expose, in their core, fundamental questions about morality, religion, God and what is beyond nature. In this sense; we may say that both Melville and Conrad are deeply interested in understanding the meaning of human existence, a fact which is even more explicit in their other writings. In the present chapter; I shall attempt to explore the different aspects of this metaphysical quest in *MD* and *HD*; a quest which is undertaken by both narrator and hero, and how this quest manifest itself in the two narratives and on what the different attitudes towards this quest are. Moreover, the ethnic diversity in the two narratives reflects the two writers' earnest concern with the racial issue as well as the large scope through which both of them consider the various subjects discussed in their writing. This chapter also analyzes the representation of the non-white characters as symbolizing brutal force, evil and the fool, and how they are approached with much depth and earnestness. We too will identify the two narratives' divergent presentation of oriental culture to which both hero and narrator escape because of the sterility of their own culture, and analyze the treatment of gender in the two novels.

### 1.2. The Quest for the Truth: Different Forms and Attitudes

As we shall see more deeply in subsequent chapters, both *MD* and *HD* present us with two adventures that embody the two narrator's search for some spiritual peace. The two voyages can thus be seen as an expression of a mental and spiritual unrest that leads both Ishmael and Marlow to start a metaphysical quest which assumes the aspect of a religious pilgrimage. The two narrators, indeed, suffer from a spiritual coma which may be sensed well before they decide to go on voyage. While Ishmael finds himself "involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouse" as he feels a "drizzly

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November” in his soul, Marlow has an “idleness of a passenger, an isolation amongst all those men with whom he had no point of contact, the oily and languid sea, the uniform somberness of the coast, seemed to keep him away from the truth of things, within the toil of a mournful and senseless delusion.” (p.19) this state of apathy and spiritual ennui that is fed by sedentary life on land forces the two narrators towards adventure, towards primeval nature. Ishmael declares that “in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God - so, better is to perish in that howling infinite, than ... craven crawl to land” (p.116), whereas Marlow finds out that the African wilderness withholds “truth stripped of its cloak of time” (p.52).

Ishmael and Marlow equally look alike in their conviction, which may be sensed even before they make their voyage, that truth is both awful and unattainable. Ishmael observes that “the sun hides not the ocean, which is the dark side of this earth, so therefore, that mortal man who hath more of joy than sorrow in him, that mortal man cannot be true” (p.405). Marlow expresses the same view of truth when he remarks that “the inner truth is hidden-luckily” (p.49). Both narrators become increasingly conscious of the horror of truth along their experiences in the sea and the jungle respectively they come to realize the immoral and arbitrary nature of human existence on earth. Both *MD* and *HD* present this truth as including man’s inherent drives as well as nature. Consequently, cannibalism in men and nature, natural disasters, human innate immorality and helpless condition amid an indifferent universe, are all aspects of the dreadfulness of the ultimate truth.

Truth or the true meaning of human existence can only be gloomy ; not only because mere glimpses of it –through the inherent immorality and evil of man and nature - are repulsive, but because it is also associated with death. In both narratives, there is an emphasis on the paradoxical nature of truth: whereas attaining this truth is imperative to make sense of human existence, it can only be reached at the threshold of death, when it is “too late” (*HD*, p.100). Therefore, truth, or the ultimate explanation of the mysteries of life, and so spiritual bliss, is inaccessible. “Our souls are like those orphans whose unwedded mothers die in bearing them: the secret of our

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paternity lies in their grave, and we must there to learn it” (*MD*, p.464) thus “perhaps all the wisdom, and all truth, and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the invisible” (*HD*, p.101).

This similar view on the metaphysical issue in *MD* and *HD* should not obscure the fact that there are differences between the two narrators’ attitude towards the metaphysical quest on the one hand, and the two heroes’ on the other whereas both Ishmael and Marlow appear as passive and peaceful searchers. Ahab and Kurtz are rather active and even furious searchers on this truth. Indeed, for both narrators, the two voyages are deliberate philosophical and spiritual quests that are meant to provide them with some spiritual and mental relief. However, both of them do not pursue their personal metaphysical journey fervently but rather peacefully and with serenity. Thus Ishmael, unlike “mad Ahab”, lives his experience in the wild sea with temperance and restraint. Before his voyage begins, he announces that he is “tormented with an everlasting itch for things remote” and that he “loves to sail forbidden seas and land on barbarous coasts.” He adds that not ignoring what is good, [he is] quick to perceive a horror, and could still be social with it.” (p.26)

Moreover, Ishmael displays a reconciling and moderate attitude towards the various philosophical crises that he meets. Hence he is able to accept Queequeg’s faith, cannibalism and his physical difference. He is also able to recognize that “all moral greatness is but disease” (p.87) and that “man must eventually lower ... his conceit of attainable felicity” (p.398).

Marlow is equally sanguine about his search for the truth. When realizing that civilization is only a veil that hides the reality of things, he determines comfortably that the “the inner truth is hidden-luckily”. Coming back to the sepulchral city a changed man, after his experience in the jungle, Marlow resents the sight of people. Unlike Kurtz who would have energetically made publicly known his discoveries-hideous as they may be “exterminate all the brutes” - in a report or an article in a newspaper, Marlow feels he “had no particular desire to enlighten” the ignorant people.



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By contrast, Ahab's and Krutz's metaphysical search is violent and painfully conscious. Moreover, their attitude towards the knowledge they gain in their experience is not one of reconciliation or restraint, but of rebellion and absolutism. While Ahab decides to "strike through the mask" that hides the origin of man's predicament, Krutz is determined till the last to "wring" the essence of the wilderness.

Thus both narratives present us with two completely opposed approaches to knowledge and truth: one of passivity and moderation versus another of activity and extremism. To use Merlin Bowen's classification, whereas the two narrators present an approach of "armed neutrality" towards metaphysical findings, Ahab and Kurtz adopt an attitude of "defiance". The same contrast is found in religion, that second aspect of the quest for the truth. Indeed, while metaphysics refers to what is beyond sensible reality and is supposed to be at the basis of thinking and knowledge, religion is a system of beliefs and practices on a relation to a supreme being, to one or many gods, to sacred entities or to the universe. In other words, while metaphysics is an independent search in rational as well as irrational entities, religion is an established system which has conventional guidelines.

### 1.3. Religion: From an Indifferent and Meaningless Supernatural Force to an Evil One

It is worth noting that while the religious issue is openly and extensively examined in *MD* it is only vaguely discerned in *HD*. This does not prevent us, however, from observing that religion is a crucial subject for both writers. For Conrad, this may especially be perceived in his *Lord Jim* (1900), for instance, and also in a number of his personal letters.

As we have already clearly traced the search for truth as aiming at spiritual harmony, which both narrators and heroes seek, we shall now open this religious discussion by identifying first the forms and expressions of divinity in *MD* and *HD*. Then we shall analyze how morality and established religion are viewed in the two works. In this manner, we hope to distinguish the attitudes towards divinity, morality

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and established religion that are portrayed in both narratives.

In both narratives, the divine force is suggested through nature and man's experience that is through the universe; in other words; the divine force, in *MD* as in *HD*, is inseparable from nature and man. While this is obvious in the case of *MD*, the association of nature or the African wilderness to the divine force in *HD* is to be deduced from Marlow's use of such terms as "immense", "great", "high" and "invincible" when describing this wilderness. The divine force is often presented in *MD* and *HD*; explicitly in the former and obliquely in the latter as expressing meaninglessness, indifference and even evil, which all are, according to the two narratives, the proper characteristics of nature and man.

In *MD*, the absurdity and arbitrariness of the divinity is perceived in the absurd of the sea which can calm and serene at times, but also turn mad and destroy ships and men overnight. Witnessing a scene where a very old whale is being eaten by sharks, Ishmael is struck by "the horrible vulturism of the earth! from which not the mightiest whale is free" (p.300). Speaking about the absurdity of the sea, he also observes that "no mercy, no power but its own controls it. Panting and snorting like a mad battle that has lost its rider, the masterless ocean overruns the globe." (p.270)

The absurdity of the divine force in *HD* may also be made out in the ephemeral nature of man's life: "droll thing life is-that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose". Again in another one of his letters, Conrad points out the absurdity of human existence and creation, similarly but less definitely, Ishmael observes that "some certain significance lurks in all things, else all things are little worth, and the round world itself but an empty cipher, except to ... fill up some morass in the Milky Way." (p.409) In fact, if Ishmael sounds uncertain in this instance, the meaninglessness of life that he only indirectly alludes to is confirmed by the reversal or the exploding of the significance of most of the symbols used in his narrative. As a Queequeg's coffin is turned into a life-buoy, and the vortex that engulfs the Pequod becomes a "vital centre" in which Ishmael is saved, while whiteness reveals to be "a

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colorless, all-color of atheism” (p.196), significance disappears in *MD*, and the world actually becomes “an empty cipher”. This is in fact suggested not only in Ishmael’s voice, but in Ahab’s as well. Being able to construct various objects that have sometimes opposed suggestions, the carpenter is regarded by Ahab as “an arrant, all grasping, intermeddling, monopolizing, heathenish old scamp, to be one day making legs, and the next day coffins to clap them in, and yet again life-buoys out of those same coffins”. Thus he revolves that the Carpenter is “an unprincipled as the gods” and that, like the gods too, he “does not mean anything” (pp.493-494).

The divinity, as sea and therefore as nature, is also presented as indifferent to and unconcerned by man’s misery, even when it is itself at the origin of this misery. Ahab, identifying with Pip, comments on divine indifference about the black boy’s misfortune: “There can be no heats above the snow-line. Oh, ye frozen heavens! look down here. Ye did beget this luckless child, and have abandoned him, ye creative libertines” (p.489). Ishmael, too, sounds at times, although with less articulateness, to share Ahab’s conviction that the divinity pays no attention to man’s predicament. The Carpenter is therefore an “impersonal” character who possesses some of “the general solidity discernible in the whole visible world; which while causelessly active in uncounted modes, still eternally holds its peace, and ignores you, though you dig foundations for cathedrals” (p.443). Again, he draws attention to this general indifference about the universe when he stresses the unresponsiveness of the sea to man’s torment: after a wreck caused by a whale, “amid the chips of chewed boats, and the sinking limbs of torn comrades, the whale’s hunters swam out of the white curds of the whale’s direful wrath into the serene, exasperating sunlight, that smiled on, as if at a birth or bridal” (p.185). The African river is similarly characterized by a “dumb immobility”, the “perfectly still” sun or the “silent” forest. What further relates the two narratives is the deep irony associated with this indifference. What further relates the two narratives is the deep irony associated with this indifference. While Ishmael speculates about man’s life being “vast practical joke” (p.225).

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### 1.4. Ethic and Religion as both Futile and Useless Principles

As we have noted earlier, the religious question is definitely more explicit in *MB* than in *HD*. However, Melville and Conrad may be compared on the basis of this theme because both of them show an unlimited concern for the moral position of man in the universe, a position which is at the centre of the religious discourse. In addition to this, both writers have been criticized as “morally dangerous” and even as “pagans”. While substantial parts of *MD*, mainly related to religion, were censored from its first edition, and while Melville was vehemently criticized for his repeated denigration of established religion, in *MD* as in other of his writings, Conrad has been qualified as an “austère paine de genie” by the *Holborn Review*. A similar affinity towards religion in both writers clearly obstructs itself. The following reveals that this affinity is central to this comparative study.

The key moral problem discussed in both *MB* and *HD* is man’s ideal behavior in front of a meaningless and evil universe. In other words, in their two works, Melville and Conrad discuss the paradoxical nature of the moral dilemma caused by man’s required moral conduct in a universe itself fundamentally immoral and evil. Ahab’s decision to lead a whole crew to utter destruction for the sake of a whale is morally reprobated. However, Ahab, as well as Ishmael (through his meditation on the whale’s witness and its religious symbolism), affirms the evil nature of the whale: “I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it.”(p.167). The African jungle too is said to possess “an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable invention”, a force which can even subvert a moralist into a “devil”. In his *Personal Record*, Conrad states more articulately the same idea about the immorality of the universe. He states that “une conception morale de l’Univers nous jette en fin de compte dans si cruelle et de si absurdes contradiction, ou les derniers vestiges de la foi, de l’espérance, de la charité, et jusqu’à ceux de la raison même, semblent près de prés, que j’en suis arrivé à soupçonner que les fins de la création ne peuvent être en rien morale. J’inclinerais volontiers à croire que leur objet est purement spectaculaire.”(ibid). Thus the sea and the jungle which represent the essence (or

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extreme form) of the universe are themselves immoral. Consequently, the question that seems to be at centre of the metaphysical debate in both narratives is whether moral limits are able to guide and restrict man's conduct in this corrupt universes and whether the religious law can be a valid, constant and effective standard for man's actions. In this respect, Melville and Conrad seem to share the same answers to these questions in their narratives.

Both writers primarily insist on the ineptness of all codes, moral and religious, in effectively and consistently ruling man's behaviour. In MD and in HD, there is the same distrust of both divine and human moral systems of conduct. The argument that the two narratives significantly share in their dismissal of these codes is the inadequacy and futility of conventional laws when removed from established civilization. By placing their heroes in front of a complex moral dilemma amid merciless natural circumstances, Melville and Conrad intend to challenge conventional moral regulations, and the challenge finally reveals their incompetence. Thus both Ahab and Kurtz's ethical and spiritual degeneration seems to be only partly condemned by the two narrators. Ishmael affirms that in the "uncivilized seas", neither he nor Starbuck could resist the "arm drag" of Ahab's mad quest. In order to achieve his purpose, Ahab, who has completely identified with the cruel and evil nature of the sea, resorts to means regarded as depraved by all moral systems operating on civilized land. Thus Ishmael notes that "what is was that inscrutable Ahab said to that tiger-yellow crew of his- thesis were words best omitted here; for you live under the blessed light of the evangelical land." He adds: "only the infidel sharks in the audacious seas may give ears to such words, when, with tornado brow, and eyes of red murder, and foam-glued lips, Ahab leaped after his prey." (p: 222).

Likewise, Marlow tells his listeners that they "can't understand" Kurtz degeneration in the wilderness since they have "solid pavement under their feet, surrounded by king neighbors... the butcher... the policeman". He adds that when these things are gone "you must fall back on your own innate strength, upon your own capacity for faithfulness." (P: 7); in this way, Kurtz's transmutation in the wilderness

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is presented as an inevitable process, since even Marlow acknowledged the irresistible call for wilderness. He explains that Kurtz's moral disintegration in the African jungle is in fact the disintegration of the essence of the moral conventions, which underlie the European civilization, in the wilderness. Consequently, man's ideal conduct, commanded by religious and moral codes, is in truth a relative one, thus it is insubstantial and illusory. This is obviously true both for human moral codes and for divine or religious ones.

In *MD*, the ineffectiveness of religion is clearly suggested by Starbuck's failure to convince Ahab to abandon the mad quest, as Starbuck symbolizes the Christian faith. Moreover, Ishmael's narrative abounds in arguments refuting the efficiency of Christianity. For example, he stresses that all kinds of worship, i.e. religions, should be valid because the different religions and faiths are nothing but "queer crochets touching the great belief". Thus he "...and Queequeg ... and every mother's son and soul of us belong to the great everlasting First Congregation of this whole worshipping world" (p: 100). Ishmael also substitutes the authority of his own mind in his various interpretations and meditations for the authority of the scriptures. An instance of this would be his willingness to participate in Queequeg's "idolatrous" religious ceremony of worshipping a wooden idol, an action which he justifies by asserting that God could not possibly be jealous of "an insignificant bit of black wood" (P: 67) and that this is "an act of Christian kindness." (P: 66) Besides, it is obvious that, throughout his whole narrative, Ishmael relentlessly ridicules the presumed superiority of the Christian over the pagan. Thus, he asserts that it is "better to sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian." (P: 43) He also finds in his friendship with Queequeg a sort of alternative to the sterility of the Christian culture: "I'll try a pagan friend, thought I, since Christian kindness has proved but hollow courtesy." (P: 66)

Although Ishmael seems in those instances to criticize Christianity, he actually condemns men's practice of this religion rather than the faith itself. His belief in the existence of a God is obvious in many instances, such as when he affirms that man has a "democratic dignity which, on all hands, radiates without end from God: Himself!

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The great God absolute! The center and circumference of all democracy! His omnipresence, our divine equality.” (P: 123) However, there are also many other instances where his doubt about the existence of a divinity comes to the surface. Therefore he wonders: “would I could mount that whale and leap the top most skies, to see whether the fabled heavens with all their countless tents really lie encamped beyond my mortal sight!” (P: 268) consequently, the only assertion one can make in relation to Ishmael’s position towards religion is that he is ambiguous and much evasive when exposing his view. Ahab, however, is straightforward in his vision of divinity. For him, it is God who has afflicted him through the whale (P: 167), so he wonders: “who’s to doom, when the judge himself is dragged to the bar?” (P: 508) Ahab, consequently, opts for defiance, which is his own version of worship: “... defyingly I worship thee!” (P: 477)

Thus the general attitude towards the Christian religion and God that the narrative of *MD* offers is a complex one. Whereas Ishmael conveys an uncertain, all-embracing and convoluted view of religion and God, Ahab holds that some divinity must exist, but that it is indifferent and malevolent. In both cases however, the established Christian faith is seriously put into question. This undermining of the authority of religion is in fact supported by all Melville’s writings which have never ceased to have the religious and metaphysical issue at its centre.

The treatment of the religious issue is not as easily sensed in *HD*; In fact, there is no single instance in the narrative dealing directly with God or with religion. Nevertheless, the religious nature of Marlow’s experience may be deduced from a number of indirect allusions. Marlow’s journey is in fact suggested as a religious quest and even as a pilgrimage. One cannot miss the biblical allusions that radiate from such words as “whited sepluchre”, “apostles”, “praying”, “devils”, “inferno”, “soul”, “belief”, “voice”, and “pilgrims”, words which are also loaded with irony and deprecation in Marlow’s narrative. Marlow even literary describes his voyage in the African continent as a “very pilgrimage amongst hints for nightmare.” (P: 21) Thus Marlow initial spiritual unrest, which we have alluded to earlier and which is clearly

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associated with the European civilization and culture, takes the form of a religious crisis definitely related to the Christian faith. Just as there is a pilgrimage, there should be an object which embodies the religious recovery or finality that comes at the end of the voyage. However, and in Daphna Erdinast Vulcan's, Marlow's "journey is metaphysical quest which has no object to project itself into: the spiritual drive, the "notion", is there, but the one blank-space on the map, the ultimate destination and object, has now dissolved into the heart of darkness." This means that Marlow's religious search has only the spirit (the "notion") and lacks the object that is at its end. There comes a point, however, in Marlow's narrative where his quest acquires new dimensions.

What is definite in *HD*, though, is the spiritual unrest pervading the Christian culture- and this is only deduced, for Marlow does not openly state it-and the desire to recover from this state by moving to a space which is non-Christian. However, unlike Ishmael who is so admiring in front of Queequeg's pagan faith (although he considers it at times to be "frantic"), Marlow seems to be as unconcerned by the Christian belief as he is by the African pagan one. Hearing, on one night, the sound of some drums in the jungle, he remarks that these sounds were charged "perhaps with as profound as meaning as the sound of bells in a Christian country". (P: 29). At first sight, the statement may suggest that the African pagan faith is put on an equal foot with the Christian one. However, an alert reading reveals the deep irony behind the superficial tolerant and sympathetic tone: Conrad indeed means that the African drums are as meaningless as the Christian bells. This is even more obvious if one looks closely at Conrad's personal view of Christianity: In a letter to Edward Garnett, Conrad confesses his personal dislike of Christianity: "C'est curieux comme j'ai toujours, depuis l'age de 14 ans, détesté la religion chrétiennes, ses doctrines, ses cérémonies, ses réjouissances..." Always writing to Garnett, Conrad invokes Allah's mercy on him: " je vous recommande au Miséricodieux, au Compatissant, a celui que je voudrais voir, parfois, abaisser sur moi son regard.--- je sais bien qu'il ne peut pas grand's chose ... mais enfin" Thus whether it is the Christian, the Muslim or the pagan faith, Conrad is clearly sceptical about all religious beliefs. More than the gods, he seems to



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reject the religious faith itself or spirituality which all religions sustain. Accordingly he affirms that faith is nothing but “un mythe... (ou) les croyances se dissipent comme les brumes sur le rivage”.

Marlow's narrative, like Ishmael's, questions the effectiveness of established religion in guiding and controlling man's conduct and also providing him with satisfactory explanations for his relation with the universe. The arguments that both narratives expose against conventional religious faith is, first, its inability to set up a reasonable relationship with a universe which is fundamentally evil. This hardly shelters man from the cruel whims of the universe. Secondly, *MD* and *HD* claim that religious laws cannot be valid in all circumstances (in savage nature, for example). They are thus relative and insubstantial.

### 1.5. Racial Representation in Moby Dick and Heart of Darkness

The main representations of race provided by the two narratives consist of white and non-white or black characters. In *MD* as in *HD*, although characterization does not exactly correspond to those two racial groups, one can nonetheless perceive that the treatment of the different figures follows this division.

William Ellery Sedgwick observes that the crew of the *Pequod* “has a compact animal or instinctive integrity which gives them a strength that Starbuck lacks, and which sets them off from the slack vulgarity of Stubb and Flask.”

Indeed, the crew in *MD* is often presented through animal imagery. While it is said to be composed of all the races of the earth (whites and non-whites), it is most obviously meant to represent the non-white group as it is headed by the three black harpooners, Queequeg, a cannibal from the south seas, Dago, “a gigantic, coal-black negro-savage”, and Tashtego, an unmixed Indian from Gray Head on Martha's Vineyard.

#### 1.5.1. The Non-White as Beast, Devil and Fool

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Ahab describes the crew as (Turkish cheeks of spotted tawn” , « Pagan leopards--- the unrecking and unworshipping things ,that live ;and seek, and give no reasons for the torrid life they feel ! » (p.167) more than the other crew members, the three harpooners, in Ahab’s as well as Ishmael’s eyes, stand for an animal-like physical force. In spite of the long and passionate passages in which Ishmael stresses Queequeg’s humanity, « civility » (p.45) and sociability, there are some instances in which he emphasizes the animal aspect of his friend as well. Thus he remarks that when Queequeg woke up, «drew back his arm,[and] shook himself all over like a Newfoundland dog just from the water » (p.45).Seeing him actually in water, Ishmael uses again the simile of the dog (used by Marlow too in his description of the Helmsman) observing that Queequeg was « swimming like a dog »(p.75).The other harpooners, too, are described through animal images. Whereas Dagoo is said to have « lion-like tread » and to be « erect as a giraffe » (p.127) Ishmael observes that Tashtego was as « [n]imble as a cat » (p.329).In addition, Ishmael emphasized the physical difference between the white and non-white characters. He notes that « a white man standing before [Dagoo] seemed a white flag come to beg truce a fortress »and that Flask « looked like a chess-man beside him ».In the same instance, Ishmael concludes that, as in all other fields (« the American army and military and merchant navies, and the engineering forces employed in the construction of the American canals and Railroads »), in the American whale fishery « the native American liberally provides the brains, the rest of the world as generously supplying the muscles »(p .127)

Thus brutal physical force is one of the ways through which the non-white group is presented in Ishmael’s narrative. The crew is consequently used as the engine of the *pequod*, while the three black harpooners act as Ahab’s arms. Moreover, even if Ishmael seems in some instances to confer to this physical energy a natural and pure quality, this association of the non-white group with physical force is not always innocent for it is also evil in Ishmael’s narrative.

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The black characters in *MD* represent brutal force and animal-like muteness. While Ishmael is allowed several opportunities to discover Queequeg's faith, habits and even origins (as he presents us with a whole chapter, *Biographical*, about the latter's origins), Queequeg, for his part, is very far from being curious about the religion or culture of his friend. Queequeg, in this sense, lacks involvement in Ahab's voyage, i.e. he lacks what E. M. Forster calls "roundness". Although there is a physical involvement on his part, besides the paramount symbolical importance Ishmael gives to him, Queequeg's character still does not grow throughout the narrative. Moreover, he is not an interlocutor (who has a voice), especially if compared to Starbuck who is able to clearly formulate his philosophy through his own voice. Queequeg, consequently, may be described, to use Forster's terminology, as a "flat character", as a character who; despite the symbolical and ideological significance conferred to him, remains, technically speaking, a minor character. He is unable to express his views and his standpoint in relation to the unfolding tragedy in his own voice. While Starbuck and even Stubb and Flask are allowed to make personal comments on Ahab's quest, Queequeg is prevented from any commentary on the point.

Fleece, the black cook in *MD*, is another instance of non-white inarticulateness or muteness. Forced by Stubb (the second mate of the *pequod*) to speak to the sharks that annoyed him with their noise, Fleece makes a genuine preaching about man's natural voraciousness. The cook's discourse has the resonance of a Christian one, yet it presents other values. One can notice that the black cook, just like Queequeg, does not make that genuine preaching out of his own will, but needs Stubb, the white Christian, in order to deliver it. If Stubb had not been annoyed by the shark's noise, there would have been no preaching, and the black cook's philosophical exposition of his own views related to the nature of man and the universe—which constitutes the main theme of the narrative—would never have been expressed to us. Thus, in spite of making of Fleece and Queequeg representatives of some primitives' peaceful attitude, Melville's narrative sustains the long western tradition of representing the other as a voiceless and unthinking stereotype. Thus the black cook's voice is not deliberate, independent or autonomous one, but a kind of a sub-voice, of a voice hidden by the white man's.

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A similar if not stronger, case of inarticulateness may be recognized in the other two black harpooners, Tashtego and Dago. Their two characters are not treated with any depth (pp: 126-127). If Queequeg is made to embody a “voiceless”, though consistent, philosophy, as we shall see later, these two characters seem to have no voice (as they make no statements, except for some brief, inconsequential and often senseless reflections) and to embody no philosophy at all. Their significance consists of their physical participation in the voyage: their presence may be explained, as Braid remarks, by Melville sole desire to maintain a symbolical trinity in the narrative.

As we shall see in the analysis of characters, the crew, (which is made up of nearly all races, but chiefly the non-white), is also made to suggest some evil chorus. This is especially obvious in its easy adherence to Ahab’s mad chase (it “abundantly responded to the old man’s ire” as if by “evil magic”, p: 188). More than the crew, the three black harpooners are visibly linked to evil. Ishmael observes that they had “a certain magnetism shot into their congenial hearts from inflexible Ahab” (p: 486). Ahab calls them “my sweet cardinals” and “pagan kinsmen”, herein suggesting that the three harpooners are not only a physical but also a spiritual and evil force. In this respect, “the monomaniac old man seemed distrustful of his crew’s fidelity; at least, of nearly all except the pagan harpooners” (p: 502). In this narrative, Ishmael describes one strange happening that occurs to him on board the *pequod*. When he is the act of guiding the ship on the sea, Ishmael is caught into a hellish drowsiness that nearly makes him lose the ship’s control. While looking at the three harpooners who, as they “narrated their unholy adventures, their tales of terror told in words of mirth” and “wildly gesticulated with their huge pronged forks and dippers” when stirring up the burning try-works, resembled some of devils igniting hell’s flames. The scene itself clearly suggests hell. Thus the harpooners are compared to demons feeding the “capricious emblazoning” of the ship which “groaned and dived, and yet steadfastly shot her red hell further and further into the blackness of the sea”. The hellish nature of the scene is confirmed by Ishmael being suddenly struck by some strange vision, and unable to see anything but “a jet gloom [...] made ghastly by flashes of redness” (p:

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404). Non-white characters are made to suggest evil and diabolism in many other instances. The three black harpooners' blood is used to temper Ahab's special harpoon in the name of the devil (p: 462). Thus, the black blood, which is the emblem or the essence of the black race, is suggested as related to the devil. The black race is consequently clearly associated with evil and inhumanity. In a similar incident, Marlow cannot bear his shoes because full with the black helmsman's blood, a fact which suggests that he is repelled by the black race. In MD, Ishmael emphasizes the idea of the devilish nature of the black race and observes that relieved against the ghostly light, the gigantic jet negro, Dago, loomed up the thrice his real stature, and seemed the black cloud from which the thunder had come. The parted mouth of Tshtego revealed his shark white teeth, which strangely gleamed as if they too had been tripped by corposant; while lit up by the preternatural light, Queequeg's tattooing burned like Satanic blue flames on his body. (P: 475)

Like his black fellows in MD, the "tiger-yellow" - complexioned Parsee fortune teller is presented as the dark and evil spirit of the voyage. This character, which may be compared to a devil for his gratuitous and inhuman malevolence, is Ishmael describes him as having "a white tooth evilly protruding from its steel-like lips". He and his four companions had a tiger-yellow complexion peculiar to that race "notorious for a certain diabolism of subtilty, and by some honest white mariners supposed to be the paid spies and secrete confidential agents on the water of the devil, their lord..." (P: 216). He is even suggested to be the devil himself in many instances; Stubb supposes that he is "the devil in disguise" (p: 315). This is further highlighted by Ishmael's frequent associations of Fedallah with fire. When the special harpoon that Ahab orders to be made is forged by the blacksmith, and the forge is shooting up its intense straight flame, the Parsee passes silently, and bows over his head towards the fire, seeming thus to be "invoking some curse or some blessing on the toil." (p: 461) again, when a thunder strikes the ship and some fire catches it, the Parsee kneels in Ahab's front beneath the doubloon and the flame (p:476). Moreover, his cruelty stems from the fact the relentlessly assists ferocious Ahab in his horrific plan to kill the white whale.

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Thus, while the black characters allude to depraved physical energy, the Parsee is definitely viewed in the narrative as the essential evil spirit accompanying Ahab in his chase. Like all the other non-white characters, the Parsee is not allowed to comment on the voyage. Every scene in which he appears he is silent and suggests a mysterious and supernatural malice. His existence, it is actually hinted, is improbable. The only instance where the Parsee is allowed to speak is when he makes that prophesy about Ahab's death, reminding us thus of that black boy in *HD* who announces, in a tone of "scathing contempt", that "Mistah Kurtz –he dead" (p: 100).

Animal imagery and hellish or evil associations are combined with the derision that sometimes colors Ishmael's attitude to the non-white figures in his narrative. one instance of this may be found in his dealing with Queequeg's religious practices in the first chapter ("the Ramadan", for instance). In this instance, Ishmael, although showing great effort at understanding and accepting the faith of the other, is unable to conceal his disparaging attitude towards the habits of Queequeg. Although he finally affirms that men are free to worship whatever they wish and succeeds in accepting Queequeg's belief, there is nonetheless a note of derision and superiority in his assessment. As noted earlier, mockery can also be sensed when he is allowed to "understand" and "accept" Queequeg's "comical" faith, while the latter is deprived of the privilege of discovering and pondering on the former's religion. Queequeg looks, in this sense, more like some unknown species of creatures that Ishmael attempts to discover than as a full individual able to learn about others' religions. The same attitude may be inferred from the scene showing Queequeg about to die (*Queequeg in his coffin*). Here again, although Ishmael loads the scene with deep spiritual considerations, one cannot miss the sarcastic tone of this scene. He notes that "the tattooed savage was crawling about amid that dampness and slime like a green spotted lizard at the bottom of a well." (p: 451). Apart from Ishmael's inferred mocking in his description of Queequeg's ritualistic proceeding to prepare his coffin, what makes the scene sarcastic, rather than spiritual, is the fact that Queequeg finally does not die. Thus the long and detailed proceeding, which the "savage" had undertaken with

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considerable effort, seem to have a mere instructive or even entertaining purpose in the narrative.

As said earlier, although Ishmael in *MD* seems essentially to emphasize the non-white character as pure, peaceful and innocent ones, they nonetheless also suggest simple animal physical force and evil. They are equally amide to provide the narrative with instructive but also entertaining material which makes for the “light” aspect of Ishmael’s adventure. In other word; the tragic and morose part of Ishmael’s voyage, which in mainly fed by Ahab’s chase, is meant to be slightly alleviated by some light-hearted and colorful considerations related to the pagan non-white figures.

What we have attempted to stress so far is the discrepancy in the presentation and treatment of characters in *MD*. This disparity, which corresponds to the racial difference of these characters, lies mainly in the apparent, even if unintentional denigrating portrayal of the non-white characters, in the unequal quality of expression conveyed to the two racial groups and also in the unbalanced attitude of the narrator to the different figures belonging to these groups. A similar and even more explicitly critical treatment of the non-white characters may be identified in *HD*.

Animal imagery is also easily detected and perhaps more explicitly rendered in the portrayal of the black natives in Marlow’s narrative. Interestingly, just as Ishmael compares Queequeg to a dog, Marlow feels that Helmsman looks like “a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind legs” (p: 52) comparing Queequeg and Helmsman to a dog may allude not so much to their savageness as to their fidelity and helpfulness, but this does not exclude the disparaging hints. Ishmael notes that his friend “would gladly die for [him]” (p: 67) while Marlow misses his “helmsman because he steered for [him]” (p: 73). Marlow observes : “that fool-helmsman, his hands on the spokes , was lifting his knees high, stamping his feet, champing his mouth, like a reined-in horse”.(p: 64) The smile aims at sarcasm but also at portraying the Helmsman as a physical force just like Queequeg. His importance for Marlow comes thus from his being “a help – an instrument” (p: 73). This is even clearer with the other natives who are described as having “bone, muscles, a wild

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vitality, an immense energy of movement". They were thus "a great comfort to look at" (p: 20). However, while Ishmael's associating the black harpooners to the animal world suggests authentic physical force and natural purity and innocence (though causing a denigrating effect), Marlow's comparing the natives to animals undermines their humanity. He remarks that the worst of it was "this suspicion of their note being inhuman" (P: 51).

Like the non-white characters in *MD*, the black natives in *HD* are associated to evil. A clear hellish atmosphere is sensed in the grove of death when the dying slaves are portrayed as phantoms. When Marlow describes the natives in terms of "a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling", he uses not only animal imagery but also builds up a nightmarish atmosphere. Hell is also conjured up when Marlow calls the Helmsman "the poor devil" and the natives "obedient worshippers". Moreover, like Ishmael who stresses the remarkable response of the three harpooners to Ahab, which sets them apart from the other members, Marlow draws attention to the difference between the black natives' reaction to an unknown part of the wilderness and the whites'. He observes that "It was curious to see the contrast expressions of the white men and the black fellows of our crew who were as much strangers to that part of the river as we". While the whites had "a curious look of being painfully shocked", the black men's "faces were naturally quiet" (p: 57).

In addition to this, what has been identified in Ishmael's narrative as a mocking or overtly sarcastic attitude towards non-white characters may also be identified in Marlow's narratives. To select just brief instances of this, we would only refer to Marlow's calling the Helmsman "an improved specimen" besides comparing him to a dog with a feather hat. The same sarcastic treatment is clearly discernible in the portrayal of the natives whose faces are seen by Marlow as "grotesque masques" (p: 20). Moreover, the non-white evil is different from the white one in its (the African jungle's) capacity to subvert moral ideals into evil ones, as has been noted by Chinua Achebe in his article about Conrad's "racism". Black characters in *HD* are



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consequently made to express mysterious evil and are presented as naturally or biologically different from the whites.

### 1.6. A Womanless Fiction: Women in the periphery in *MD* and *HD*

Both *MD* and *HD* are remarkably short of female characters. *HD* seems however to be less “womanless” than *MD*. Female characters are thus represented in Ishmael’s narrative by Aunt Charity, while they are represented by Marlow’s Aunt, the two company’s women, the Black Mistress and the Intended in *HD*.

While *MD* is clearly short of women, female characters are actually present, though in a peripheral position to the plot in *HD*. Certainly, one is right to ask what a woman could do on board a whaler sailing around the globe, or a steamer sent for a mission to the center of Africa. However, it is obvious that in both novels central topics transcend those of exotic adventure novels. Both narratives treat rather more serious issues like the racial, religious, political and philosophical problems. Consequently, the absence of female figures from these complex novels can only be noteworthy. In fact, feminine characters are not only suggested as insignificant as regards the main plot in *MD* and *HD*, they are also openly criticized. They are thus presented as wooden figures rather than full characters. Besides men-women relationships are suggested as destructive in both narratives.

In *MD*, women are approached as simple stereotypes. There is no effort on the part of the writer to present them with any depth or complexity. They are thus made to represent the traditional and superficial clichés of affection and physical beauty. Captain Bildad’s sister, who provides the *Pequod* with what is needed before it sails, and who is described as “charitable” and “kindhearted” is literally named “Aunt Charity”. She is thus made to embody the stereotypical feminine feature of Kindheartedness or charity. Apart from this single female character, Ishmael observes that women in New Bedford “bloom like their own red roses” and that the young girls “breathe such musk, their sailor sweethearts smell them miles off shore”

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(p: 51). Women here are only rose and musk odors. Elsewhere, one sailor compares sea waves to women (p: 176), suggesting the beauty and sensuality of women.

Women are clearly kept as representing the traditional simple features of beauty and affection. They are, unsurprisingly, of little effect on the main plot of the narrative. Moreover, men-women relationships in *MD* and *HD* are suggested either as creating sadness and antagonism, or simply as uninteresting.

It is worth observing that men-women relationships seem to be completely outside Ishmael's scope of interest. His narrative, which is fraught with every sort of topic, amazingly evades the most explored and prolific subject in literature (especially in Romantic literature), that of love. In fact, whenever Ishmael accidentally touches upon the relationship between men and women he is not without misogyny. He notes, in this sense, that "as ashore, the ladies often cause the most terrible duels among their rival admirers; just so with the whales, who sometimes come to deadly battle, and all for love." (p: 376)

Men-women interaction is not only a source of trouble but of sadness too, as it ends in pain. The miscellaneous extracts that precede the first chapter of Ishmael's narrative include a brief passage taken from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales* (1873) which tells about a woman who "came to bespeak a monument for her first love, who had been killed by a whale in the Pacific ocean, no less than forty years ago." (p: 17) The same ideas of death and pain are conveyed in the marble tablets set up in the memory of some drowned sailors that Ishmael sees in the Chapel, and one of which reads "THIS TABLET IS ERECTED TO HIS MEMORY BY HIS WIDOW" (p: 52). This observation becomes more articulate when Stubb, attempting to interpret the drawings on the doubloon (which Ahab promised to the first who sees the whale), sees the signs of the zodiac. Reaching the Virgin sign, he exclaims: "... Virgo, the virgin ! that's our first love ; we marry and think to be happy for aye, when pop comes Libra, or the Scales —happiness weighed and found wanting..." (P: 412).

Taking into consideration these instances where women are indirectly mentioned, it is clear that the attitude towards women that is suggested through *MD* is one of

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antipathy and mistrust. While women are definitely portrayed as superficial and simple beings, relationships between men and women, in particular those of love or marriage; are short-lived, painful and causing trouble in Ishmael's narrative.

The female figures present in *HD* reveal the same striking simplicity and superficiality. First, Marlow's Aunt, who has the naive conviction that the European explorations carried out in Africa aim at "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways", makes Marlow assume that women are queerly "out of touch with truth ... they live in a world of their own, and there had been never anything like it, and never can be. It is too beautiful altogether, and if there were to set it up it would go to pieces before the first sunset." (p : 18)

Women are "out of touch" with reality and are even made to belong to a world of magic. In other words, women are not portrayed as substantial characters. Their presence in Marlow's narrative is consequently purely symbolic. The two women that Marlow meets in the Company — who strikingly contrast with Aunt Charity in *MD* as they all appear just before the two narrators set for their voyage, are said to be "guarding the door of Darkness" (p: 16). They are thus made to symbolize mystery and evil. Kurtz's Mistress is also viewed as an element of wilderness. She is "savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent". In this way, the magical end "immense wilderness seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul." (P: 87) The Mistress suggests in this passage sorrow, passion, fecundity but mystery as well. Although expressing deep feelings and significant notions, the mistress is not portrayed as an individual but as an "image", an idea, a symbol of the jungle. Similarly, although less obviously, women are connected to magic and unreality in *MD* through Ishmael's references to the mermaids in his narrative.

Furthermore, these women seem to be kept far away from the central tragedy in both narratives. In *MD*, Aunt Charity appears only before the ship sails. The Intended, is presented, in *HD*, after the voyage, while Marlow's Aunt is seen before the voyage then after the voyage. They are consequently confined only to "that beautiful world of their own" (*HD*, p: 69). Moreover, they are sometimes presented as unsubstantial

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when they are made to allude to an unreal world. In this sense, they appear more as ideas or concepts that the two writers intend to express than full characters as their male counterparts. In addition to this, their relationship with men is always implied as bringing about, or at least as being associated with suffering, sorrow and breakdown. This is not true only for *MD* and *HD*, but also for an important number of the two writers' work.

Women are approached by Conrad in a symbolical manner not only in *HD* but in all his works. Las Vergnas note that Conradian women are of two types: the simplest (in the first works, like *HD*) and the most complex (in later works). He also observes that even if Conrad's complex female characters were attempts at affecting some depth and strength. Considering what has been presented earlier, this seems to be the case with *HD*. This is even more obvious if we reflect upon one of Conrad's remarks in *Chance* (1913) where he observes that "inertia in woman is always enigmatic and therefore menacing. It makes one pause", and adds that a "woman may be a fool, a sleepy fool, an agitated fool, a two awfully noxious fool, and she may even be simply stupid. But she is never dense. She's never made of wood through and through as some men are."

### 1.6.1. Nature as a Woman

Depicted as dangerous and cruel, the sea in *MD* is masculine. However, this description is only linked with its depths. The sea surface is, by opposition, associated with femininity. Ishmael thus often refers to "the fair of the pleasant sea" (p: 300), to its "sweet mystery" and "gently awful stirrings" (p: 456), its "smooth, show heaving swells" and to "the tranquil beauty and brilliancy of the ocean's skin" (p: 463).

Depicting the movements of an old-aged whale, Ishmael draws a comparison between nature or the sea on the one hand, and a woman on the other. He observes thus that, in his last days, an old whale "will have no one near him but Nature herself; and her he takes to wife in the wilderness of waters, and the best of wives she is, though she keeps so many moody secrets." (p: 377). Besides the sea, the wild whale

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displays some feminine beauty. Thus, because its tail's flexions are said to be "invariably marked by exceeding grace", "no fairy's arm can transcend it." (p: 361)

Although not being concerned with the sea but with the jungle, the anonymous narrator further mentions, in the opening passages of *HD*, the feminine quality of the sea by noting that "there is nothing mysterious to a seaman unless it be the sea itself, which is the mistress of his existence..."(p: 08). Besides the sea, Marlow also describes later how he was "charmed" and "fascinated" by the African river. Not only the river, but the wilderness as a whole is suggested, in Marlow's narrative, to possess a feminine quality. In this respect, Marlow refers to that black man who is horribly punished for being suspected to have caused a fire. Remaining sick for several days, Marlow then observes that "the wilderness without a sound took him into its bosom again."(p.34)

Just as in *MD*, the wilderness is consequently compared, in *HD*, to a woman. This is even more obvious in Marlow's description of Kurtz's disintegration in the jungle. He thus comments that the wilderness, like an infatuated mistress, "had caressed" Kurtz; "it had taken him, embraced him" and "sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation." (p: 69) The parallel drawn between the wilderness and some loving woman materializes in the Black Mistress, who is said to reflect the jungle. Marlow thus notes that, just like the African jungle, the Black Mistress "was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent". He adds that "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." (p: 87)

The two narratives present thus a number of significant similarities as well as differences in their handling of the gender issue. First, *MD* and *HD* hold in common a general negative approach to women. Even if they differ in the degree of explicitness in the handling of this issue, feminine characters are suggested, in both narratives, as simple and uninteresting figures. Their presence, in *MD* as in *HD*, is purely symbolic.

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Moreover, men-women relationships are presented as painful, short lived and destructive.

Both narratives replace this unsuccessful association between men and women by a union between men. As we have discussed the point in a precedent chapter, effective fidelity and passion are possible, both in *MD* and *HD*, only among men who are able to understand the miseries of one another. Deep loyalty and faith are recommended among men, while women are dismissed from central arena as creatures that are unable to understand or even to relieve men's pains. They should, therefore, remain in that "world of their own" (*HD* p.69).

Women are thus dismissed from the two central plots of both narratives, but femininity is suggested, both by Ishmael and Marlow, to be present in nature. The sea and the jungle, which both narrators and heroes get in close contact with, are described with strong feminine connotations. Nature and men become, in this sense, substitutes for women. While we have observed that some biographical facts may be at the origin of Melville's and Conrad's misogynous attitude that is unfolded through their two narratives, it is also important to stress the presence of a number of significant divergences in the handling of the same issue. Whereas both narratives are critical towards women, *MD*'s striking denial of the presence of women (absence of feminine characters) is countered by *HD*'s open criticism of the some women present in the plot, stressing that they are "out of touch with reality" and that they are associated with evil (the two women). In addition to this, it is worth noting that whereas *MD*'s women are middle-aged (Aunt Charity), *HD*'s women are young (the Intended, the Black Mistress). Thus *MD* presents the woman as a mother, while *HD* presents her more as a young mistress or fiancée as a mother.

### 1.7. Conclusion

*Heart of Darkness* and *Moby Dick* are both narratives that have proved to be extraordinary in form, style, and symbolism; although years separate the two

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novels a lot of common perspective have motivated the two authors in conducting these masterpieces, from the quest for the truth, religion, racial representation, to women and nature the stories that lay bare in the pages of the narratives have managed to not only entertain the reader but also to take him into spiritual and psychological journey that may mark him for the rest of his life. Heart of Darkness and Moby Dick are literary works that need to be wholeheartedly analyzed for both of them reflect the author's conscious and unconscious thought that consequently demand thorough consideration.

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## **2. Chapter Two: Form and Style in Moby Dick and Heart of Darkness**

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## **Chapter Two: Form and Style in Moby Dick and Heart of Darkness**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Moby Dick and Heart of Darkness are both novels that show a great deal of complexity yet the similarities that are shared between the two make the two narratives worth interpretation and scrutiny. The present chapter aims to address three of the novels' aspects: characterization, narration and point of view, and style, it attempts present a comparison between the two works projecting the similarities that make them stylistically familiar although years and historical changes separate the two.

### **2.2. Characterization**

The characters that come to life on Moby Dick and Heart of Darkness are one of a kind and the way they behave and conduct is reflective of the effectiveness of the two authors.

#### **2.2.1. Ahab and Kurtz: Two Tragic Heroes and Godlike dictators**

Comparing Ahab with Kurtz comes down to examining the most striking and crucial resemblance between the two novels. Besides being the central figures in the two stories. Both Ahab and Kurtz are the most original, controversial, and charismatic creations of the two novelists. Both of them are tragic heroes whose tragedy stems from their inner imperfections or from their "tragic flaws". Moreover their inflated pride or what is called "hubris" leads them both to defy higher powers (divine, cosmic, or moral ones). This is manifested in the two protagonists' tyrannical and absolutist attitude towards others, an absolutism that borders on self-deification, and to their behaving as if they were holy beings.

Furthermore, neither of them is exclusively self-spoken. they are more presented by the narrator and by other characters than through their own reported speech. This similarity should not prevent us , however, from observing that the amount of Ahab's monologue is more important than Kurtz's which may be explained by the influence

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of the theatre on MD (especially the soliloquies ) and by the modernist technique of the unreliable narrator in HD.

As said earlier, Ahab and Kurtz are tragic heroes, in the sense that they are victims of their personal imperfections. However, the imperfections are not flaws, such a jealousy or cowardice, which usually provoke the downfall of tragic characters. These imperfections stem rather from the opposition between two major but antagonistic human attributes, i.e. reason and emotion. Pointing out this conflict in Melville's heroes, Merlyn Bowen comments that:

For Melville, as for others before him, the tragic hero is to be known first of all by the greatness of his gifts, by his heroic endowment of passion, energy and will. HE is man magnified. But he is also man-idealized no one-sided monster of thought or feeling but a harmonious individual whose varied gifts exist, in the beginning in a right proportion to each other. It is not enough that he be "a man of greatly superior natural force" he must be endowed more both "a globular brain and a ponderous heart." He must feel life more intensely than ordinary men, but he must also look more searchingly into it.

This opposition between brain and heart holds an important place in both narratives. Both Ahab and Kurtz are portrayed and intelligent, but also as passionate and emotional men. Ahab is said to possess "a globular brain and a ponderous heart".(p.87) while Kurtz is held to be "a universal genius"(p.103), to have "a concentrated" intelligence but to conceal "monstrous passions" as well (p.95). The rational side of Ahab appears in his great mental capacities. At one point Ishmael asserts that in his "board madness, not one jot of his great natural intellect had perished" (p.186) This is equally suggested through the passage on his "intellectual superiority" (p.151). Similarly, Kurtz intelligence is stressed more than once. The Brickmaker asserts that

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Europe needed men with “higher intelligence” (p.36) and that Kurtz was one of them, while the intended regrets “his generous mind” (p.109).

However, as has been noted, this emphasis on the logical and rational nature of the two protagonists is significantly linked with their being emotive. While Ahab is shown to pursue his fiery vengeance with a remorseless spirit, he is nonetheless made to yield, even if briefly, to regret, shortly before his fatal encounter with the whale. In “*The Symphony*”, Ahab confesses to strike his longing for his young wife and only child, for a peaceful and serene life, regretting thus the tumultuous course he took:

“When I think of this life I have led; the desolation of solitude is has been, the masoned, walled-town of a Captain’s exclusiveness, which admits but small entrance to any sympathy from the green country without--oh, weariness! Heaviness !” (p.507)

This instant of regret recurs at the very last moment in Ahab’s life, when he is about to be destroyed by whale: “Oh, lonely death on lonely life! Oh, now I feel my topmost greatness lies in my topmost grief”(p.534). On the other hand, Kurtz is not given as much time to comment on his lifetime. However to express the essential of his vision of his life when he “sums up” and “judges” the “adventures of his soul on this earth” (p.100) through his last “burst of sincerity” (which echoes Ahab’s confession): “The horror” (p.100). The remorse of the two protagonists, akin to some religious confession to a priest, trims down their monster-like aspect, rather, stressing the human and fragile side of their character.

This human aspect is reinforced by some other details related the two protagonists, and unfolded to us through other characters. Ahab’s complex character is pointed out by Peleg who observes:

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 ...He’s a queer man, Captain Ahab---so some think--but a good one....

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He's grand, ungodly god-like man, Captain Ahab; does not speak much; but, when he does speak, then you may well listen. Hark ye, be forewarned; 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 hand in mightier, stranger res than whales.(p.92)

He adds that Ahab was “a good man--not a pious, old man ... but a swearing good man”. He adds that Ahab “was never very jolly” and that “on the passage home, he was a little out of his mind a spell”; but he explains that “it was the sharp shooting pains in his bleeding stump that brought that about”. He concludes that “stricken, blasted, if he be, Ahab has his humanities” (p.93). Captain Peleg also informs Ishmael that Ahab has “a sweet, resigned” wife and a child. Similarly, Kurtz has a “beautiful” fiancée and is said to possess gifts in painting and music. Just like Ahab, his physical suffering and deterioration are referred to more than once. All these details add to the humane aspect of the two protagonists, who are not monstrous creatures of thought, but complex beings, able to intensely think and feel at the same time.

The human aspect of Ahab and Kurtz, however, is dwarfed by a narcissistic vision of their persons and their self-centeredness. Before Ahab appears in the narrative, Ishmael meditates on the fascinating nature of water, and mentions Narcissus, who because “he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into and drowned”; then he comments: “But the same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all.”(p.23). The meditation clearly alludes to Ahab, who, by seeking a sea creature, seems to look deep into the ocean which reflected his own image. And like Narcissus, the cost of this introspection was to be his ultimate destruction. Elsewhere and less obliquely, Ishmael affirms that “Ahab's soul, shot up in the carved trunk of his body, there fed upon the sullen paws of its gloom” (p.157). Similarly, Marlow asserts that Kurtz's “soul was mad. Being alone in wilderness, it had looked into itself, and, by heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad” (p.95). Kurtz's

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concentration on his self can also be sensed in his possessiveness “My intended, my ivory, my station, my river” (p.70). The same egotism can be discerned in Ahab’s refusal to help the captain of the Rachel (chapter128). Egocentrism and introspection constitute the main features that distinguish Ahab and Kurtz from the other characters and make them deserve their position as central figures. They also seem to redeem them at times in the eyes of Ishmael and Marlow.

### **2.2.2. Ahab, Kurtz, and the Others: Constructing a Central Consciousness**

The two protagonists do not appear immediately after the action begins, but are progressively introduced through some short, general, and sometimes ambiguous testimonies made by a number of characters. As noted earlier, Ahab is first introduced by Captain Peleg. Ahab’s character’s is described as dangerous by the strange Elijah, who warns Ishmael against sailing with him. Besides, Starbuck views Ahab as a madman, while Stubb judges him “queer” man (p.133). Minor characters, such as the different ships captains, also make some observations on Ahab. In HD, a similar gradual presentation introduces Kurtz. First, the accountant informs Marlow that Kurtz was “a very remarkable person” he “sends in as much ivory as all the others put together” (p.27). Then, the manager reports to Marlow that “Mr. Kurtz was the best agent he had, an exceptional man, of the greatest importance to the company” (p.32). Later, Kurtz is presented by the brick maker as “a prodigy... an emissary of pity, and science, and progress, and devil knows what else.” (p.36). The Harlequin observes to Marlow that “you don’t talk with Kurtz- you listen to him” (p.76), and then passionately confides to him how “this man enlarged his mind” (p.78). Even after his death, comments on Kurtz -’s character still imparted to us. Man with an official manner comes to visit Marlow and declares to him that “Kurtz’s knowledge of unexplored regions must have been necessarily extensive and peculiar- owing to his great abilities and to the deplorable circumstances in which he has been placed” (p.103). Kurtz’s cousin testifies that Kurtz “was essentially a great musician” (p.103). Afterwards a journalist intimates to Marlow that “Kurtz’s proper sphere ought to have been politics” (p.104). Finally, Kurtz’s intended ardently asserts that her regretted

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fiancé “drew men toward him by what was best in them.” (p.108) and that he had “greatness”, a “generous mind” and a “noble heart” (p.109).

By presenting the two main protagonists through other characters’ reports on them, both characters and narrators participate in the building up of his figure. Thus the concept of the protagonist originally envisaged as an enclosed and concentrated figure or persona will go beyond these confines, and become an all-pervading conscience or spirit. The characters of Ahab and Kurtz are not introduced only when the two protagonists are physically present in the two narratives but are felt as consciences from the very beginning of the two accounts till very end. This omnipresence is maintained both by the narrator’s and the other characters’ presentation of these two main figures. Accordingly, the central discourse that is supposed to emanate from the person of the protagonist as a central character does not only dissolve into many discourses, as we have already noted, but into the whole narratives as well. Meaning becomes, as our analysis of narrative structure will also show, centrifugal, i.e. spread out over the whole narrative.

Moreover, meaning is spread out from the centre to the periphery in the two narratives by the method of contrasting the different characters with the two central protagonists. As has been pointed out in the chapter devoted to characterization, both MD and HD present significant oppositions between the portrayal of the two protagonists and the other characters.

Ahab’s rigid and monomaniacal character is clearly opposed to the “virtue and right-mindedness” of Starbuck, to the “invulnerable jollity of indifference and recklessness” of Stubb, and to the “pervading mediocrity” of Flask (p.188). Ahab’s philosophical defiance is also contrasted to the pointlessness of Fedallah’s evil, and Queequeg’s primitive wisdom. His proud unyielding nature is equally meant to be opposed to Ishmael’s humble and reconciling character. Moreover, Ahab’s “heroic” madness is contrasted with Pip’s flimsy insanity.

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Similarly, Kurtz's character which is associated with high moral ideals is distinguished from the immoral Manager, Brickmaker and Accountant, and from the innocent and unthinking Helmsman. Kurtz's unreserved nature is also contrasted with the self-restrained cannibals.

Just like the variety in the presentation of the protagonists, this method of contrasting characters destroys the confines of the protagonists' figures and creates an interaction between them and the other characters. Thus by opposing these different attitudes meaning is again diffused through wider spaces in the two narratives. The variety in the presentation of the two protagonists is intensified by the narrator's and other characters' oblique and confusing comments on the central figures. All the different testimonies on the two protagonists are tinted with uncertainty, ambiguity and shadiness. No one of those who attempt to describe Ahab and Kurtz does so accurately or clearly. This adds to the general sense of mystery and incomprehension, as well as the general haziness that surround the two protagonists. Through less flamboyant, Ishmael and Marlow form another enigmatic pair that deserves close analysis.

### **2.2.3. Queequeg and Helmsman: The "Wise man" and the "Improved Specimen"**

For James Baird, Queequeg represents the element of "ideality" and the "man of wisdom". His ideality stems from the many instances in which Ishmael presents him as patient, understanding, helpful, satisfied, and peaceful ("entirely at his ease; preserving the utmost serenity; content with his own companionship; always equal to himself" (p.66). This is especially clear in the first chapters of the narrative. Thus Queequeg, the emblem of Oriental primitive culture, represents a sound and consistent philosophy that seems to be put forward by Ishmael as a plausible alternative to Ahab's monomaniacal and stern philosophy.

The helmsman is Queequeg's counterpart in many ways. Like Queequeg the Helmsman is completely absent as an interlocutor and lacks autonomous involvement in the central discourse. As has been noted in an earlier chapter, Ishmael's own



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interpretation, or explanation of Queequeg's character is essential to its appreciation; so is Marlow's deciphering of the Helmsman's look when the latter is dying. Marlow notes that "the intimate profundity of that look (the Helmsman ) gave (him) when he received his hurt remains to his day in (his) memory- like a claim of distant kinship affirmed in a supreme moment." (p.73) In this sense, both Queequeg and the Helmsman represent mute philosophies that seem to need Ishmael and Marlow's voice, understanding, and discriminative mind to unfold their position vis-à-vis central issues, such as race or the metaphysical question.

The Helmsman's disturbed death is further emphasized by the general troubled atmosphere. Thus Marlow notes the "tumult of angry and warlike yells" and the "tremulous and prolonged wail of mournful fear and utter despair" which seemed to have followed "the flight of the last hope from earth"(p.66). What we may consequently deduce from comparing Queequeg to the Helmsman is that while both characters draw near one another in their lack of autonomy in the two narratives, Queequeg differs from his counterpart in his ability to represent the "wise man". The Helmsman, by contrast, stands only for some incomprehensible, disturbed and "frenzied" existence. As our analysis of race in the two narratives has shown, while MD presents the non-white pagan world as a world of wisdom, happiness and serenity, HD describes it as frantic, dark and nightmarish one. Thus the analysis of this pair of characters emphasizes significant points related to the visions unfolded through the two narratives. Similarly, comparing between the characters of Pip (MD) and the Harlequin (HD) will disclose important implications.

### **2.2.4. Fadallah, the Manager, and Other Petty Devils**

The characters in HD to whom Fedallah, the Parsee fortune teller, may be compared to are those of the two knitting women, the accountant, the Brickmaker, and the Manager. The affinity which all these characters bear with Melville's Parsee lies in their mysterious nature, devotion to evil, their amorality, and their seeming futility. As noted in the analysis of race, Fedallah is presented as an unreal person. When appears

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for the first time, he seems “fresh formed out of air” (p.216). His presence in the plot as an actor being unconvincing, he is not to be considered as a dynamic element, but as a symbolic figure which represents evil and mystery. His character is introduced to us in the guise of a devil, as he is said to belong to “a race notorious for a certain diabolism of suability” (p.216)

Like Fedallah, the two women whom Marlow meets before his voyage have no effect on the development of events, but their presence in the narrative creates the same sense of mystery, evil, and the supernatural. While Parsee foretells Ahab’s death in a ambiguous prophecy, the two women in HD seem to foreshadow the gloomy events that Marlow will experience later in the jungle. Whereas one seemed “uncanny and fateful”, the second appeared to be “introducing continuously to the unknown”. Furthermore, the descriptions of the Parsee as well as the two women suggest evil and mystery (the black colour). Ishmael notes that the fortune-teller wears a “jacket of black cotton (...) with white black trousers of the same dark stuff” and “a glistening white turban” (p.216). Similarly, the two women knit black wool, and one of them wears “a starched white affair on her head” (p.15). We may even see in these descriptions some allusion to a sort of Oriental wickedness (the turban). Thus just like Fedallah who has the appearance of some evil and mysterious creature, the two women seem to Marlow to be “guarding the door of Darkness” (p.16).

The Accountant, like fantastic like Fedallah whose first appearance on the ship is presented as “fresh formed out of air” , is described by Marlow as “a sort of vision”, a “miracle” (p.25). Moreover, just as the supernatural competence possessed by Fedallah (which is revealed in the fulfillment of his prophecy at the window the chase) makes him weird and unearthly, the Accountant’s self-control and competence dehumanizes his character. Like a devil, the Accountant’s reveals a gratuitous and deep hatred of the natives (he affirms: “...one comes to hate those savages - hate them to the death.” (p.27)

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More than the Accountant and the Brickmaker, Fedallah's real counterpart seems to be the manager. Unlike Kurtz, the manager had "no genius... No learning, and no intelligence" (p.31). He could only inspire "uneasiness" (p.31) and "an atmosphere so vile" (p.89). Already at the Outer situation, Marlow foresees that it "would become acquainted with a flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly." (p.23) His feeling is confirmed later, the he is able to notice that only glance at the inner Station "was enough to let you see the flabby devil was running that show" (p.30). Although he is only figuratively compared to a devil, while the Parsee is more than once suggested to be a real devil or some unearthly malicious creature, the Manager's character seems to be a pure case of evil. Marlow reflects: "Perhaps there was nothing within him" (p.31), seeming to contrast him with Kurtz who had some ideals. Thus Marlow turns to Kurtz, his other "choice of nightmares" for relief (p.89).

Despite the fact that the Parsee is associated with devilish actions while his counterparts in *HD* are only symbolically suggested as being diabolic, these characters meet in the fact that they incarnate evil, a theme which is central in both novels. Fedallah, the two women, the Accountant, the Brickmaker and the Manager represents evil, but a futile one, that of an inferior standard. Thus the meaning of these characters' presence in the narratives seems to lie in the two writers' desire to contrast the with the central protagonists. By contrast to these figures' pointless and absurd evil, Ahab and Kurtz represent a heroic evil, an evil of the Miltonian kind.

### 2.3. Symbols and Language

one of the most outstanding characteristic that the two narrative share is symbolism, the hidden meaning between the novels' lines are numerous and no matter how different the writings are, the similarities shared in these two masterpieces are remarkable. The language used to express the thoughts and deliver the plot is, too, astonishing proving the simplicity and the complexity of the authors which indeed make them one of a kind.

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### 2.3.1. The Infernal City

Being a centre of the white Christian faith and materialist culture, the city in MD and in HD is the symbol of spiritual death. Certainly Melville's and Conrad's visions do not perfectly meet in relation to this subject. As we have seen in our study of race, while Melville totally rejects this emblem of the white Christian civilization, which can be deduced not only from MD, but from his other works as well, Conrad only questions it. Thus Marlow does not go ashore for a chance and a howl with the natives and does not die like Kurtz, but returns to "the city". By contrast, Ishmael is saved by the coffin-life-buoy of Queequeg, the non-Christian black cannibal. Moreover, unlike Marlow, Ishmael does not return to "the city" as the narrative ends only with his being rescued by a ship. The Infernal City drives both Ishmael and Marlow away, far from its spiritless and meaningless existence; from its sick and deadly atmosphere.

In this sense, the two narrators will have to search for another kind of existence, with another set of symbols, purer and more innocent.

### 2.3.2. Symbols of the "Urwelt"

The alternative to the Infernal City for Ishmael and Marlow is the sea and the jungle, respectively. Both sea and jungle represent the primeval world, or, to use a German term by James Baird, the "Urwelt", "the original world shaped from the original universe". The sea and the jungle are symbols because they are repeated several times in both narratives, and because they are clearly linked with the central themes of these narratives (like the quest for truth theme). But they are also "archetypes" because they do not recur only in MD and HD, but in many other works of literature.

The sea and the jungle (or the forest) are the most substantial and significant symbols long meditated upon by Melville and Conrad. Both writers have frequently generously used those two figures in their writings.

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In HD, the symbolical equivalents of the sea are the river and the forest, and they are likewise emblems of the primitive world. The jungle, with its forest and river, is a symbol of the primitive world but not the eternal timeless world, as is the sea in *MD*. It rather represents another “unknown planet” where Marlow and his companions are unable to understand the human sounds around them “because they were too far and could not remember” (p.51).

The snake is another significant symbol as it referred to several times both in *MD* and HD. Apart from some insignificant instances, the image of the snake or the serpent is used meaningfully three times. First Pip calls Ahab “that anaconda of an old man” (p.179), then Ishmael describes the *Pequod* as “booming through the mist, the waves curling and hissing around us like the erected crests of enraged serpents”(p.224). Finally, Flask describes Fedallah’s one protruding white tooth as “that tusk of his..... carved into a snake’s head”(p.315). The snake figure is associated to the primitive sea and to the primitive Parsee.

In HD, the only metaphor related to this creature and which seems to be fused with meaning is that of the African river. Marlow explains how he was “fascinated” and “charmed” like a little bird by this river which resembled “ an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depth of the land”(p.12).

### 2.3.3. Symbols in contrast

Both *MD* and HD show a significant antagonism in the treatment of a number of symbols. This antagonism kind of symbols is referred to by Northrop Frye as the “heraldic symbol” which is often found in modern literature. Frye explains that contrary to the symbol of Spencer, for instance, which maintain a logical relationship between the narrative and meaning (nature), there is “no continuous relationship between art and nature” in “the heraldic emblematic image”. He adds that this type of symbols “combines the quality of Carlyle’s intrinsic symbols with

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significant in itself, and the extrinsic symbol which points quizzically to something else”.

### 2.3.3.1. The Light of Darkness Versus the Darkness of Light

Darkness and light exemplifies another important symbolic affinity. The analysis of the interplay between darkness and light in the two narratives shows that they are used both as conventional symbols representing evil and good respectively. But they allude to other notions as well, which are at the opposite end of their conventional significance.

In MD as in HD, the significance of the image of darkness is announced from the very beginning. In chapter two, looking for some lodging in New Bedford, in “a very dark and dismal night”, Ishmael compares “the gloom towards the north with the darkness towards the south”(p.27). Then he enters a “negro church” where he sees “a black Angel of Doom” preaching about “the blackness of darkness”(p.28). The image of darkness used thus at the beginning of the narrative has clearly an ominous suggestion of the events awaiting Ishmael. Consequently, it is used as a traditional representation of unpleasant events. Likewise, it symbolizes mystery and danger.

Darkness in MD is equally related to the black race, and is given the traditional meaning of danger and devilishness. Thus queequeg is first described by Ishmael as having “a dark purplish yellow color” with “blackish looking squares”(p.39).

As its title shows, HD is a novel which deals mainly with darkness, either in the literal or in the figurative meaning of the term. Like MD, the narrative opens with this image of light and darkness when the unknown narrator describes the estuary perceived from the *Nellie*. Thus the estuary is described as “luminous”, while behind, above Gravesend, darkness “condensed into a mournful gloom”(p.05). The image of darkness is first linked with the stereotypical notions of ignorance and backwardness. In this sense, Marlow associates it with England before the arrival of the Romans. He also links it with Central Africa before the white man’s coming

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(p.12). While the figure of darkness seems to be associated with evil, mystery, and savagery, light is not used in HD as the opposite symbol of darkness, as convention will have it. Light, in Marlow's narrative, is rather presented as "blinding"(p.23) and depressing "there was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine"(p.48). At the end of the narrative, the estuary that was "luminous" at the beginning becomes "sombre" and "leading into the heart of an immense darkness"(p.111).

### 2.3.3.2. Whiteness as Both Good and Evil

In addition to light and darkness, MD and HD share the symbol of whiteness which is also as ambiguous and paradoxical as the previous ones. Whiteness in both narratives is first used in its conventional meaning, as representing goodness. But this symbolization is soon put into question, and then completely destroyed, giving whiteness thus the opposite meaning; that of evil.

In MD, whiteness as a symbol is linked to the whale, which is in itself another important emblem. Whiteness is also related to the white race, since the racial issue figures as an important topic in the novel. Moreover, the white color is linked to the vortex which engulfs the *Pequod* at the end.

It seems that it is equally impossible to define the meaning of the white color in HD. Whiteness, like light, is linked with negative notions in Marlow's narrative. One of the two women who seemed to "guard the door of darkness" wore a "white affair on her head". In the Outer Station, Marlow sees a black man with "a bit of white worsted round his neck" which looked "startling". The accountant too, with his "starched collars" and "white cuffs" resembled a "vision". Furthermore, whiteness is linked with ignorance and loss. Marlow hints to this when he observes that the "white fog" was "more blinding than the night" (p.56). Moreover, the comparison of Brussels to a "white sepulcher" suggests that the white color is also a symbol of death.

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Consequently, through the symbol of whiteness, both the white race and ivory are implied as confusing, indefinite and obscure entities. They are in fact as obscure as darkness, and this is even more obvious through the several references to whiteness as having a close relationship with darkness.

### 2.3.3.3. Modern Technology as Symbol: The Glorious but “Foolish Toys”

There appears in *MD* and in *HD* another type of cross symbols or contradictory symbols related to technology and science. Before analyzing this type of emblem, we have to observe that the nineteenth century as a whole witnessed a huge scientific and technological development in America and Europe. The handling of the symbols of science and technology in the two narratives is related to the attitude of Melville and Conrad towards this development.

In *MD*, Melville's handling of the symbols of science seems to be as ambivalent as his treatment of the other symbols. He appears in some instances, to approve of technology and science. This is especially obvious when he describes lengthily, and not without pride, the various tools and equipments used in the whaling industry. Moreover, there are some particular instances in the narrative which show that science and technology are positively considered by Melville. One of these instances is when Ahab is shown to study sea charts (*The Chart*), with the help of some books in order to locate the whale. Ishmael's comment on this point is that the use of scientific methods in whaling can be fruitful. In opposition, there are other passages in the narrative which show an adverse attitude emanating from a contradictory handling of their symbols. Among these instances, Ahab's rejection of some scientific tools like the quadrant, stands out. He dashes this instrument against the deck because it tells him nothing of the sun's “unknown thither side”, calling it: “Foolish toy! Babies playing” and shouting “Science! Curse thee, thou vain toy” (*The Quadrant*).

A similar confusion in the handling of science and technology may be recognized in *HD*. In Marlow's narrative too, some technological emblems are presented as futile



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and grotesque. Before Marlow enters the African jungle, he comes upon a man-of-war firing his “six-inch gun” into the continent. Marlow finds out that this had a “touch of insanity”, “a sense of lugubrious drollery” (p.20). Entering the jungle, he comes upon “a boiler wallowing in the grass”; then he notices “an undersized railway-truck lying there on its back with its wheels in the air”. He nearly falls in “a vast artificial hole” dug for no particular purpose. In the same place, he notices a lot of drainage-pipes, all of them broken. Technology seems, in those scenes, absurd, futile and ugly. One of the instances showing this positive rendering of science and technology in the narrative is Marlow’s description of that book on the science of navigation as an “extraordinary find”, written with a “singleness of intention” and an “honest concern for the right way of going to work”(p.54).

### 2.3.4. MD and HD: Verbosity versus Conciseness

While both MD and HD show a significant similarity in their use of poetic language, they also meaningfully and visibly differ in their use of words. Melville uses a verbose and extravagant style in MD. In this sense, his descriptions and reflections are formulated through excessively long sentences and a remarkably rich and pompous vocabulary, as the following passage shows:

Is it that by its indefiniteness it shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation, when beholding the white depths of the milky way ? Or is it, that as in essence whiteness is not so much a color as the visible absence of color, and at the same time the concrete of all colors; is it for these reasons that there is such a dumb blackness, full of meaning, in a wide landscape of snows- a colorless, all color of atheism from which we shrink? (p.196)

By opposition, Conrad opts for a concise, concentrated and controlled mode of writing in HD. Assuming a similar attitude of meditation and cogitation than Ishmael’s in the

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precedent passage, Marlow conveys his questionings related to the natives' restraint through short sentences and simple vocabulary:

Restraint! What possible restraint? Was it superstition, disgust, patience, fear- or some kind of primitive honor? No fear can stand up to hunger, no patience can wear it out, disgust simply does not exist where hunger is; and as to superstition, beliefs, and what you may call principles, they are less than chaff in a breeze. Don't you know the devilry of lingering starvation, its exasperating torment, its black thoughts, its sombre and brooding ferocity? Well, I do. (p.60).

Indeed, this flagrant discrepancy in the use of language, which the formats of the two books disclose, may be justified by the two artistic traditions that influenced Melville and Conrad respectively: Romanticism and Modernism. However, we should also note that Melville's writing is commonly assumed to be "purposefully old-fashioned".

### 2.3.5. Stylistic Ambiguity

Melville and Conrad's ambiguity displayed in their tendency towards contradiction in symbolization, is supported by another kind of indefiniteness; that of style. Both writers present a style which is rich in deep considerations and reflections, but which proves, however, to hide some inner blurriness and hesitancy.

As has been noted earlier in this chapter, unlike HD, MD may be said to have a rich vocabulary. Despite this abundance in words, Ishmael's narrative expresses a certain sense of indistinctness. Thus Melville's stylistic vagueness is conveyed through his frequent use of such words as "mysterious", "indefiniteness", "invisible", "profound", and "dark". His narrative abounds also in a structure in which he combines polar opposites, for instance "ungodly, god-like", "personified, impersonal" or "hopelessly holding up in the midst of despair" (p.225). Moreover, there is a frequent use of a succession of equivalents as in "speechless, placeless",

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“undeliverable, nameless” or “unearthly, formless, chance-like apparition”. Likewise, there is equally in MD an important use of the interrogative form, as in “is it, that as an essence whiteness is not so much a color as the visible absence of color ... ?”.

While the two narratives diverge in style in the sense that MD's style is excessively verbose whereas HD's is more controlled and less wordy, both narratives show a similar desire for fluency and consistency in narration. However, this preoccupation with clarity and precision in both narratives is opposed by a frequent and successive use of such vague words as “inscrutable”, “dark” and “mysterious”, a recurrent combination of opposites and a noticeable use of the interrogative form. All this contributes to form a style which can be described as ambiguous and vague.

### **2.4. Narrator and Point of view**

What is shared in both narrative in the narrator and the point of view, MD and HD are both told by narrator who play at the same time protagonists which make the plot hints at the psychology of the characters and thus depicting them unusually.

#### **2.4.1. Ishmael and Marlow: coming of Age, Isolation, and Narration Building**

As has been noted in the analysis of Ishmael's and Marlow's characters, both are passionate, experienced and intelligent sailors. Opting for narrators who are perceptive seafarers prepares the reader for the kind of tale s/he will read, as both an adventure story and a mediation tale. It also establishes both Ishmael and Marlow as trustworthy narrators, taking into account their long experience enriched by their many sea voyages. We have also observed previously that both Ishmael and Marlow significantly evolve through out their two voyages (and their two narratives as well). Both undergo important changes in the course of their voyages. However, the changes that Marlow's personality undergoes are not as satisfying or easily accepted, as Ishmael's. His evolution seems even to take the form of some mental breakdown. His experience in the wilderness only provides him with additional questioning, doubts and uncertainties. Thus while Ishmael's serene and peaceful acceptance of his

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experience makes of him an objective and trustworthy narrator, Marlow's affected mental state undermines the authority and accuracy of his narrative. The coming of age of both Ishmael and Marlow throughout the narrative is significant for it distinguishes their respective personal experiences from those of Ahab and Kurtz. In other words, both narrators stress their detachment from their heroes through their personal development or their coming of age as a result of their journeys. Consequently, their voices take a different note from those of Ahab and Kurtz.

In addition to this, these changes have an important effect on the two narratives as constructions of reality: they expose the illusion of stability and immutability. In other words, by their shift of position, the two narrators prove that there is not only one static way of perceiving reality and that reality itself is not fixed, but is in constant flux. This shift in perspective is conveyed by narratives which may be described as three-dimensional and which correspond to the artistic movement called Modernism. This type of narratives does not develop on a single dimension, but on three dimensions (space-time and narrator), resembling thus any mobile object that may be perceived in reality.

Thus the narrators' evolution in both MD and HD becomes significant, since it gives the two narratives life-like dimensions. In other words, it alters the status of the narrative from that simply describing events to that of creating an organic, autonomous world; a function which is a central one in modernistic works. In this respect, we may say that while the modernist nature of HD is obvious, MD may be described as a pre-modernist work, owing to its three-dimensional narrative. The modernist aspect of MD will often figure in this study as a central affinity with HD.

Ishmael and Marlow's isolation from the rest of the characters is an important element in the process of narration, for through it the shape of interaction and exchange in the two novels moves from the level of action i.e. that of the participating characters, to the level of fictional discourse. In other words, the significance of both stories does not lie anymore in the relationship between narrator and narrate. Thus

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meaning is transferred from the act of “doing” or “performing” to the act of “telling”. An example of the importance of telling in *MD* is provided by the chapters devoted to Ishmael’s (in fact Melville’s) knowledge in the whaling business. In *HD*, this significance is illustrated by Marlow’s digressions over time and topic, which are made mainly through anticipations about his meeting with Kurtz or about his lie to the intended. This predominance of the importance of the narrating over doing in the two novels is reinforced by another element which is the textual recognition or admission of the reader and the audience in *MD* and *HD*, respectively.

In *MD*, this recognition is given such significance that it figures as the opening sentence of the whole narrative: “Call me Ishmael”. Then, as the narrative progresses, Ishmael allows himself to directly address the reader in many instances using the pronouns “you” and “your”. This is especially clear in chapters about cetology (e.g.:chapter 76). This may be accounted for by the flagging of the action in those scientific passages; the tale is interrupted and the narrator disappears, leaving the floor for the author-as-teacher. Thus the author addresses not only his readers, but the narrator (Ishmael) as well. Drawing attention to the difficulty of decoding the brow appearing on the whale’s face, Ishmael ( Melville) dresses directly the reader, but also himself:

If then, Sir William Jones, who read in thirty languages, could not read the simplest peasant’s face in its profounder and more subtle meanings, how many unlettered Ishmael hope to read the awfulChaldee of the sperm Whale’s brow? I but put that brow before you. Read it if you can.

Melville’s voice can be identified in many passages in the narrative. It is easily distinguishable from that of Ishmael because of the theme this latter is sometimes made to deal with, while his character does not correspond with these themes. When Melville butts into Ishmael’s discourse, he does it through the long and erudite digressions related to the whale or to some historical or legendary events, which are

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really beyond the pale of the younger sailor, as the passage quoted above shows. Furthermore, this passage discloses not only Melville's intrusion on Ishmael's narratorial process, but another aspect of Ishmael's narrative, which is the overt affirmation of the fictive nature of the narrative.

### 2.4.2. Point of View in MD and HD: Multi-Focalization versus Double-Voicedness

First, we may note that Ishmael's involvement in the main action can be described as very limited, as he is rather absent plot-wise. But Marlow's involvement in the story is quite substantial, for the whole action in HD is firmly combined with the physical penetration into the inner station.

Secondly, in MD, events are primarily reported by a first-person narrator: Ishmael. However, Ishmael often alternates his voice with other characters' voices in the process of narration. This alternation takes such a proportion in some chapters that the initial first-person narrator becomes what is called a "heterodiegetic-covert" narrator, and I narrator who switches to a third-person narration, as the "I" pronoun disappears, and lends his voice to other characters. Besides Ishmael, important parts of the narrative of MD are narrated by Ahab, Starbuck and , by father Mapple and, to some extent, by other characters as well. Thus Ahab and Starbuck transcend the status of the character to that of the narrator, or "focalizer". We may note, in this respect, that this variety of "narrations" multiplies the narrative perspectives and thus displaces meaning, again, from the centre (one narrator) to the periphery (many characters). Meaning in both narratives becomes, as has already been noted, centrifugal.

A clear illustration of the multitude of perspective in MD would be Ishmael devoting whole chapters to some characters' soliloquies, without making any intrusions on these speeches. Thus "sunset" (ch37) focuses exclusively on a soliloquy made by Ahab to express his determination to pursue the white whale and the righteousness of his chase. The succession of this chapter and the two that follow is not only a good instance of the alternation of narration between Ishmael and other

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characters; it also highlights the “multi-focalization” technique, the method of juxtaposing voices in a narration without privileging any one of them. Moreover, the narrative of *MD* fulfils what Mikhail Bakhtin calls “dialogism”. According to Bakhtin, unlike the epic or lyrical poem, which are “monologic”, the novel is dialogic in the sense that it does not present one voice but many voices interacting within the narrative, *MD* also can be said to process some modernist features, as its narrative holds no privilege, rigid, one-way world view. Ishmael’s narrative seems rather to present a more open and democratic vision of reality, which is one of the characteristics of modernist writing.

What is also noticeable in some of the novel’s chapters is that Ishmael, who appears at first as a homodiegetic narrator, turns into an omniscient narrator, an all-knowing narrator. He is thus able to delve into the minds of other characters and become a sort of a fictional consciousness that can have free and unlimited access to the thoughts of other characters, while he is supposed to be one of the crew members. This feature is also strongly present in *HD*, this was possible to Conrad both thanks to his use of a second-degree narrator, who allows Marlow to address directly some listeners, and is thus able to tell of his experience and his inner most impressions in a natural and authentic way.

Moreover, instead of delving indiscreetly into the other characters’ minds, Marlow uses a number of other techniques to convey to us their thoughts. The use of such techniques may be discerned, for instance, in the conversation Marlow overhears between the manager and his uncle, in Kurtz’s painting and in the report the latter writes for the society for the suppression of Savage Customs.

As far as multi-focalization is concerned in *HD*, we can say that there is no substantial alternation of Marlow’s perspective with any other character. His perspective is certainly the most privileged one, for even the frame narrator, who seems to hold a different opinion from Marlow, appears, at the end of the narrative, to have changed his position and to have joined that of Marlow. This is clear in the shift

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of his position from the opening of the narrative (cf. his exaltation of the greatness of Britain's past) to its closing (when he observes that the Thames waterway "seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness" (p.11)).

### 2.4.3. MD and HD: Two Open Narratives

Although Ishmael's tale has obviously an A+ve modality, it is nonetheless a non-dogmatic or open narrative, just as HD is. While Ishmael's narrative creates meaning by virtue of its multi-voicedness, multi-focalization (Ishmael and the different characters) and its switching of point of view (Ishmael and Melville), Marlow's narrative achieves this through a non-categorical or negative modality. Furthermore, the construction of reality in both narratives does not stem from one unique and definite quarter. The voices of both narrators seem to lack authority: while Ishmael allows other voices to replace his own, Marlow is unable to make any definite or solid statement. The result is that the two narratives offer a plurality of world-views, without privileging any one of them, leaving it to the reader to have his/her own point of view. It is there for, as has been noted earlier, difficult to make out any definite assertion or distinct conclusion about MD and HD.

The absence of an authoritative point of view in both narratives may also be related to the two narratives nature which is based more on fundamental questionings than assertions. Moreover, as we discussed earlier, since both narratives deal with such profound philosophical subjects as the death theme or human nature, it seems that both writers are unable to face up to the truths their narratives reveal.

The two narratives' affinity, which lies in their non-dogmatic nature, should not prevent us however from emphasizing some significant points which set MD and HD apart. We may thus underline the fact that Ishmael may be described as an objective and trustworthy narrator because his narrative is an assertive one (A+narrative). He is a reliable narrator also because he shows a peaceful acceptance of his troubling experience. By contrast, Marlow may be considered as a subjective and unreliable narrator since his disturbed mental state, which is the outcome of his experience,



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weakens the authority of his narrative. What also accounts for Marlow's unreliability is the "negative modality" which characterizes his narratives, as we have seen.

### **2.5. Conclusion**

The present chapter has highlighted the similarity between Heart of Darkness and Moby Dick which itself has transformed to a form a affinity shared between the two, in characterization, narration, and symbolism, the relationship between the two works have proved to be canny making both Joseph Conrad and Herman Melville familiar with one another although nor the setting nor history that made up the two stories are common but literature has indeed related the two.

# **General Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

What Conrad fundamentally opposes in Melville is the latter's excessively idealistic and superficial approach to these issues. He thus disagrees with his precursor's multiple borrowings from magic tales with their fabulous monsters and fantastic figures. Moreover, he contests the American writer's idealistic view of the past as myth. Likewise, Conrad is against Melville's all-inclusive and metaphysical philosophy which is meant as a substitution to conventional religious and moral creeds. It is also a similar idealism in Melville's attitude towards reality which Conrad opposes. He thus rejects Melville's belief in a possible positive attitude towards reality, which is expressed mainly through virtue and morality. On the contrary, the writer of *Heart of Darkness* stresses the fact that morality and virtue may lead to immoral actions.

Conrad also seems to oppose his predecessor's narrative form, which may be described as fragmented, by devising a concentrated and compact narrative continuum. The same idea of fragmentation or multi-voicedness is contested by Conrad in relation to Melville's use of point of view. Moreover, Conrad rectifies, in more than a way, Melville's clumsy narrative techniques by devising more skillful and effective ones. Conrad's disagreement with MD equally concerns Melville's idealistic view of oriental culture as an accessible set of symbols that can easily be internalized. It is also a similar idealism which the Polish author corrects in his predecessor's primitivism. Conrad also opposes Melville's misogyny, which is expressed through a rather clumsy technical exclusion of women from narrative, by denigrating female characters with a bold attitude.

Lastly, Conrad appears in more than one instance to complete or go farther than his predecessor. In this sense, he widens the scope of Melville's view of nature as haphazardly resembling man by affirming that nature is *the maker of man*. His overt analysis goes further than Melville, who seems sometimes to treat issues only metaphorically. This particularity stands out in MD's approach to imperialism.

The present study has highlighted the affinity between MD and HD in relation to different narrative aspects. The similarities identified between the two works lead us to

## General Conclusion

assume that Melville actuality haunts Conrad. This is particularly obvious in the presence of the spirit of Ahab, Ishmael, the whale and the sea in HD. Furthermore, the differences noted between the two narratives suggest Conrad's efforts to free himself from the encumbering spirit of Melville, with the desire or pretension of surpassing him.

In this respect, by using Melville's "terms" and by completing him too, Conrad affects what Bloom calls a *Tessera*. In other words, Conrad handles the same techniques and the same themes as used by Melville but with the desire to complete him antithetically, as has been shown throughout the chapters of this study. Consequently, HD may be said to represent "any later poet's attempt to persuade himself (and us) that the precursor's Word would be worn out if not redeemed as a newly fulfilled and enlarged Word of the epebe" (Harold Bloom 1997: 67).

This is not only true of HD, but for most of Conrad's works, where the spirit of Melville hangs out. We may thus note that this study has unfolded an important number of haunted hunters in relation to the two novels. Besides Ahab; the sea hunter, who is haunted by the whale, or Kurtz; the ivory seeker, who is inhabited by the spirit of the jungle or again, the two narrators; who are so possessed by the shadow of their heroes; besides all these men, Conrad seems to be a captive of Melville's MD and perhaps of other works.

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