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THE PHYSETER AND THE GREAT WHITE WHALE:
THE INFLUENCE OF RABELAIS ON MOBY-DICK

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Doris Mills Patton

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FOR CYNTHIA, LANCE, AND REBECCA

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ABSTRACT

Herman Melville's debt to Rabelais's Gargantua and Pantagruel has often been given critical mention but never fully discussed. In Moby-Dick the Rabelaisian motif permeates the novel.

The most obvious expression of Rabelaisian thought may be found in Melville's treatment of: religion, women, the quest voyage in mock epic form, folk legend, and in his style. Both writers reject Calvinism, while favoring religious reform. Both writers express the attitude toward women of their time; that is, young women are depicted as sexual objects, usually promiscuous, and all other women as ugly old crones. Both writers use the quest-voyage motif, the object of Rabelais's voyage being consultation of the Oracle of the Holy Bottle to determine if Panurge's marriage would result in cuckoldom for him. The object of Melville's voyage is of course Moby Dick, the great white whale. An epic convention in both Gargantua and Pantagruel and Moby-Dick is the storm at sea, resulting in loss of direction for both ships. Another common theme in both books is the use of folk legend; Gargantua and Pantagruel, like Moby-Dick, are derived from folklore. Finally, there are similarities in style--the use of the narrative persona reciting the oral tale; dialogue; and verbal echoes. All these elements converge to show Rabelais and Melville as kindred spirits.

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François Rabelais

Chronology

- 1494 Now the generally accepted date of François Rabelais's birth, although it has been pushed back as far as 1483. Born at La Devinière, a family property near Chinon, where his father, Antoine Rabelais, was a lawyer.
- 1511 Possible date for his entry into a monastery of the Franciscan order at Fontenay-le-Comte.
- 1525 Passes to the Benedictine Order with the hope that he can pursue more freely his humanistic studies.
- 1530 September 17--Rabelais registers at the school of medicine of the University of Montpellier.
November 1--receives his bachelor's degree in medicine.
- 1531 April 17 to June 24 gives lectures on Hippocrates and Galen.
Toward the end of the year goes to Lyons.
- 1532 Publication of Pantagruel and the Pantagrueline Prognostication, a facetious almanac for the year 1533. Nominated doctor of the hospital of Hotel-Dieu (Lyons).
- 1533 Pantagruel is censured by the Sorbonne on October 23.
November 8--leaves for Italy with Cardinal Jean du Bellay as his personal secretary and doctor.
- 1534 February-March--stay in Rome.
May--back in Lyons.
August--publication of Gargantua (approximate date).

- 1535 Second trip to Rome with Jean du Bellay.
- 1536 July--returns to Lyons and then departs for Paris with the Cardinal who is in charge of fortifying the capital against Charles V.
- 1537 Receives M.D. at Montpellier. Dissects the body of a hanged man.
- 1538 Death of Rabelais's son, Theodulus, at the age of two.
- 1540 Rabelais goes to Turin with Guillaume du Bellay, the Cardinal's eldest brother.
- 1542 December--returns to France with Guillaume du Bellay who will die before reaching his destination.
- 1543 The Sorbonne censures again Gargantua and Pantagruel.
- 1545 Francois I licenses Rabelais to publish another work.
- 1546 Publication of the Third Book. In spite of the license, a new censure forces Rabelais to seek refuge in Metz where he practices medicine.
- 1547 Rabelais comes back to Paris.
July--leaves for Rome with Jean du Bellay. Passing through Lyons, he gives to the publisher the first eleven chapters of the Fourth Book.
- 1549 September--Rabelais sends back to the French court, specifically to the Duke de Guise, an account of the Sciomachie, a description of the festivities in Rome to celebrate the birth of an heir to Henri II.

- 1550 Rabelais receives a license for the Fourth Book.
- 1551 Through the auspices of Cardinal du Bellay, Rabelais obtains the vicarship of two parishes, in other words, financial security.
- 1552 Publication of the Fourth Book.
March--renewed harassment by the Sorbonne.
- 1553 Rabelais resigns from his two vicarships.
April (?)--death of Rabelais.
- 1562 Publication of L'Isle Sonante (Ringling Island) usually considered of Rabelais's own hand.
- 1564 Publication of the Fifth Book whose first sixteen chapters compose the episode of Ringling Island. [There is no evidence that Melville had access to this book.] (Tetel 15-16).
- Source: Marcel Tetel, Rabelais. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1967.

Herman Melville

Chronology

- 1819 Herman Melville (or Melvill) born August 1 in New York City, third child of Allan and Maria Gansevoort Melvill.
- 1825- Attends New-York Male High School.
- 1830
- 1830 Allan Melvill's importing business fails, and family moves to Albany, New York. Herman enrolls at the Albany Academy from October 15, 1830, until his father's death.
- 1832 January 28, Allan Melvill dies, heavily in debt.
- 1832- Works as a bank clerk, as helper on his uncle's farm in
- 1837 Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and as assistant in his brother Gansevoort's fur factory and store. Enters Albany Classical School (1835).
- 1837 Teaches school near Pittsfield.
- 1838 May, the Melvilles move from Albany across the river to Lansingburgh, New York. Studies surveying at the Lansingburgh Academy.
- 1839 "Fragments from a Writing Desk" published May 14 and 18 in the Democratic Press and Lansingburgh Advertiser. June 5, ships as a crew member aboard the St. Lawrence, a packet boat plying between New York and Liverpool; October 1, he returns. Teaches school at Greenbush, New York.
- 1840 Works briefly as a substitute teacher in Brunswick, New York. Travels with Eli James Fly to visit his Uncle Thomas in Galena, Illinois.

- 1841 January 3, ships as a common seaman aboard the whaling ship Acushnet, bound from Fairhaven, Massachusetts (New Bedford harbor), for the South Seas.
- 1842 July 9, deserts ship with Richard T. Greene at Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas Islands. After a month among supposedly cannibalistic natives of the Taipi valley, escapes on August 9 by joining the crew of the Lucy Ann, an Australian whaler. Placed ashore at Tahiti with other crewmen and held in light confinement as an accused mutineer.
- 1843 Spends May to August at Lahaina (Maui) and Honolulu. Works in Honolulu during the summer. August 17, enlists in the United States Navy at Honolulu as an ordinary seaman and sails for home.
- 1844 October 14, mustered out of the navy in Boston and returns to Lansingburgh. Begins writing the story of his adventures that winter.
- 1846 Typee published. "The Story of Toby" published and later added to the book as an epilogue.
- 1847 Omoo. August 4, marries Elizabeth Shaw. Efforts to secure a government appointment in Washington prove fruitless; settles in New York City.
- 1847- Tries earning his living as a writer. Closely associated
1850 with Evert and George Duyckinck and other literary figures of New York. Writes reviews and articles for The Literary World and Yankee Doodle magazines.

- 1849 February 16, son Malcolm born. Mardi and Redburn published October 11, sails for Europe to arrange publication of White-Jacket.
- 1850 White-Jacket. Takes his family to Pittsfield, Massachusetts, for the summer. September, purchases a farm (later named Arrowhead) at Pittsfield, settling there as a gentleman-farmer and author. Meets and forms strong friendship with Nathaniel Hawthorne, then living in nearby Lenox. Writes an enthusiastic review of Hawthorne's Mosses from an Old Manse.
- 1851 Moby-Dick. October 22, son Stanwix born.
- 1852 Pierre.
- 1853 May 22, daughter Elizabeth born. Unsuccessful in efforts to secure a consular appointment. December 10, copies of his books destroyed in a disastrous Harper and Brothers fire.
- 1853- Writes stories and sketches for Putnam's Monthly Magazine and
- 1856 Harper's New Monthly Magazine.
- 1855 Israel Potter published in book form after serialization in Putnam's. March 2, daughter Frances born.
- 1856 The Piazza Tales. Travels abroad, partly for his health, leaving New York for Europe October 11.
- 1857 The Confidence-Man. May 5, sails from Liverpool for New York.
- 1857- Earns money as a lecturer for three seasons. Topic: "Statuary in Rome," "The South Seas," "Traveling." Begins writing poetry about 1859.
- 1860

- 1860 Sails for both health and pleasure aboard the clipper ship Meteor, commanded by his younger brother Thomas. Leaves ship at San Francisco, returning home by way of Panama.
- 1863 Moves from Pittsfield to New York City, exchanging homes with his younger brother Allan.
- 1865 A pirated edition of Israel Potter published in Philadelphia as The Refugee.
- 1866 Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War published, some of the poems having appeared previously in Harper's. December 5, appointed a district inspector of customs for New York harbor.
- 1867 September 11, son Malcolm killed by his own gun under tragic circumstances.
- 1876 Clarel.
- 1885 December 31, resigns his position as inspector of customs.
- 1886 Son Stanwix dies in a San Francisco hospital.
- 1888 Makes a short vacation voyage to Bermuda. John Marr and Other Sailors.
- 1891 Timoleon. Melville dies September 28.
- 1924 Billy Budd published posthumously.

Source: Tyrus Hillway, Herman Melville (rev. ed.). New York: Twayne Publishers, 1979.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When Melville's third novel, Mardi, was published in 1849, he was hailed in France as "un Rabelais American" (Weaver 27). American reviewers also found similarities between the Gargantua and Pantagruel of Rabelais and Mardi, mainly in what Bakhtin calls "the material body principle, that is, images of the human body with its food, drink, defecation and sexual life [which] play a dominant role" (18). Melville had read Rabelais in January and February of 1848, for he had borrowed volumes two, three and four from Evert Duyckinck. He later charged volume two at the New York Public Library, as Sealts points out, his first charge there (207). The translator(s) of the edition Melville read is not known, but the notes are by "Duchat, Ozell, and Others," and it was published in London in 1844 by Smith and Miller. Since this particular edition is no longer available, I have used the translation of Sir Thomas Urquhart and Peter Motteux, with annotations by Duchat, Ozell and Others, assuming that it is the same translation Melville used.

Neither Redburn (1849) nor White-Jacket (1850) had any resemblances to the Works of Rabelais. But Melville's major novel, perhaps America's major novel--it has been called "the American epic" (Chase 100)--goes far beyond Mardi's surface resemblances in "the material body principle." True, there are light-hearted moments in Moby-Dick, quite a few. But these moments go beyond food and drink, for Melville draws on Rabelais's

religiopolitical satire, his chauvinistic attitude toward women, his parody of the epic, his use of folklore in content as well as form, and of course style.

More than once Melville invites this comparison. In "Extracts" he quotes Panurge's garbled biblical reference, in which he juxtaposes Job and Moses:

Let us fly, let us fly! Old Nick take me if it is not
Leviathan described by the noble prophet Moses in the
life of patient Job (3).

Rabelais

The passage is from Book III, Chapter XXXIII: "How Pantagruel Discovered a Monstrous Physeter, or Whirlpool, Near the Wild Island" (360).

["Physeter" is a Greek term for "whale," or "blower" because of the whale's spout. Melville uses the term "Physeter" for the "Sperm Whale" (121).] The whale is described as "neighing, snorting, raised above the waves higher than our maintops, and spouting water all the way into the air before itself, like a large river flowing from a mountain" (360). Approaching the ships, the physeter "threw water by whole tuns upon them, as if it had been the cataracts of the Nile in Ethiopia" (363). The weapons of the ships' crews--"arrows, darts, gleaves, javelins, spears, harping irons, and partizans"--were of no avail (363). It is left for their noble leader, the giant Pantagruel, to best the physeter with his admirable strength in "shooting and darting" (364). With darts resembling the beams of mighty bridges, with aim from a mile away able to "turn over every leaf of Friar John's breviary"

without tearing a one, with one blow after another a dart pierces the whale's forehead and goes through his jaws and tongue so he can no longer spout. A second dart puts out his right eye and a third pierces his left. By the time Pantagruel finishes, the physeter

seemed like the hulk of a galleon with three masts . . .
[and], giving up the ghost, turned itself upon its back, as all dead fishes do; and being thus overturned, with the beams and darts upside down in the sea, it seemed a scolopendra or centipede, as that serpent is described by the ancient sage Nicander (364-65).

I have dealt with Rabelais's chapters on the "physeter" here because I believe they demonstrate that Melville drew substantially upon Gargantua and Pantagruel in writing Moby-Dick.

A survey of scholarship will show that scant attention has been paid to Melville's debt to Rabelais. A few reviews noted in passing stylistic resemblances to Rabelais: an unsigned review in the New Monthly Magazine dated July 1853 found Ahab a man who "raves by the hour in a lingo borrowed from Rabelais" (Branch 335). Another anonymous review in the April 1857 issue of Putnam's Monthly Magazine found Melville "as formidably satirical as Rabelais" (365). There seems to be nothing dealing solely with Moby-Dick and Gargantua and Pantagruel until 1923, when a one-page article by Whitney Hastings Wells called " Moby-Dick and Rabelais" appeared in Modern Language Notes; however, the influence of Rabelais on Moby-Dick is mentioned to some extent by the following writers: Raymond M. Weaver, Herman Melville: Mariner and Mystic, 1921 (Melville's first biographer); Richard Chase,

Herman Melville: A Critical Study, 1949; Lawrance Thompson, Melville's Quarrel with God, 1952; Robert H. Shulman's unpublished dissertation, "Toward Moby-Dick: Melville and Some Baroque Worthies," 1959; Richard Chase, Melville: A Collection of Critical Essays, 1962; Janez Stanonik, Moby Dick: The Myth and the Symbol, 1962; Edward H. Rosenberry, Melville and the Comic Spirit, 1969; Joseph Flibbert, Melville and the Art of Burlesque, 1974; Tyrus Hillway, Herman Melville (Revised Edition), 1979; Jane Mushabac, Melville's Humor: A Critical Study, 1981; Brainard Cowan, Exiled Waters: Moby-Dick and the Crisis of Allegory, 1982; William H. Shurr, "Moby-Dick as Tragedy and Comedy," in Approaches to Teaching Melville's Moby-Dick, 1985; Mary K. Bercaw, Melville's Sources, 1987; and Merton M. Sealts, Jr., Melville's Reading, 1988. Although other books on Melville have been helpful, as well as books on Rabelais, only those I have mentioned find any parallels in Gargantua and Pantagruel and Moby-Dick.

In the following chapters I will explore significant areas where I believe the attitudes of Rabelais and Melville are strikingly similar. In Chapter II, I deal with religious satire, finding that both authors reject Calvinism for a belief in the "dignity of man as a rational, sentient being, born upon this earth with a right to use and enjoy it" (Putnam 14). Rabelais, of course, directed his satire against what he saw as abuses in the Roman Catholic Church. Chapter III is concerned with their mutually chauvinistic attitude toward women, a source of humor for both writers. In Chapter IV both works are considered as mock-epics, quest-voyages in the form of storms at sea,

while Chapter V deals with both novels as being rooted in folk legend. Larger than life heroes (giants and a giant whale) and tall tales inhabit both novels. Chapter VI is devoted to similarities of style. As Melville wrote, there are men who "swear by Rabelais as passing wise" (355). The purpose of this study is to discover whether Melville was among that number.

CHAPTER II

RELIGIOUS SATIRE

Religion as a topic for satire is important in both Gargantua and Pantagruel and Moby-Dick. Rabelais entered the Franciscan order in about 1511, passed into the more liberal Benedictine order about 1525, and in Rome "filed a petition for apostasy, for having laid aside his monk's robe without permission; and on January 17, 1536, Pope Paul granted him an absolution" (Putnam 27). In August of 1536 Rabelais was made a canon of Saint-Mur, allowing him to leave off his monk's robe and become a secular priest (27). The movement of Rabelais's faith may thus be said to be toward the more liberal humanism of the Renaissance in France. Humanism, writes John Addington Symonds,

which was the vital element in the Revival of Learning, consists mainly of a just perception of the dignity of man as a rational, volitional and sentient being, born upon this earth with a right to use it and enjoy it. Humanism . . . involved a vivid recognition of the goodliness of man and nature, displayed in the great monuments of human power, recovered from the past (14-15).

Samuel Putnam assesses the effect of Renaissance humanism on Rabelais in the following terms:

It was this humanist creed that lead Rabelais to abandon one phase of the Renaissance, represented by the Protestant Reformation, for the reason that, having at first vigorously

espoused the Protestant cause as is shown by certain passages in his work, he soon discovered that "the demoniacal Calvins, those imposters of Geneva"--those "predestinators," as he elsewhere calls them--were fundamentally opposed to the ideal of the full, free life for all, for which humanism stood. True, he seems to have retained his devotion to "the good apostle, St. Paul," and his fondness for "a good evangelical preacher," but that was about as far as it went. Though he was hounded through life by the theologians of the Sorbonne and though his Catholic orthodoxy is decidedly open to question, he could not go along with the reformationists; for Calvinism, with its denial of the moral freedom of the individual, was repugnant to his sense of life (15).

Like Rabelais, Melville rejected the tenets of what Lawrance Thompson calls "the Reformation dogma of John Calvin" (Thompson 4). Adding that this "Reformation dogma" came "in a quite undiluted form," Thompson discusses Melville's religious heritage:

His devout and pious parents were members of the Dutch Reformed Church in America, and they taught their son to believe that God had created him innately depraved and predestinately damned to eternal Hell; but that he might possibly be saved from such damnation, through divine grace, if he threw himself submissively and abjectly on the mercy of God, as revealed through Jesus Christ (4).

Melville apparently accepted these tenets of faith until he left home, but even though disillusionment began with his first voyage and

accumulated with later ones, complete rebellion did not occur until after the publication of Typee and Omoo. Not until the writing of Mardi (influenced markedly by Gargantua and Pantagrue), Thompson says, had "the struggle between his beliefs and his doubts reached a crisis" (5). He did, however, manage "to salvage a modified assertion of mystical religious affirmation, short-lived, because it did not satisfy and sustain him" (5).

Rejection of one's inherited faith in favor of a personally achieved concept of God is a rite of passage for most adults; but, as much as he wanted to, Melville did not arrive at a "concept of God more acceptable and congenial to his temperament" (5). He did not go as far as atheism, though, for as Thompson explains,

One might fear that Melville's concept of a Calvinistic God might gradually have become so repulsive that he might have moved through doubt and skepticism to a denial of the existence of God. This final step he never took. . . . Melville arrived at a highly ironic conclusion: believing more firmly than ever in the God of John Calvin [he], came to resent and hate the attributes of God, particularly the seemingly tyrannous harshness and cruelty and malice of God. Thus, instead of losing faith in his Calvinistic God, Melville made a scapegoat of him, and blamed God for having caused so many human beings to rebel (5).

Melville was thus faced with a problem, for he knew that if he expressed his concept of God in literary form, he would offend his

Christian readers. As Thompson writes,

He also knew that if he should announce that he had declared his independence from the sovereignty of God, and had declared war against God in order to fight for his own freedom as a natural man, his Christian readers would want to tell him that he was being ridiculous; that it takes two to make a quarrel, and that God is above quarreling with a human being (6).

In order to have the satisfaction of expressing his religious views in his writings, Melville developed structural and stylistic methods that, while appearing to present orthodox religious beliefs, actually presented his own rebellion against God. These stylistic methods allowed the literary expression of

sarcasm and satire and irony, because the pretense gave the illusion of proceeding in a different direction exactly opposite from the anti-Christian direction of the story itself. Within this flexible formula of sustained irony, Melville achieved ample elbowroom for playing with innumerable artistic devices for defensive concealment, subterfuge, deception, hoodwinking, ridicule (6-7).

If we accept Thompson's ideas (and I do), it is obvious that Rabelais is more important in the conception of Moby-Dick than has hitherto been accepted, more important than occasional allusions or stylistic echoes. Indeed, it becomes obvious that the larger ideas, from the common attitude toward Calvin to companion beliefs in the

value of what Putnam calls "the full, free life for all" (15), embody a humanistic concept not present either in medieval Catholicism or nineteenth-century orthodox religion.

Several passages in Book I indicate Rabelais's sympathy with Evangelicals or Protestants. There is, for example, his scorn

for the people of Paris [who] are so sottish, so badot, so foolish and fond by nature, that a juggler, a carrier of indulgences, a sumpter-horse, or mule with cymbals, or tinkling bells, a blind fiddler in the middle of a cross lane, shall draw a greater confluence of people together than an Evangelical preacher (I, 64).

Although he does not attend mass, "sermons of Evangelical preachers" (I, 99) are a part of Gargantua's education. In a lengthy discussion of the faults of monks, Gargantua points out that they "neither preach nor teach, as do the Evangelical doctors and school-masters" (I, 157). According to Greene, however, the clearest statement of Rabelais's attitude toward the Evangelical movement may be found above the entrance to the Abbey of Thélème:

the invitation of the Thélème portal to those who preach the holy gospel in its lively meaning ("qui le saint Evangile en sens agile announcez") . . . contains the clearest clue to Rabelais's sympathy for the new movement. On the supreme doctrinal issue--justification by faith alone or by works--he never took a clear stand. But he admired the

Evangelicals chiefly for the enterprise revealed in their very name. In his eyes (and most French humanists agreed in 1534) they taught the "sens agile" of the Biblical text, the living, flowing, subtle significance of divine revelation (Greene 54).

This is not to say that Rabelais went beyond the idea of reform or corrections of abuse within the Roman Church, but at this point in history doctrinal issues were, as Greene puts it, "still blurred" (55). Rabelais openly expressed his liking for the Evangelicals and, Greene says, "He shared . . . the reformers' offense at the alleged abuses of the Roman church" (54). With the passage of time, however, Rabelais rejected both Roman Catholicism and Reform (Calvinism). In the dedication to the fragmentary publication of the first ten or so chapters of Book IV (near the end of his life), Rabelais responds to attacks from both Calvin and a member of the Faculty of Paris: "I was so hideously and baselessly slandered by certain cannibals, misanthropists and sour-pusses that I lost all patience and decided not to write another word" (Greene 82). In the completed volume, Rabelais is more specific, revenging "himself on Calvin, who had attacked him in his work, De Scandalis, published in 1550" (IV, 357). (Book IV was published in 1552.) Listed among "the hypocritical tribes of eaves-dropping dissemblers [are] . . . the demoniacal Calvins, imposters of Geneva" (IV, 357).

Indeed, a reading of the Works as a whole, published over a period of twenty years (1532-1552), will show a variety of attitudes toward

religion which reflect the blurring of doctrinal lines in the first half of sixteenth-century France and Europe as a whole. Perhaps Tetel's comment on Rabelais's religious stance is most valid: "Rabelais cannot be forced into one position because he does not have a permanent opinion" (Tetel 57).

One religious tradition Rabelais satirizes is the miraculous birth. His miraculous birth--the birth of Gargantua through the ear of his mother, Gargamelle--has been cited by early twentieth-century critics such as Lefranc as evidence of his skepticism, even atheism (Greene 53). Abel Lefranc saw Gargantua's birth as a travesty of the miraculous birth of Christ. More recent critics accept Rabelais's disclaimer which immediately follows his account of Gargantua's birth; however, it may be said that perhaps the writer protests too much:

I doubt me, that you do not thoroughly believe the truth of this strange nativity. Though you believe it or not, I care not much: but an honest man, and of good judgment, believeth still what is told him, and that which he finds written.

Is this beyond our law, or our faith; against reason or the Holy Scripture? For my part, I find nothing in the sacred Bible that is against it. But tell me, if it had been the will of God, would you say that he could not do it? Ha, for favour sake, I beseech you, emberlucock or impulregafize your spirits with these vain thoughts and idle conceits; for I tell you, it is not impossible with God;

and, if he pleased, all women henceforth would bring forth their children at the ear (I, 24).

Just as Gargantua is born from Gargamelle's head, so is Tashtego born from a whale's head. Drowning in spermacetti, Tashtego appears to be lost, with the rescue efforts of Dagoo and others unsuccessful. Only through Queequeg's "noble rescue" is Tashtego born from the side of the whale's head (289-90). It is through "the courage and skill in obstetrics of Queequeg, the deliverance, or rather delivery of Tashtego, was successfully accomplished" (291). The "noble rescue" is described in quasi-medical terms, as follows:

Now, how had this noble rescue been accomplished? Why, diving after the slowly descending head, Queequeg with his keen sword had made side lunges near its bottom, so as to scuttle a large hole there; then dropping his sword, had thrust his long arm far inwards and upwards, and so hauled out poor Tash by the head. He averred, that upon first thrusting in for him, a leg was presented; but well knowing that was not as it ought to be, and might occasion great trouble--he had thrust back the leg, and by a dexterous heave and toss, had wrought a somerset upon the Indian; so that with the next trial, he came forth in the good old way--head foremost. As for the great head itself, that was doing as well as could be expected (289-90).

In his conclusion, Melville apparently forgets that the whale is not doing well at all, for it is quite dead. An appropriate

baptism for both occasions might include these words of Ahab:

"Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris,
sed in nomine diaboli" (404).

Fasting for religious purposes is also an object of satire in Rabelais. Xenomanes dissuades Pantagruel from stopping at Sneaking Island, ruled by "Shrovetide," or, as Putnam translates it, "Lent-keeper" (586). Greene sees Lent as "the dreary monster Quaresmeprenant," who represents "the sin of self-denial," and places the idea of lent in a historical context:

In 1547 [the year Rabelais published the first eleven chapters of Book IV] the Council of Trent had reaffirmed the obligation to observe this period of abstinence, despite the opposition of both the French and Imperial ambassadors, to say nothing of the Protestants. But the suggestivity of this hauntingly grotesque description transcends its historical provocation. For despite the occasional tedium or obscurity of its catalogues, the description of Quaresmeprenant remains a withering caricature of that life-denying perversion which, in or out of the Church, cripples the body and atrophies the spirit (96).

Sneaking Island is "much out of the way," and "manger maigre" (lean cheer) is to be found not only "at that prince's [Lentkeeper's] court [but], indeed all over the island" (IV, 344). Lent is anatomized in three chapters with a surrealistic outpouring of similes: "'a strange and monstrous sort of a man, if I may call him a man,'" remarks Pantagruel (355).

Some comments of the editors are helpful. They write that Rabelais's

design seems . . . to expose the superstition of the papists about Lent, and how much the practice of it, their way, shocked good sense Shrovetide being married to Mid-lent, only begot a good number of local adverbs; that is, the stations, the churches, and chapels, whither the gulled mob must go, whence they come, and through which they must pass to gain the indulgences (357-58).

Finding the name of the island, Sneaking Island, appropriate because it "suits with the true design of Lent, to humble man and make him look sneakingly," the editorial comment continues that "The ingenious fable of nature and her counterpart is brought in to show that those who enjoin things that shock nature, as is the Church of Rome's way of keeping Lent, have the confidence to make laws contrary to those of God, and the impudence to justify them by reason": so Rabelais tells us, that,

Antiphrasis [against nature], the mother of Lent, begot also the eavesdropping dissemblers, superstitious pope-mongers and priest-ridden bigots, scrapers of benefices, mad herb-stinking hermits, gulli-gutted dunces of the cowl, church vermin, devourers of the substance of men, and other deformed and ill-favoured monsters, made in spite of nature (358-59).

Commenting that "the flood of similies devoted to the creature's [Lent-keeper's] organs and faculties combines outdated medical learning with

a bizarre fancy that approaches surrealism, yet a kind of repellent portrait does emerge of the hulking, goitrous, hairless creature" (96), Greene summarizes the portrait of Lent: "The twisted legs, the sunken cheeks, the hard and icy fingers, the scarred, misshapen face, the wasted, bony frame, the sickly brown skin, bear witness to a host of inner infirmities of which the commonest is melancholia and the most disagreeable pederistic syphilis" (96).

There is a great deal more in the same vein, for the seven chapters devoted to Lentkeeper illustrate that, as someone has remarked, Rabelais is not always humorous. This bitterly satiric condemnation of fasting for religious purposes occurs in Book IV. Melville's parody of Lent begins in chapter 16, near the beginning of his novel and is one of the funniest episodes in Moby-Dick.

At Queequeg's insistence that Yojo "had told him two or three times over, and strongly insisted upon it everyway," that Ishmael must go alone to choose which ship they must sign on for their whaling voyage, Ishmael assents with misgivings. He leaves early the next morning for the harbor, mulling over these thoughts:

leaving Queequeg shut up with Yojo in our little bedroom--for it seemed that it was some sort of Lent or Ramadan, or day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer with Queequeg and Yojo that day; how it was I never could find out, for, though I applied myself to it several times, I never could master his liturgies and XXXIX Articles--leaving Queequeg, then, fasting on his tomahawk pipe, and Yojo warming himself at

his sacrificial fire of shavings, I sallied out among the shipping (6).

Ishmael arranges with Captain Peleg and Captain Bildad for Queequeg and himself to become part of the crew of the Pequod, delaying his return to the Try Pots until nightfall to avoid disturbing Queequeg's religious rites. He explains, "As Queequeg's Ramadan, or Fasting and Humiliation, was to continue all day, I did not choose to disturb him till towards nightfall, for I cherish the greatest respect towards everybody's religious obligations, never mind how comical" (78). He proceeds to use the occasion to deliver a little homily:

[I] could not find it in my heart to undervalue even a congregation of ants worshipping a toad-stool; or those other creatures in certain parts of our earth, who with a degree of footmanism quite unprecedented in other planets, bow down before the torso of a deceased landed proprietor merely on account of the inordinate possessions yet owned and rented in his name (78).

With what seems to be a straightforward plea for religious tolerance, specifically from his fellow "good Presbyterian Christians," Ishmael returns to thoughts of Queequeg, Yojo, and his Ramadan, and concludes that, since "Queequeg thought he knew what he was about [and] . . . seemed to be content," he should be left alone.

Late in the afternoon, supposing Queequeg's Lenten day of fasting, prayer, and humiliation to be over, Ishmael goes up to their room only to find the door locked. There is no answer to Ishmael's knock nor

to his whispered pleas through the keyhole, nor is Queequeg visible through the keyhole. All Ishmael can see is the forbidden harpoon which Mrs. Hussey has demanded be left downstairs to prevent suicide. When, alarmed, Ishmael breaks down the door, only to find "Queequeg, altogether cool and collected, right in the middle of the room, squatting on his hams and holding Yojo on top of his head," deep in meditation, he is led to observe:

I wonder, thought I, if this can possibly be a part of his Ramadan; do they fast on their hams that way in his native island? It must be so; yes, it's part of his creed, I suppose; well, then let him rest; he'll get up sooner or later, no doubt. It can't last forever, thank God, and his Ramadan only comes once a year; and I don't believe it's very punctual then.

.

Now, as I before hinted, I have no objection to any person's religion, be it what it may, so long as that person does not kill or insult any other person, because that other person don't believe it also. But when a man's religion becomes really frantic; when it is a positive torment to him; and, in fine, makes this earth of ours an uncomfortable inn to lodge in; then I think it high time to take that individual aside and argue that point with them (80-81).

At sunrise Queequeg, his Ramadan completed, comes to bed where Ishmael tries to reason with him, "beginning with the rise and progress

of the primitive religions" to the present time and discussing all the "various religions" of the world. His voice assuming the cadence of a sermon, Ishmael decries "all those Lents, Ramadans, and prolonged ham-squattings in cold, cheerless rooms . . . as stark nonsense; bad for the health; useless for sense" (80-81).

Not only is Queequeg's Ramadan "ridiculous," it is harmful to the body, for "fasting makes the body cave in; hence the spirit caves in; and all thoughts born of a fast must necessarily be half-starved. This is the reason why most dyspeptic religionists cherish such melancholy notions about their hereafters" (82). Then follows the often-quoted Melville epigram: "hell is an idea first born on an undigested apple-dumpling; and since then perpetuated through the hereditary dyspepsias nurtured by Ramadans" (82).

For both authors, then, fasting for religious purposes is not only ridiculous but actually harmful to both body and soul. Physically, for Rabelais, fasting causes the body to become deformed; spiritually, it results in melancholia and the vilest of social diseases. For Melville, fasting makes both body and spirit "cave in." Although they approach the subject somewhat differently, their conclusions are identical.

A fourth sacrament that both Rabelais and Melville parody is the mass. Although the only retribution Melville need fear is protests from the reviewers, the ultimate retribution for sacrilege in sixteenth-century Europe was of course being burnt at the stake. For that reason, Rabelais's parody of the mass is submerged; Chapter V, "How They

Chirped Over Their Cups," comes just before Gargantua's birth (I, 15). The entire chapter consists of six pages of one-liners, a dialogue of one hundred and nine different speeches, none identified except by their content. There are, Putnam believes, "Representatives of the clergy, possibly monks from a neighboring monastery, [and] . . . the good father superior who only satisfies his 'paternal thirst' out of his breviary" (65). To the statement, "By the belly of Sanct Buff, let us talk of our drink: I never drink but at my hours, like the Pope's mule," he replies, "And I never drink but in my breviary, like a fair father guardian" (I, 15). Another says, "I . . . who am a sinner, . . . never drink without a thirst, either present or future. To prevent it, . . . I drink for the thirst to come. I drink eternally. This is to me an eternity of drinking, and drinking of eternity" (I, 15). Still another calls upon Satan, "Pour out all [wine] in the name of Lucifer" (18).

This evocation would seem to parallel Ahab's black mass in the splicing scene of Moby-Dick:

a ceremony of consecration, with the crew and officers:
 an inverted Communion Service, and in this sense a sort of
 black mass, in which all bind themselves to Ahab's blasphemous
 purpose '. . . drink and swear, ye men . . . Death to Moby-Dick!
 God hunt us all, if we do not hunt Moby-Dick to his death!'"
 (Thompson 185).

This passage follows the scene where Ahab nails the gold doubloon to the main-mast as a reward for the first man who sights Moby-Dick.

It is also called the splicing scene. The ceremony begins on deck as Ahab calls for a brimming pitcher and orders the crew to stand before him with their weapons: the harpooners with their harpoons, the mates with their weapons, and the rest of the men forming a circle around the group. Melville describes the scene:

"Drink and pass!" he cried, handing the heavy charged flagon to the nearest seaman. The crew alone now drink. Round with it, round! Short draughts--long swallows, men, 'tis hot as Satan's hoof. So, so; it does round excellently. It spiralizes in ye; forks out at the serpent-snapping eye. Well done; almost drained" (146).

It may be seen, then, that for the second time the two authors treat the same subject in opposite moods; Rabelais has used a serious tone regarding Lent, while Melville treats Lent comically. Here Rabelais uses humor in his chapter on the mass, but Melville in turn is highly serious.

Another form of religious observance that both Rabelais and Melville satirize is the sermon. Mushabec comments on Rabelais's "turning inside out the popular form of the sermon" (10). Auerbach says of Rabelais's debt to the sermon: "much as he hated the mendicant orders, their flavorful and earthy style, graphic to the point of ludicrousness, was exactly suited to his temperament and his purpose, and no one ever got so much out of it as he" (Mushabec 164). In a later passage Mushabec finds sermons in both books:

The great throat swallows, the great mouth talks. Rabelais's book, like Melville's afterwards, is a teasing ventriloquistic performance. Panurge through three volumes [Mushabec includes Book V] only wishes to know whether he should marry or not, as Pip later in an incident central to Moby-Dick only wants to know if he is supposed to jump from the whaleboat or not. All they get is talk--long, endlessly pompous, contradictory sermons (91).

Frame finds an overt sermon, "a 'short and holy' lay sermon, full of scriptural passages, by Pantagruel," upon the departure of the fleet at the beginning of Book IV. Rabelais tells us that, at

the general meeting [of all the travellers], Pantagruel made a short but sweet exhortation, wholly backed with authorities from the Scripture upon navigation; which being ended, with an audible voice prayers were said in the presence and hearing of all the burghers . . . who had flocked to the mole to see them shipping. After the prayers, was melodiously sung a psalm of the holy King David, which begins "When Israel went out of Egypt"; and that being ended, tables were placed upon deck, and a feast speedily served up (IV, 244).

Following this highly serious service, all hands take part in the feasting and drinking more typical in Rabelais.

The final religious topic to be considered is hell. Mischievous little devils frequent Rabelais's pages, but there is only one extended treatment of hell. Chapter XXX in Book II is entitled: "How

Epistemon, Who Had His Head Cut Off, Was Finely Healed by Panurge and of the News Which He Brought From the Devils, and of the Damned People in Hell" (II, 395). Epistemon's head has been cut off in battle, but Panurge sews it back on, restoring him to this world. Upon regaining consciousness, "he began to speak, and said, that he had seen the devil, had spoken with Lucifer familiarly, and had been very merry in hell, and in the Elysian fields, affirming very seriously before them all, that the devils were boon companions, and merry fellows" (396).

Commenting that the hell he has seen is not so bad as he has been led to believe, Epistemon names a host of classical and historic figures, along with their fitting punishment: for example, "Cleopatra, a crier of onions," and Helen, "a broker [procurer] for chamber-maids" (403). Rabelais reserves his sharpest digs for popes:

Pope Julius was a crier of pudding pies,
but he left off wearing there his great
buggerly beard. (401).

.

Pope Alexander, a rat-catcher.

Pope Sixtus, an anointer of those who have
the pox (402).

.

Pope Calixtus was a barber of women's
sine qua non.

Pope Urban, a bacon-picker (403).

Urging Epistemon to "reserve all these fair stories for another time, only tell us how the usurers are there handled," Pantagruel ends the discussion. Epistemon responds:

"I saw them . . . all very busily employed in seeking of rusty pins and old nails in the kennels of the streets, as you see poor wretched rogues do in this world. But the quintal, or hundred-weight, of this old iron ware is there valued but at the price of a cantle of bread, and yet they have but a very bad dispatch and riddance in the sale of it. Thus the poor misers are sometimes three whole weeks without eating one morsel or crumb of bread, and yet work both day and night, looking for the fair to come. Nevertheless, of all this labor, toil, and misery, they reckon nothing so cursedly active they are in the prosecution of that their base calling, in hopes, at the end of the year, to earn some scurvy penny by it" (406).

Another play on the word "devil" describes an incident in the Cake Peddlers' War. Gymnast, on a military errand, is accosted by a Captain Tripet, to whom he offers his bottle. The following conversation ensues:

Gymnast: Hold, captain, drink boldly and spare not;
I have been thy taster, it is wine of La Faye
Monjau.

Tripet: What! This fellow gybes and flouts us? Who
art thou?

Gymnast: I am a poor devil (pauvre diable).

Tripet: Ha, seeing thou art a poor devil, it is reason that thou shouldst be permitted to go whithersoever thou wilt, for all poor devils pass everywhere without toll or tax. But it is not the custom of poor devils to be so well mounted; therefore, Sir Devil, come down, and let me have your horse, and if he do not carry me well, you, Master Devil, must do it; for I love a life that such a devil as you should carry me away (I, 136-37).

Like Rabelais, Melville often speaks of the devil humorously. We have already seen his quip about the origin of the idea of hell (82). Upon first seeing Tashtego, Ishmael describes him in satanic terms: "To look at the tawny brawn of his lithe snaky [emphasis added] limbs, you would almost have credited the superstitions of some of the earlier Puritans, and half believed this wild Indian to be a son of the Powers of the Air" (107). He describes the "phantoms" of Ahab's boat crew as "a race notorious for a certain diabolism of subtility, and by some honest white mariners supposed to be the paid spies and secret confidential agents on the water of the devil, their lord, whose counting-room they suppose to be elsewhere" (187). Speaking later about the oriental phantoms, Ishmael notes that their types are often picked up as castaways, and "that Beelzebub himself might climb up the side and step down into the cabin to chat with the captain, and

it would not create any unsubduable excitement in the forecastle" (198). And, "according to Genesis, the angels indeed consorted with the daughters of men, the devils also, add the uncanonical Rabbins" (199). Of the sharks feasting on Stubb's whale, he says, "If you have never seen that sight, then suspend your decision about the propriety of devil-worship, and the expediency of conciliating the devil" (250). Stubb comments to Flask, "I take that Fedallah to be the devil in disguise. . . . He's the devil, I say. The reason you don't see his tail, is because he tucks it up out of sight; he keeps it coiled away in his pocket, I guess" (275).

Both authors seem to look upon the devil as a source of laughter, thus following the tradition rooted in medieval drama of presenting the devil as a comic figure. We have also seen that the Pantagruel of folk tradition was a little devil. Even the aura of evil surrounding Ahab's oriental boat crew is somewhat dissipated when allusions to them are examined closely.

All these passages illustrate the major similarities in religious satire of Rabelais and Melville. There are minor shots at religious bigotry such as Melville's puns on the dome of St. Peter's and archbishops, and the chapter called "The Cassock" deserves attention. But the main parallels--the miraculous birth; baptism; fasting/Lent/Ramadan; the mass; sermons; popes and other church officials; and the devil/hell--have been covered. It becomes obvious that Melville felt an empathy with the spirit of Rabelais that enriched his writing, especially in Moby-Dick.

CHAPTER III

ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN

An attitude that Rabelais and Melville share is, in contemporary terms, a chauvinistic attitude toward women. At its worst, this attitude amounts to exploitation of women; at its least serious, women are set up as comic caricatures. Both writers reflect the ideas about women current in their times.

Book III of Rabelais is devoted to the problem of marriage for Panurge (all urge); the whole question is whether or not a wife will cuckold him. Putnam writes that Book III

was launched in the midst of a literary battle, one that raged with special violence from about 1542 to about 1550 (the Third Book was published in 1546), and it is, in a manner, an episode in this battle. The literary conflict referred to is the one known as the "Querelle des femmes," or Woman Question, a controversy that had begun as far back as the fifteenth century and had been carried over into the sixteenth, reaching its peak of intensity on the eve of the Religious Wars. Dividing writers and their readers into two sharply defined and bitterly opposed camps, this controversy had come to include the entire subject of Feminism (369-70).

Lefranc, a controversial writer who saw Rabelais as a woman-hater, had a profound effect on Rabelais scholarship. He argues thus:

One may say . . . that from 1450, or thereabouts, down the years that witnessed the beginning of the Reformation, marriage appeared as an institution badly battered in the breach. The attacks and satires directed against it are found to be infinitely more numerous than the panegyrics. It furnished a facile and a merry theme for a number of semi-popular laments (Putnam 370).

By the sixteenth century the controversy became more serious. As Putnam writes, "This was, in no small degree, due to the revival of classical learning and to the developments that were taking place in medicine, law, and the natural sciences" (370). Two influential works of this period were Sylvae nuptialis libri sex . . . An nubendum sit, vel non, six books on the subject: to wed or not to wed, by the jurisconsult Jean Nevizan; and De Legibus Connubialibus (On Marriage Laws) by a legal friend of Rabelais, André Tiraqueau. Both works were reprinted many times, with the last edition of the second printed in 1546, the publication date of Book III (Putnam 370-71).

"Woman," as Lefranc says, "tended to play a larger and larger social rôle; her place was no longer merely at the fireside; her sole mission was no longer to see to the affairs of the household; she was looking forward to an equal footing with man" (Putnam 372). For, as Putnam comments, "The feminists, as well as the anti-feminists, had their doughty spokesmen" (371). A feminist spokesman who replied to Tiraqueau was Amaury Bouchard, the author of Apology for the Feminist Sex, the Tes gynaikeais phytles, id est Feminei sexus apologia (1522) (Putnam 371).

Other factors that reflected women's changing status in the sixteenth century were:

the splendor of the great courts of the time--those of England, France, and Spain--and the political and literary success that women were achieving there. The Queen of Navarre, author of the Heptameron [a decastich "To the Spirit of the Queen of Navarre" precedes the first edition of Book III], was not the only outstanding figure. There were a number of others. Among these others, to mention only a few of the better known, were Joan of Aragon, painted by Raphael and celebrated by Niphus in the latter's pioneer work, which some scholars look upon as the beginning of modern aesthetics, the De Pulchro et Amore; Vittoria Colonna, Michelangelo's perduring innamorata; Diane de Poitiers; Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's beheaded queen, to whom a reference has been seen in this book; Catherine de' Medici; Mary Stuart; Queen Elizabeth; Sir Thomas More's daughters; and any number of others (372).

One critic has seen Rabelais himself as "one of the most notorious, dangerous, and typical enemies of the feminine sex" (possibly Lefranc, Putnam does not identify him, 372). He makes unfavorable references to women in the first two books (for example, Badebec's grotesque death and Gargantua's ambivalent response to it). Lefranc sees the Abbey of Thélème in which everything is to be "according to the will of the ladies" and in the first book the passing praise for ladies who have sought the "heavenly manna" of education as "momentary effusions."

He goes on to comment that in the first two books "woman is either absent from the other portions . . . or is there treated with little sympathy" (372). In Lefranc's terms, even Theleme "glorifies women for the reason that such a glorification is necessary to Rabelais' picture of an antimonastic society" (373). He continues, "In reality, this former monk was not a lover of women; he obviously remains faithful to the old gauloise tradition . . . with regard to the weaker sex. . . . The Franciscan of Fontenay-le-Comte, friend of Tiraqueau, was ever alive in him" (373).

As Putnam summarizes Lefranc,

The two traditions--the satiric gauloise attitude and the idealistic one--have always existed, side by side, in France. During the decade from 1530 to 1540, an attempt was made to give the old chivalric ideal of courtoisie a new meaning and a new life. The movement grew in strength, and it is not strange that cries of alarm were soon raised against it. Among those to sound the alarm was Gratian (or Gratien) Dupont, Seigneur de Drusac. His Controverses de sexe masculin et feminin (Controversies on the Masculine and the Feminine Sex [sic]), a vast poem in three books containing only a succession of violent invectives against women, was published at Toulouse, in 1534. (It may be noted, parenthetically, that the author was reported to have been unhappily married.) This was one of the works on which Rabelais drew (373).

Though there are more recent critics who see Lefranc's position as extreme, most agree that Rabelais treats women unfavorably. One such critic is M. A. Screech, who comments: "Rabelais was not (I think) the violent anti-feminist that some made him out to be, but he was closer, most of the time no doubt, to the distrustful attitude of Tiraqueau than to the enthusiastic feminism of Amaury Bouchard" (Screech 190).

Stronger than the words of the critics are the words of the Maitre himself. In all four books, Rabelais presents only three flesh and blood women; of these three women he identifies only two by name. The third woman is identified only as a lady of Paris, the victim of a cruel joke Panurge plays on her in revenge for his unrequited love. The first and second women are Gargamelle, the mother of Gargantua, and Badebec, the mother of Pantagruel. Both women give birth, and, their function served, are dropped from the narrative (Badebec dies). Not only are their names unpleasant, but they give birth in a most unpleasant manner.

At the beginning of Book I, Grangousier marries Gargamelle, in the vigour of his age. . . . These two did oftentimes the two-backed beast together, joyfully rubbing and frotting their bacon against one another, in so far, that at last she became great with child of a fair son, and went with him into the eleventh month; for so long, yea longer, may a woman carry her great belly, especially when it is some master-piece of nature, and a person predestined to the

performance, in due time, of great exploits (I, 10).

There follows the epic similie that Rabelais is so fond of, an extended comparison of Gargamelle's eleven-month pregnancy with even longer pregnancies of classical mythological figures:

As Homer says, that the child, which Neptune begot upon the Nymph, was born a whole year after the conception, that is in the twelfth month. . . . [and] Jupiter made the night he lay with Alcema, last forty-eight hours, a shorter time not being sufficient for the forging of Hercules (I, 10).

From epic similie Rabelais descends to pseudo-legalese combined with pseudo-medical jargon to support "the ancient Pantagruelists [who] have confirmed that which I say, and withal declared it to be not only possible, but also maintained the lawful birth and legitimation of the infant born of a woman in the eleventh month after the decease of her husband" (I, 11). The result of these learned opinions is, Rabelais says:

[the] means whereof the honest widows may without danger play at the close buttock game with might and main, and as hard as they can for the space of the first two months after the decease of their husbands. . . . [For], if they happen within the third month to conceive, the child shall be heir to the deceased, if, before he died, he had no other children, and the mother shall pass for an honest woman (I, 11).

Having left his readers with a double reason for Gargamelle's eleven-month pregnancy--either she is carrying a heroic son or there

are other reasons--the pregnancy is interrupted:

The occasion and manner which Gargamelle was brought to bed and delivered of her child, was thus: and, if you do not believe it, I wish your bum-gut may fall out, and make an escapade. Her bum-gut, indeed, or fundament escaped her in an afternoon, on the third day of February, with having eaten at dinner too many godebillios [tripes]. . . . They had abundance of tripes, as you have heard, and they were so delicious that everyone licked their fingers. . . . Nevertheless he [Grangousier] bid his wife eat sparingly, because she was near her time. . . . Notwithstanding these admonitions, she did eat sixteen quarters, two bushels, three pecks, and a pipkin full (13-14).

Following dinner comes the famous drinking scene (Chapter V: "How They Chirped Over Their Cups"), in which "Gargamelle began to be a little unwell in her lower parts" (21). Cheering her on, Grangousier urges her "On with a sheep's courage" (21). He bids her "Dispatch this boy, and we will speedily fall to work for the making of another" (14). Not until an "old ugly trot . . . who had the repute of an expert she-physician" administers a vile potion does Gargamelle give birth, and that in a most unusual way:

the cotyledons of her matrix were presently loosened, through which the child sprung up and leaped, and so, entering into the hollow vein, did climb by the diaphragm even above her shoulders, where the vein divides itself

into two, and from thence taking his way toward the left side, issued forth at her left ear (22-24).

With Gargantua's birth accomplished in this grotesque manner, Gargamelle, having no further function, is allowed to drop out of the picture. Pantagruel's mother, Badebec, is not so fortunate:

For when his mother Badebec was in the bringing of him forth, and that the midwives did wait to receive him, there came first out of her belly three score and eight tregeneers, that is, salt-sellers, every one of them leading in a halter, a mule heavy laden with salt; after whom issued forth nine dromedaries, with great loads of gammons of bacon, and dried neats' tongues on their backs. Then followed seven camels loaded with links and chitterlings, hogs' puddings, and sausages. After them came out five great wains, full of leaks, garlick, onions, and chibots, drawn with five-and-thirty strong cart-horses, which was six for every one besides the thiller. At the sight hereof the said midwives were much amazed (II, 237).

Badebec is not so fortunate as Gargamelle, for she dies in giving birth to Pantagruel. Gargantua, torn between mourning Badebec ["Ah, Badebec, Badebec, my minoin, my dear heart, my sugar, my sweeting, my honey, my little coney . . . my tender peggy, my cod-piece darling, my bob and hit, my slipshoe-lovie, never shall I see thee (II, 237)] and celebrating his son's birth, rationalizes that we all have to die sometime and philosophizes: "Let her pass, then, and the Lord preserve

the survivors; for I must now cast about how to get another wife" (240).

These two grotesques are present in the early chapters of Books I and II; having served their function, conceiving, carrying and giving birth to heroes, the only identifiable women characters have their hour onstage at the beginning of the first two books and are heard of no more. In Moby-Dick also the only two women characters have their hour onstage at the beginning of the novel and are heard of no more. (Aunt Charity's ginger tea does resurface later.)

Mrs. Hussey, the landlady of the Try Pots, bears a name with unfavourable connotations. (The names of Gargamelle and Badebuc do not run trippingly on the tongue, but only the latter has unfavourable connotations.) Ishmael first sees Mrs. Hussey in surroundings he compares to "Tophet" (64). In his words:

Two enormous wooden pots painted black, and suspended by asses' ears, swung from the cross-trees of an old top-mast, planted in front of an old doorway. The horns [emphasis added] of the cross-trees were sawed off on the other side, so that this old top-mast looked not a little like a gallows. Perhaps I was over sensitive to such impressions at the time, but I could not help staring at this gallows with a vague misgiving. A sort of crick was in my neck as I gazed up to the two remaining horns [emphasis added]; yes, two of them, one for Queequeg, and one for me. It's ominous, thinks I. A Coffin my Inn-keeper upon landing in my first whaling port; tombstones staring at me in the whalemens

chapel; and here a gallows! and a pair of prodigious black pots too! Are these last throwing out oblique hints touching Tophet? (64; the significance of the horns will be discussed later.)

The rest is anticlimax; the Mrs. Hussey whom Ishmael first sees in this hellish scene as "a freckled woman with yellow hair and a yellow gown, standing in the porch of the inn, under a dull lamp hanging there" (64), upon closer acquaintance is actually the landlady concerned with "Clam or cod?" (Her frequent reiterations of this question to all the customers often seem to be echoes of a dominant theme in Rabelais, the cod-piece, particularly Panurge's cod-piece.) Not only is there Mrs. Hussey's ubiquitous clam chowder, but she wears "a polished necklace of codfish vertebrae" (65). There is also a peculiarly

fishy flavor to the milk . . . which I [Ishmael] could not at all account for, till one morning happening to take a stroll along the beach among some fishermen's boats, I saw Hosea's brindled cow feeding on fish remnants, and marching along the sand with each foot in a cod's decapitated head, looking very slipshod, I assure ye (65).

Aside from serving her customers clam or cod chowder, Mrs. Hussey's main concern seems to be protecting her property, particularly her counterpanes, from suicides. The implement of suicide she is concerned with is the harpoon, which she insists that the men who are staying at the Try Pots leave downstairs. (The harpoons connected with Mrs. Hussey and her counterpanes would seem to look forward to the lady

harpooned in the chapter entitled "Fast Fish and Loose Fish.")

If Melville draws upon Mrs. Hussey's comic attributes, then he has even more fun with Aunt Charity, Captain Bildad's sister, "a lean old lady of a most determined and indefatigable spirit, but withal very kindhearted . . . who has taken upon herself the mission of providing the Pequod with everything that could possibly be needed on the three-year voyage, however trivial" (89-90). Melville describes her efforts:

At one time she would come on board with a jar of pickles for the steward's pantry; another time with a bunch of quills for the chief mate's desk, where he kept his log; a third time with a roll of flannel for the small of some one's rheumatic back (89-90).

But Aunt Charity is not just a comic busybody; in Melville's terms this representative of the biblical highest virtue is herself a clanging cymbal:

Never did any woman better deserve her name, which was Charity--Aunt Charity, as everybody called her. And like a sister of charity did this charitable Aunt Charity bustle about hither and thither, ready to turn her hand and heart to anything that promised to yield safety, comfort, and consolation to all on board a ship in which her beloved brother Bildad was concerned, and in which she herself owned a score or two of well-saved dollars (90).

And it is interesting that Aunt Charity, like Mrs. Hussey, is associated with harpoons. As the Pequod is being outfitted, Melville says, "It was startling to see this excellent hearted Quakeress coming on board, as she did the last day, with a long oil-ladle in one hand, and a still longer whaling lance in the other" (90).

The harpoons connected to Mrs. Hussey and Aunt Charity become more significant in the chapter called "Fast Fish and Loose Fish," where the harpoon is used as an obvious phallic symbol. Melville details a litigation over possession of a whale prosecuted in England some fifty years earlier. Mr. Erskine represented the defendants. In the process of the defence, he cited a similar court case:

A recent crim, con. case [a case of "criminal conversation"-- that is, adultery], wherein a gentleman after in vain trying to bridle his wife's viciousness, had at last abandoned her upon the seas of life; but in the course of years, repenting that step, he instituted an action to recover possession of her. He then proceeded to say that, though the gentleman had originally harpooned [emphasis added] the lady, and had once had her fast, and only by reason of the great stress of her plunging viciousness, had at last abandoned her; yet abandon her he did, so that she became a loose-fish [note the double entendre]; and therefore when a subsequent gentleman re-harpooned [emphasis added] her, the lady then became that subsequent gentleman's property, along with

whatever harpoon [emphasis added] might have been found sticking in her (332).

So it appears that, consciously or unconsciously, Melville associates Mrs. Hussey and Aunt Charity, who have had their brief hour onstage, with the identical phallic symbol here discussed so explicitly and unmistakably.

The horns of the Try Pots sign relate to the cuckold's horns in Rabelais's Book III. Near the beginning of this volume, Panurge asks Pantagruel for advice on whether or not he should marry. Pantagruel does not give him a direct answer, but hedges equivocally, suggesting that Panurge seek an answer through interpretation of a dream. Early the next morning, in a chamber with Pantagruel and several friends and advisors, Panurge relates a dream he has had the previous night. Puzzled, he says that, "Dreamed indeed I have, and that right lustily" (III, 3). He has dreamed of a "pretty, fair, gallant, handsome woman" who treated him as if he were Adonis" (III, 3). She played a little game with him, "flattered me, tickled me, stroked me, laid her hands about my neck, and now and then made jestingly, pretty little horns above my forehead" (III, 3).

Pantagruel interprets Panurge's dream:

To my sense and meaning . . . if I have skill or knowledge in the art of divination by dreams, your wife will not really and to the outward appearance of the world, plant, or set horns, and stick them fast in your forehead, after a visible manner, as satyrs used to wear and carry them; but she will

be so far from preserving herself loyal in the discharge and observance of a conjugal duty, that on the contrary, she will violate her plighted faith, break her marriage oath, infringe all matrimonial ties, prostitute her body to the dalliance of other men, and so make you a cuckold (4).

This episode inspires a quest, first to consult learned authorities in Utopia (where Books I, II, and III are set), to find out whether Panurge's marrying would indeed make him a cuckold. Having exhausted Utopian authorities without finding anyone who will assure him that marriage will not have such an adverse result, he, Pantagruel, and their closest friends and advisors set off upon a quest voyage in search of the "Oracle of Bacbuc, Alias the Holy Bottle" (IV, 242), a voyage that turns out to be an endless voyage (Book V, published after Rabelais's death, has not been accepted by all authorities as genuine. Too, there is no record of Melville's having read Book V.)

With Panurge's fear of becoming a cuckold, the dominant image shifts in Book III from the cod-piece to the emblem of the cuckold, horns. It seems to me that the horns associated with Mrs. Hussey (and Ishmael and Queequeg) at the Try Pots may be symbolic as well. Horns are mentioned later in the novel, for there is a cetology chapter where a "Narwhale" is described. This whale has a "peculiar horn [emphasis added], which is 'but a lengthened tusk'" (124). The Narwhale is also called a "Horned whale" [emphasis added] or a "Unicorn whale" (124). This whale was the source of a gift presented to the Queen, Melville tells us:

Black Letter tells me that Sir Martin Frobisher on his return from that voyage, when Queen Bess did gallantly wave her jewelled hand to him from a window of Greenwich Palace, as his bold ship sailed down the Thames; "when Sir Martin returned from that voyage," saith Black Letter, "on bended knees he presented to her highness a prodigious long horn [emphasis added] of the Narwhale, which for a long period after hung in the castle at Windsor." An Irish author avers that the Earl of Leicester, on bended knees, did likewise present to her highness another horn [emphasis added], pertaining to a land beast of the unicorn nature (125).

A note tells the reader that "The 'land beast' is the Earl of Leicester himself, who was the Queen's favorite" (125).

An example of Panurge's exploitation of women is his suggestion of a cheap way to rebuild the crumbling walls of Paris: "a pretty, strange, and new way" (II, 328). He says to Pantagruel:

I see that the sine qua nons, callibistris, or contrapunctums of the women of this country are cheaper than stones. Of them should the walls be built, ranging them in good symmetry by the rules of architecture, and placing the largest in the first ranks, then sloping downwards ridgeways, like the back of an ass. The middle-sized ones must be ranked next, and last of all the least and smallest. This done, there must be a fine little interlacing of them, like points of diamonds, as is to be seen in the great tower of Bourges,

with a like number of the nudinnudos, nilnisistandos, and stiff bracmards, that dwell in amongst the claustral cod-pieces. What devil were able to overthrow such walls? (328-29).

Panurge's absurd suggestion would make every woman in Paris public property, a concept similar to the argument presented by Mr. Erskine in the court case already described (M-D 332). In Chapter 89, "Fast Fish and Loose Fish," as attorney for the defense in litigation over who owns a whale, he argues that the "example of the whale and the [harpooned] lady were reciprocally illustrative of each other" (332).

In fine comic form, Melville exuberantly carries on in the spirit of Rabelais with this and the next chapter, called "Heads or Tails." The question debated in this chapter is also property rights. The epigraph, "De balena vero sufficit, si rex habeat caput, et regina caudam," may be translated as "Concerning the whale, truly it suffices, if the king have the head, and the queen the tail" (334). The "real property" here is not the queen, but the whale. Melville writes that "Latin from the books of the Laws of England . . . means, that of all whales captured by anybody on the coast of that land, the King, as Honorary Grand Harpooneer, must have the head, and the Queen be respectfully presented with the tail" (334).

In discussing this law, Melville comments that "an allegorical meaning may lurk here" (336). The "allegorical" passage is worth quoting in its entirety:

In his treatise on "Queen-gold," or Queen-pinmoney, an old King's Bench author, one William Prynne, thus discourseth: "Ye tail is y^e Queen's, that y^e Queen's wardrobe may be supplied with y^e whalebone." Now this was written at a time when the black limber bone of the Greenland or Right Whale was largely used in ladies' bodices. But this same bone is not in the tail; it is in the head, which is a sad mistake for a sagacious lawyer like Prynne. But is the Queen a mermaid, to be presented with a tail? 334).

Whatever Melville's "allegorical meaning" is, no doubt it is at the expense of the female sex. Rabelais's outrageous anti-hero, Panurge, after being rejected by a woman of Paris, plays a cruel joke upon her. Panurge, having become the man of the hour, is celebrated by the ladies of Paris for defeating the Englishman in the disputation of signs. He is praised by everyone, a song is written about him, and little children sing his praise. Being welcome in the homes of great ladies, "he became presumptuous, and went about to bring to his lure one of the greatest ladies in the city" (357). Skipping the preliminaries, Panurge gets straight to the point, and the following dialogue ensues:

Panurge: Madame, it would be a very great benefit to the commonwealth, and delightful to you, honourable to your progeny, and necessary for me, that I cover you for the propagating of my race; and believe it, for the experience will teach it to you.

Lady: You mischievous fool, is it for you to talk thus to me? Whom do you think you have in hand? Be gone, never to come in my sight again; for if one thing were not, I would have your arms and legs cut off.

Panurge: Well . . . that were all one to me, to want both legs and arms, provided you and I had but one merry bout together.

Lady: Go, villain, go. If you speak to me one such word more, I will cry out, and make you to be knocked down with blows.

Panurge: How happy shall that man be to whom you shall grant that favour to embrace her, to kiss her, and to rub his bacon with hers! . . . That shall be I, I know it well; for she loves me already her belly full, I am sure of it; and so I was predestinated to it by the fairies. And, therefore, that we lose no time, put on, thrust out your gammons!

The lady's response is to look out her window in an attempt to call for help. Panurge beats a hasty retreat (357-58).

Rebuffed twice more the next day, in church and in the lady's home, Panurge plots revenge. He prepares a potion from parts of a female dog in heat, encloses it in a love poem that he hands to the lady in church. She is dressed in her best, "a rich gown of crimson

satin, under which she wore a very costly white velvet petticoat" (361). Assaulted by "all the dogs that were in church," who spoil her handsome attire, the attempts by other women in church to beat off the dogs are of no avail. When she runs out of church, Panurge watches with great satisfaction and goes along the streets, urging all the dogs he meets to join in the fray. The scene is indeed a spectacle, as Rabelais describes it:

But the best was at the procession, in which were seen above six hundred thousand and fourteen dogs about her, which did very much trouble and molest her, and whithersoever she past [sic], those dogs that came afresh, tracing her footsteps, followed at her heels. . . . All the world stood gazing at this spectacle, considering the countenance of those dogs, who, leaping up, got about her neck, and spoiled all her gorgeous accoutrements, for which she could find no remedy, but to retire unto her house, which was a palace (363).

This unfortunate lady is the last representative of her sex to take part in the action of the Works; Books II and III deal mainly with the question of whether or not Panurge should marry; that is, whether or not he will be cuckolded if he does. Women are absent, too, from the rest of Moby-Dick. There are passing references to wives left at home, and to "olive-hued" Polynesian girls glimpsed on the deck of the Bachelor. The other females discussed at length are of another species. Rosenberry finds what he calls the "whale-man metaphor" running throughout the novel (108). In Chapter 88, "Schools

and Schoolmasters," Melville uses that metaphor to lead into his most direct treatment of what he might have called "the fair sex." He points out that there have been seen "small detached bands . . . embracing from twenty to fifty individuals each," called schools (328). These bands are composed exclusively of females or "young, vigorous males or bulls." Melville describes their habits thus:

In cavalier attendance upon the school of females, you invariably see a male of full grown magnitude, but not old; who, upon any alarm, evinces his gallantry by falling in the rear and covering the flight of his ladies. In truth, this gentleman is a luxurious Ottoman, swimming about over the watery world, surroundingly accompanied by all the solaces and endearments of the harem. The contrast between this Ottoman and his concubines is striking; because, while he is always of the largest leviathanic proportions, the ladies, even at full growth, are not more than one third of the bulk of the average-sized male. They are comparatively delicate, indeed; I dare say, not to exceed half a dozen yards around the waist. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied, that they are hereditarily entitled to en bon point (328).

Melville describes the migrations of "this harem and its lord in their indolent ramblings. Like fashionables they are for ever on the move in leisurely search of variety" (328). The metaphor of person shifts to one of place:

You meet them on the Line in time for the full flower of the Equatorial feeding season, having just returned, perhaps, from spending the summer in the Northern seas, and so cheating summer of all unpleasant weariness and warmth. By the time they have lounged up and down the promenade of the Equator awhile, they start for the Oriental waters in anticipation of the cool season there, and so evade the other excessive temperature of the year (328-29).

Throughout these journeys, "my lord whale" defends his ladies from any approach from "any unwarrantably pert young leviathan" (329). The Bashaw attacks these "unprincipled young rakes" to protect "the sanctity of domestic bliss," no matter how unsuccessful he may be, for "he cannot keep the most notorious Lothario out of his bed; for alas! all fish bed in common" (329). Thus the Ottoman whale and Rabelais's Panurge share a common fear: cuckoldum. And the ladies seem to enjoy it, even to delight in it:

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. They fence with their long lower jaws, sometimes locking them together, and so striving for the supremacy like elks that warringly interweave their antlers. Not a few are captured having the deep scars of these encounters,--furrowed heads, broken teeth, scolloped [sic] fins; and in some instances, wrenched and dislocated mouths (329).

It would appear then, that both Melville and Ranelais are saying that women are not to be trusted; the young ones will cuckold their husbands; and all the others are ugly old trots. The only defense against women is to make them the objects of obscene jokes. The world has changed very little for three hundred years. It is only in the twentieth century that women are judged on their own merits, and not stereotyped as silly fools whose virtue is questionable.

CHAPTER IV

OF STORMS AND WILLS

There is disagreement over whether the Quart Livre and Moby-Dick may be classified as epics.¹ Tetel finds that, taken as a whole, the Fourth Book parodies the epic and the literature of imaginary voyages: "No epic voyage leaves out the storm at sea, an episode which shows the courage of the heroes and casts them against the stronger forces of Nature" (73). For Greene,

A subtler dialectic emerges from the great tempest in chapters 18-24, one of the showpieces of the volume. This episode is important, aside from its artistic mastery, because its turbulence places a greater strain on the cheerful comic surface of the book than has any previous episode. . . .

At the height of the storm, Rabelais successfully us to fear for his heroes' safety" (90).

Thompson writes that,

the climactic action in Moby-Dick occurs in the . . . storm scene of "The Candles" chapter. . . . Thereafter, the remainder of the narrative may be considered as the falling action, because the outcome is certain, even though we as

¹Chase claims that "Moby-Dick is an American epic; so far it seems to be the American epic" (100).

readers may not be able to anticipate the details of that outcome (229-31).

Rabelais gives his voyagers some warning of their storm at sea:

[Pantagrue] whose watch it was observing the fluttering of the ancient above the poop, and seeing that it began to overcast, judged that we should have wind; therefore he bid [sic] the boatswain call all hands upon deck, officers, sailors, foremast-men, swabbers, and cabin-boys, and even the passengers; made them first settle their top-sails, take in their sprit-sail; then he cried, "In with your top-sails, lower the fore-sail, tallow under the parrels, brade up close all them [sic] sails, strike your top-masts to the cap, make all sure with your sheepsfeet, lash your guns fast (307-08).

Then follows, as Tetel puts it, "The description of the mounting waves at the beginning of the storm scene [which] has a pseudo-epic tone" (73):

Immediately it blowed a storm; the sea began to roar, and swell mountain high: the rut of the sea was great, the waves breaking upon our ship's quarter; the north-west wind blustered and over-blowed; boisterous gusts, dreadful clashing and deadly scuds of wind whistled through our yards, and made our shrouds rattle again. The thunder grumbled so horridly, that you would have thought heaven had been tumbling about our ears; at the same time it lightened, rained, hailed; the sky lost its transparent hue, grew dusky, thick, and

gloomy, so that we had no other light than that of the flashes of lightning, and rending of the clouds: the hurricanes, flaws, and sudden whirlwinds began to make a flame about us, by the lightnings, firey vapours, and other aerial ejaculations. Oh how our looks were full of amazement and trouble, while the saucy winds did rudely lift up above us the mountainous waves of the main (308).

Unlike Pantagrue's ship, the Pequod is not forewarned, for "the direst of all storms, the Typhoon . . . burst from out that cloudless sky, like an exploding bomb upon a dazed and sleepy town The Pequod was torn of her canvas, and bare-poled left to fight a Typhoon which had struck her directly ahead" (413). Melville describes the scene in words that echo those of Rabelais:

When darkness came on, sky and sea roared and split with the thunder, and blazed with the lightning, that showed the disabled masts fluttering here and there with the rags which the first fury of the tempest had left for its after sport.

Holding by a shroud, Starbuck was standing on the quarter-deck; at every flash of lightning glancing aloft, to see what additional disaster might have befallen the intricate hamper there; while Stubb and Flask were directing the men in the higher hoisting and firmer lashing of the boats. But all their pains seemed naught. Though lifted to the very top of the cranes, the windward quarter boat (Ahab's) did not escape. A great rolling sea, dashing high up

against the reeling ship's high tetering side, stove in the boat's bottom at the stern, and left it again, all dripping through like a sieve (413).

In Rabelais, the narrative opening of the storm scene is followed by what Greene calls a "cacaphonous chorus of voices whose alternating hysteria and resolution communicate the fury of the elements with extraordinary force" (91). He continues:

As the danger mounts, Rabelais creates a kind of complex tonal effect which is only within the grasp of the most accomplished comic writers: a fusion of genuine terror with the humor of Panurge's incoherent obbligato punctuated with the profane explosions of Frère Jean's virile scorn. Through the discord of this unholy duet, and through the crash and thunder of the tempest, we hear the steady calls of hard-pressed mariners and, also, more rarely the calm prayer of Pantagruel (91).

Common to both works is this use of dialogue instead of narration to depict the scenes. Tetel remarks that, "Contrary to many of its predecessors, the [storm] episode is not narrated, but acted out; it is composed of animated dialogues that convey the action" (74-75). The following passage illustrates Tetel's point:

Luff, luff, luff the helm.

Done, done! said the sailors.

Keep her up . . . bring her round . . . so, ho, high!

hoist, haul!

Golden words! Friar John commented.

Hoist hoist; haul, haul! A little elbow grease, your guts
into it, lads, and we've done the trick!

Luff, luff, Starboard . . . helm . . .

The storm is almost spent; a little longer my hearties!

Praise God, our devils are slinging their hooks.

Out with your sails!

Larboard! larboard!

Let her go!

Slack man, give her slack . . . right! right!

Slack, luff (Tetel 75).

On this passage, Tetel remarks,

One may think that the juxtaposition of orders and counter-orders, with Panurge's incessant crying, produces confusion, but Rabelais uses this means to express the movement of the action. He pours into the description his considerable nautical vocabulary, which is derived from Spanish and Italian as well as French, dialects. These verbal edifices and their sonorous qualities contribute to the dynamic nature of the scene. The storm has rightly been called an artistic prodigy (75).

Of course Melville has no need to demonstrate his "considerable nautical vocabulary," for it is interwoven implicitly throughout Moby-Dick. But he too uses dialogue instead of narration to present a scene. The brief chapter 120, entitled "The Deck Toward the End of the First

Night Watch," gives us the time and place; the brief stage directions give us the characters and their positions: "Ahab standing by the helm. Starbuck approaching him." The rest of the chapter is presented entirely in dialogue:

"We must send down the main-top-sail, sir.

The band is working loose, and the lee lift is half-stranded.

Shall I strike it, sir?"

"Strike nothing; lash it. If I had sky-sail poles, I'd sway them up now."

"Sir?--in God's name!--sir?"

"Well."

"The anchors are working, sir. Shall I get them inboard?"

"Strike nothing, and stir nothing, but lash everything. The wind rises, but it has not got up to my table-lands yet. Quick and see to it.--By masts and keels! he takes me for the hunchbacked skipper of some coasting smack. Send down my maintop sail yard! Ho, gluepots! Loftiest trucks were made for wildest winds, and this brain-truck of mine now sails amid the cloudscud. Shall I strike that? Oh none but cowards send down their brain-trucks in tempest time. What a hooroosh aloft there! I would e'en take it for sublime did I not know that the colic is a noisy malady. Oh, take medicine, take medicine!" (418-19).

Another way the storm episodes are important is the testing or trying-out of character in the epic tradition. Tetel sees in Panurge

Friar John, and Pantagruel "a gradual spectrum of human behavior" (74).

Panurge, the picaresque rogue of Book III, regresses in the storm scene to a cowardly buffoon. Squatting on deck,

having, with the full contents of the inside of his doublet,
plentifully fed the fish, greedy enough of such odious fare,
sat on the deck all in a heap, with his nose and arse together,
most sadly cast down, moping and half dead; invoked and called
to his assistance all the blessed he and she saints he could
muster up (308).

Vowing to confess at the next opportunity, he promises to "build a fine large little chapel or two" (312-13). Paralyzed by fear, he is reduced to gibberish:

Oh ho, oh ho, be be be bous, bous, bhous,

I sink, I die, my friends.

I die in charity with all the world.

Farewell, in manus.

Bohous bohous, bhousowauswaus (IV, 312).

Tetel calls attention to the fact that Panurge, about to drown literally, "momentarily escapes by drowning himself in a flow of onomatopoeic words":

Ulbulbulbugh!

Ulbulbulugh! Grwh! Upckvomtchbg! . . .

O-o-o-o-o-o-h!

I sink, I drown, I peugh.

Where is heaven?

I cannot see where earth is!

Ugh! the only elements left us are fire and water . . .

Ububbubgrshlouwhftrz! (Tetel 74).

Aside from allegorical characters, Panurge now becomes the least sympathetic character in the Works. Although Stubb in Moby-Dick appears fearless, in the storm scene he admits his bravado hides cowardice: "But I am not a brave man; never said I was a brave man; I am a coward; and I sing to keep up my spirits" (414). Viewed in that light, Stubb's bravado in his ballad becomes a coverup for cowardice:

Oh! jolly is the gale,

And a joker is the whale,

A' flourishin' his tail,--

Such a funny, sporty, gamy, jesty, joky, hoky-poky lad
is the Ocean, oh!

The scud all a flyin',

That's his flip only foamin',

When he stirs in the spicin',--

Such a funny, sporty, gamy, jesty, joky, hoky-poky lad,
is the Ocean, oh!

Thunder splits the ships,

But he only smacks his lips,

A tastin' of this flip,--

Such a funny, sporty, gamy, jesty, joky, hoky-poky lad,
is the Ocean, oh! (413-14).

Melville would seem to imply in Stubb's inappropriate response to danger a false courage akin to Panurge's cowardice; Starbuck's quiet judgment--"if thou art a brave man thou wilt hold thy peace"--supports such an interpretation of Stubb's character.

Another Rabelaisian character whose mettle is tested by the storm at sea is Friar John. Tetel finds that "Panurge's physical idleness and verbal activity are contrasted to Friar John's physical activity as the latter helps to maintain the ship afloat" (74). This contrast is evident in narrative--"Friar John had stripped himself to his waistcoat to help the seamen"--(311) and in dialogue as he castigates Panurge for his cowardice: "Panurge the calf, Panurge the whiner, Panurge the brayer, would it not become thee much better to lend us here a helping hand, than to lie lowing like a cow, as thou dost, sitting on thy stones like a bald-breeched baboon?" (311).

In response to Panurge's plea to Friar John to hear his confession, the friar replies:

Come hither, and be damned, thou pitiful devil, and help
us . . . in the name of thirty legions of black devils, come,
will you come? . . . A thousand devils seize the cuckoldy,
cow-hearted mongrel Fye upon him, how ugly the shitten
howler looks, . . . Mind the pumps, or the devil choke thee
(312).

In Friar John's rejection of Panurge's fox-hole religiosity for realistic effort to save the ship, there is a similar pattern of realistic assessment of danger and practical response to danger in Starbuck's efforts to save the Pequod and her crew.

Starbuck's first response to Stubb's nonsensical song in the face of the typhoon is a plea for him to "hold thy peace" (414). That failing, Starbuck speaks sharply: "Madman! look through my eyes if thou hast none of thine own" (414). Another bantering reply leads Starbuck to use physical force, "seizing Stubb by the shoulder, and pointing his hand toward the weather bow, he cried,

markest thou not that the gale comes from the eastward, the very course Ahab is to run for Moby Dick? the very course he swung to this day noon?

.

Yes, yes, round the Cape of Good Hope is the shortest way to Nantucket. . . . The gale that now hammers at us to stave us, we can turn it into a fair wind that will drive us towards home (414).

The voice of reason that parallels that of Starbuck in Rabelais is that of a mature, serious Pantagruel, who "having first implored the help of the great and Almighty Deliverer, and prayed publicly with fervent devotion, by the pilot's advice held tightly the mast of the ship" (311). As peril becomes more imminent, Pantagruel's response reverently echoes that of Christ on the cross. He was then "heard to make a sad exclamation, saying, with a loud voice, Lord save us, we perish; yet not as we would have it, but thy holy will be done" (319).

Coming through the storm, with land in sight, Pantagruel's assessment of Panurge's fear during the storm may hold the answer to Stubb's fear that exists under his bravado. Pantagruel offers a toast to the

crew: "Cheer up . . . cheer up, my boys: let us be ourselves again"

(322). The toast is followed by a query:

But who is this Ucalegon below, that cried, and makes such a sad moan? Were it not that I hold the mast firmly with both my hands, and keep it straighter than two hundred tacklings--I would--

It is, said Friar John, that poor devil Panurge, who is troubled with a calf's ague; he quakes for fear when his belly is full.

If, said Pantagruel, he hath been afraid during this dreadful hurricane and dangerous storm, provided he hath done his part like a man, I do not value him a jot the less for it. For as, to fear in all encounters is the mark of a heavy and cowardly heart . . . so [is] not to fear when the case is evidently dreadful (322-23).

This exchange parallels the exchange of Stubb and Starbuck discussed earlier (413-14).

A problem in both storm episodes is loss of direction from the compass. Panurge howls,

Alas! who shall have this wreck. . . . Alas! do not let go the main tack nor the bowlin. I hear the block crack; is it broke? For the Lord's sake, let us have the hull, and let all the rigging be damned. Be, be, bous, bous, bous. Look to the needle of your compass, I beseech you, good Sir Astrophel, and tell us if you can, whence comes this storm (309).

Receiving no reply, Panurge makes another suggestion: why not stop where they are?

Harkee, my friends, since we cannot get safe into port, let us come to an anchor into some road, no matter whither. Drop all your anchors; let us be out of danger, I beseech you. Here, honest tar, get you into the chains, and heave the lead, if it please you. Let us know how many fathom water we are in. Sound friend, in the Lord Harry's name. Let us know whether a man might here drink easily without stopping. I am apt to believe one might (316).

Ignoring Panurge's absurd suggestions, the pilot gives orders to the crew:

Helm a-lee, hoh, cried the pilot.
Helm a-lee; a hand or two at the helm; about ships with her;
helm a-lee, helm a-lee . . . lash sure the helm a-lee, and
let her drive (316).

The pilot's words are echoed by the chief mate, James Brahier, who cries: "Let her lie under the sea, . . . Let her drive." Friar John urges, "Here, here, on this side, . . . in the devil's name. Let her drive, for the Lord's sake unhang the rudder: hoh, let her drive, let her drive."

While in Rabelais the quest is for the Oracle of the Holy Bottle, vaguely located in Cathay, in Upper India, stops at exotic ports of call are part of the voyage. For that reason, there is no concern about being off course; any sight of land is welcome, no matter the

location. The chief mate, James Brahier, "has set the needles on all the compasses" (Putnam 554).¹ The fleet set sail at an early hour,

to an east-by-southeast wind. . . . For his [Brahier's], opinion, and that of Xenomanes likewise, was to the effect that, seeing that the oracle of the Holy Bottle was in Cathay, in Upper India, it was best not to follow the route ordinarily taken by the Portuguese. The latter were in the habit of passing through the torrid zone and rounding the Cape of Good Hope at the southern end of Africa, beyond the Equinoctial, thus losing from sight the North Pole, which should have served them as a guide; and in this way they made a tremendous voyage of it. The better thing to do was to keep as close as possible to the parallel of India and to swing around the North Pole to the west in such a manner that, coming from the north, they would find themselves in the same latitude as the port of Olonne, but without going any farther north than that, for fear of being drawn into the Arctic Sea and marooned there.

By making, then, this canonical detour and by keeping to the same parallel, they would have to their right and toward the east what at their departure had been on their left, which was a very great advantage for them (554-55).

¹Putnam translates the name as Jamet Brayer and calls him the chief pilot, not the chief mate.

(Many critics see this as a search for the Northwest Passage, of great interest at this time.)

The quest in Moby-Dick is neither for a place/route nor an oracle (though the latter could be argued), but for a living, moving, shifting being, of no fixed place. The search involves tracking the white whale over the waters of the world and ends in relative proximity to the object of Panurge's search (Cathay), Japan. For that reason, instruments of navigation are even more important than those in Rabelais. Ahab has already smashed the quadrant,¹ is dependent on the compass. But

¹Ahab uses the quadrant to determine the precise instant the Pequod (the time is high noon, when he takes his usual "daily observation of the sun to determine his latitude") crosses the equator (411). This done, he becomes philosophical as he murmurs to himself: "Thou sea-mark! thou high and mighty Pilot! thou tellest me truly where I am--but canst thou cast the least hint of where I shall be? Or canst thou tell where some other thing besides me is this moment living? Where is Moby Dick?"

Then gazing at his quadrant, and handling, one after the other, its numerous cabalistical contrivances, he pondered again, and muttered: "Foolish toy! babies plaything of haughty Admirals, and Commodores, and Captains; the world brags of thee, of thy cunning and might; but what after all canst thou do, but tell the poor, pitiful point, where thou thyself happenest to be on this wide planet, and the hand that holds thee; no! not one jot more! Thou canst not tell where one drop of water or one grain of sand will be tomorrow noon; and yet with thy impotence thou insultest the sun! Science! Curse thee, thou vain toy; and cursed be all the things that cast man's eyes aloft to that heaven, whose live vividness but scorches him, as these old eyes are even now scorched with thy light, O sun! Level by nature to this earth's horizon are the glances of man's eyes; not shot from the crown of his head, as if God had meant him to gaze on his firmament. Curse thee, thou quadrant!" dashing it to the deck, "no longer will I guide my earthly way by thee; the level ship's compass, and the level dead-reckoning, by log and by line; these shall conduct me, and show me my place on the sea. Aye," lighting from the boat to the deck, "thus I trample on thee, thou paltry thing that feebly pointest on high; thus I split and destroy thee!" (412).

the violence of the storm has affected this instrument:

During the most violent shocks of the Typhoon, the man at the Pequod's jaw-bone tiller had several times been reelingly hurled to the deck by its spasmodic motions, even though preventer tackles had been attached to it--for they were slack--because some play to the tiller was indispensable (420).

In the violence of the storm, "while the ship is but a tossed shuttlecock to the blast, it is by no means uncommon to see the needles in the compasses, at intervals, go round and round" (420). This is true with the Pequod's: "at almost every shock the helmsman had not failed to notice the whirling velocity with which they revolved upon the cards; it is a sight that hardly any one can behold without some sort of unwonted emotion" (420).

After midnight, when the sails have been replaced, the Pequod is once more under way,

with some precision again; and the course--for the present, East-south-east--which he was to steer, if practicable, was once more given to the helmsman. For during the violence of the gale, he had only steered according to its vicissitudes. But as he was now bringing the ship as near her course as possible, watching the compass meanwhile, lo! a good sign! the wind seemed coming round astern; aye, the foul breeze became fair! (421)

In his soliloquy on shooting Ahab with one of his own guns, a charge Starbuck levels against him is his smashing of the quadrant: "Has he not dashed his heavenly quadrant? and in these same perilous seas, gropes he not his way by mere dead reckoning of the error-abounding log?" (422) The next morning Ahab, noticing something amiss, demands to know the direction the ship is heading:

"East-sou-east," said the frightened steersman.

"Thou liest!" smiting him with his clenched fist.

"Heading East at this very hour in the morning, and the sun astern?" (423).

The crew has not noticed anything wrong; it is Ahab who discovers the problem is in the compasses: with "one glimpse of the compasses; his uplifted arm slowly fell; for a moment he almost seemed to stagger . . . the two compasses pointed East and the Pequod was infallibly going West." To Starbuck, he exclaims: "'I have it! It has happened before. Mr. Starbuck, last night's thunder has turned our compasses--that's all. Thou hast before now heard of such a thing, I take it.'" Starbuck's gloomy reply is "'Aye; but never before has it happened to me, sir.'" (424).

At this point, Melville, in an aside to his readers, explains how the unusual event takes place:

Here, it must needs be said, that accidents like this have in more than one case occurred to ships in violent storms. The magnetic energy, as developed in the mariner's needle, is, as all know, essentially one with the electricity beheld

in heaven; hence it is not to be much marveled at, that such things should be. In instances where the lightning has actually struck the vessel, so as to smite down some of the spars and rigging, the effect upon the needle has at times been still more fatal; all its loadstone virtue being annihilated, so that the before magnetic steel was of no more use than an old wife's knitting needle. But in either case, the needle never again, of itself, recovers the original virtue thus marred or lost; and if the binnacle compasses be affected, the same fate reaches all the others that may be in the ship; even were the lowermost one inserted into the kelson (424).

Ahab's solution to the problem of finding direction with the inverted compasses is,

eyeing the transported compasses, . . . with the sharp of his extended hand [to take] . . . the precise bearing of the sun, and satisfied that the needles were exactly inverted [to shout out] . . . his orders for the ship's course to be changed accordingly (424).

Stumbling over the twisted quadrant he had smashed the day before, Ahab personifies the remains: "'Thou poor, proud heaven-gazer and sun's pilot! yesterday I wrecked thee, and today the compasses would fain have wrecked me'" (425).

Ahab's solution to the problem arises from three motives: (1) to prove himself "lord over the level loadstone"; (2) "to revive the spirits of the crew by a stroke of his subtle skill, in a matter so

wondrous as that of the inverted compasses"; and (3) to appease the crew, "for the old man well knew that to steer by transpointed needles, though clumsily practicable, was not a thing to be passed over by superstitious sailors, without some shuddering and evil portents" (425).

Ahab's solution to the problem of the inverted compasses is to construct a makeshift compass. Of Starbuck he demands "'a lance without the pole; a top-maul, and the smallest of the sail-maker's needles. Quick!'" (425). To the crew he announces steadily: "'Men, . . . my men, the thunder turned old Ahab's needles; but out of this bit of steel Ahab can make one of his own that will point true as any'" (425). Melville describes the process in minute detail:

With a blow from the top-maul Ahab knocked off the steel head of the lance, and then handing to the mate the long iron rod remaining, bade him hold it upright, without its touching the deck. Then, with the maul, after repeatedly smiting the upper end of the iron rod, he placed the blunted needle endwise on the top of it, and less strongly hammered that, several times, the mate still holding the rod as before. Then going through some small strange motions with it--whether indispensable to the magnetizing of the steel, or merely intended to augment the awe of the crew, is uncertain--he called for linen thread; and moving to the binnacle, slipped out the two reversed needles there, and horizontally suspended the sail-needle by its middle, over one of the compass-cards. At first, the steel went round and round, quivering and

vibrating at either end; but at last it settled to its place, when Ahab, who had been intently watching for this result, stepped frankly back from the binnacle, and pointing his stretched arm towards it, exclaimed,--"Look ye, for yourselves, if Ahab be not lord of the level loadstone! The sun is East, and that compass swears it!" (425).

Loss of direction caused by violent storms is thus corrected by makeshift means in both narratives: Rabelais's "canonical detour" and Ahab's crude substitute compass.

In Chapter XXI: "A Continuation of the Storm, With a Short Discourse on the Subject of Making Testaments at Sea," Rabelais parodies wills made at sea. The last sentences in the previous chapter have been Panurge's cowardly plea to Friar John: "Oho! I drown. Confiteor; one poor word or two by way of testament, Friar John, my ghostly father; good Mr. Abstractor, my crony, my Achates, Xenomanes, my all. Alas! I drown; two words of testament here upon this ladder" (316).

Panurge is answered by Epistemon:

To make one's last will, . . . at this time that we ought to bestir ourselves and help our seamen, on the penalty of being drowned, seems to me as idle and ridiculous a maggot as that of some of Caesar's men, who, at their coming into the Gauls, were mightily busied in making wills and codicils; bemoaned their fortune, and the absence of their spouses and friends at Rome; when it was absolutely necessary for them to run to their arms, and use their utmost strength against Ariovistus their enemy.

This also is to be as silly, as that jolt-headed loblolly of a carter, who, having laid his waggon fast in a slough, down on his marrow-bones, was calling on the strong-backed deity, Hercules, might and main, to help him at a dead lift, but all the while forgot to goad on his oxen, and lay his shoulder to the wheels, as it behooved him: as if a Lord have mercy upon us, alone would have got his cart out of the mire.

What will it signify to make your will now? for either we shall come off or drown for it. If we escape, it will not signify a straw to us; for testaments are of no value or authority but by the death of the testators. If we are drowned, will it not be drowned too? Pr'ythee who will transmit it to the executors? (317)

Some kind wave will throw it ashore, like Ulysses," replied Panurge; "and some king's daughter, going to fetch a walk in the fresco, on the evening, will find it, and take care to have it proved and fulfilled; nay, and have some stately cenotaph erected to my memory, as Dido had to that of her good man Sichaeus; [ed. note: "Whence Rabelais had this I know not. Perhaps he took for a cenotaph the funeral pile which gave occasion to Dido to burn herself with the sacrifice she had been making to the manes of Sichaeus. See Justin 1. 18, c.6"] Aeneas to Deiphobus [Aeneid, 1., 6, v. 505], upon the Trojan shore, near Rhoete; Andromache to Hector

[AEneid, 1. 3, v. 302], and so on, with ten more classical references, making this passage a hilarious parody of the classical epic.

Although not in Melville's great storm scene, Ishmael's will made at sea follows a time of great danger. In the chapter entitled "The First Lowering," the three boats from the Pequod meet with a violent squall. When Queequeg throws his harpoon,

Then all in one welded commotion came an invisible push from astern, while forward the boat seemed striking on a ledge; the sail collapsed and exploded; a gush of scalding vapor shot up nearby; something rolled and tumbled like an earthquake beneath us. The whole crew were half suffocated as they were tossed helter-skelter into the white curdling cream of the squall (194).

Although the boat was swamped, the men were able to collect the oars and tumble back into it.

The description of the squall rivals Rabelais' description in the Fourth Book:

The wind increased to a howl; the waves dashed their bucklers together; the whole squall roared, forked, and crackled around us like a white fire upon the prairie, in which, unconsumed, we were burning; immortal in these jaws of death! In vain we hailed the other boats; as well roar to the live coals down the chimney of a flaming furnace as hail those boats in that storm. Meanwhile the driving scud, rack, and mist,

grew darker with the shadows of night; no sign of the ship could be seen. The rising sea forbade all attempts to bail out the boat. The oars were useless as propellers, performing now the office of life-preservers. So, cutting the lashing of the waterproof match keg, after many failures Starbuck contrived to ignite the lamp in the lantern; then stretching it on a waif pole, handed it to Queequeg as the standard-bearer of this forlorn hope (194-95).

The men hear through the mist the ship, but are not rescued until they abandon their boat and are rescued only when they "swam for it, were dashed against it [their boat] by the seas, and were at last taken up and safely landed on board" (195).

The squall, then, arouses more terror in Ishmael than the later storm scene. The main function of the storm scene seems to be to illuminate the character of Captain Ahab. The squall scene focuses on Ishmael, and its violence is followed by a brief chapter "The Hyena," where the development is inner, or philosophical. Ishmael's ideas are important enough to be quoted in full:

There are certain queer times and occasions in this strange mixed affair we call life when a man takes this whole universe for a vast practical joke, though the wit thereof he but dimly discerns, and more than suspects that the joke is at nobody's expense but his own. However, nothing dispirits, and nothing seems worth while disputing. He bolts down all events, all creeds, and beliefs, and persuasions,

all hard things visible and invisible, never mind how knobby; as an ostrich of potent digestion gobbles down bullets and gun flints. And as for small difficulties and worryings, prospects of sudden disaster, peril of life and limb; all these, and death itself, seem to him only sly, good-natured hits, and jolly punches in the side bestowed by the unseen and unaccountable old joker. That odd sort of wayward mood I am speaking of, comes over a man only in some time of extreme tribulation; it comes in the very midst of his earnestness, so that what just before might have seemed to him a thing most momentous, now seems but a part of the general joke. There is nothing like the perils of whaling to breed this free and easy sort of genial, desperado philosophy; and with it I now regarded this whole voyage of the Pequod, and the great White Whale its object (195-96).

Ishmael, the last man dragged aboard the Pequod, asks Queequeg, Stubb, and Flask in turn whether "going plump on a flying whale with your sail set in a foggy squall is the height of a whaleman's discretion" (196). Being assured that such behavior is quite common, Ishmael muses to himself:

Here then, from three impartial witnesses, I had a deliberate statement of the entire case. Considering, therefore, that squalls and capsizings in the water and consequent bivouacks on the deep, were matters of common occurrence in this kind of life; considering that at the superlatively critical

instant of going on to the whale I must resign my life into the hands of him who steered the boat--oftentimes a fellow who at that very moment is in his impetuosity upon the point of scuttling the craft with his own frantic stampings; considering that the particular disaster to our own particular boat was chiefly to be imputed to Starbuck's driving on to his whale almost in the teeth of a squall, and considering that Starbuck, notwithstanding, was famous for his great heedfulness in the fishery; considering that I belonged to this uncommonly prudent Starbuck's boat; and finally considering in what a devil's chase I was implicated, touching the White Whale: taking all things together, I say, I thought I might as well go below and make a rough draft of my will [emphasis added]. "Queequeg," said I, "come along, you shall be my lawyer, executor, and legatee" (196).

Ishmael's attitude toward wills made at sea progresses from gentle irony to wry humor as he philosophizes on the subject:

It may seem strange that of all men sailors should be tinkering at their last wills and testaments, but there are no people in the world more fond of that diversion. This was the fourth time in my nautical life that I had done the same thing. After the ceremony was concluded upon the present occasion, I felt all the easier; a stone was rolled away from my heart. Besides, all the days I should now live would be as good as the days that Lazarus lived after his resurrection; a

supplementary gain of so many months or weeks as the case might be. I survived myself; my death and burial were locked up in my chest. I looked around me tranquilly and contentedly, like a quiet ghost with a clean conscience sitting inside the bars of a snug family vault (197).

It can be seen, then, that the two storm scenes are very similar in at least three ways: description, dialogue, and loss of direction. There is also the similarity of wills made at sea. Certainly Rabelais and Melville show a marked kinship in these passages.

CHAPTER V

FOLK LEGENDS

Critics generally agree that the characters Gargantua and Pantagruel had their origins in folk tales (Greene 8-9; Tetel 17-18). The first volume of the Works was entitled: The Terrible and Horrendous Deeds and Acts of Prowess of the Far Renowned Pantagruel, King of the Dipsodes, Son of the Great Giant Gargantua, newly composed by Alcofribas Nasier [anagram of Rabelais's name].

Greene writes that "The Gargantua of this title, supposed father of the hero, was a legendary giant, of whom country people throughout France told stories or made jokes" (8). The story had already appeared in print in 1532, shortly before the publication of Rabelais's version. Called "Les Grandes Chroniques du Grand et Enorme Geant Gargantua," it had an enormous commercial success. Inspired by the success of that slight volume, Rabelais wrote "Son of Gargantua," his own version of the tale, which, Greene believes, "must have been chiefly intended as a potboiler and a scholar's holiday" (9). The name "Pantagruel" came from another folk character, "a mischievous devil of the mystery plays, who personified thirst and whose commonest prank consisted of pouring salt down the throats of drunkards" (9). (Putnam translates "Panta" as "all," and "gruel" as "thirsty," and remarks that he "would one day be the Ruler of the Thirsty Ones" 237).

Commenting on what she calls "the Renaissance tall tale

of Rabelais," Mushabac finds that

in his extravaganza, Rabelais had a way of spelling out the feeling of prodigiousness and bounty that is at the heart of frontier humor. Rabelais creates Gargantua and Pantagruel, giants of body, mind, and heart who are described in an affectionate and extravagant vernacular and sprung from native folk legend. Like Pantagruel, the whale in Melville's book is a vast creature, described and admired in a spirited colloquial tongue, one who as an infant consumes in a day thousands of gallons of milk, and as an adult traveling whither he pleases and turning up everywhere, takes the whole world as his province. *Moby Dick*, in addition, as one particular whale, is sprung very consciously from native legend and, like Pantagruel, is male, important, and importantly dressed in white" (90).

Yes, just as Gargantua and Pantagruel grew out of folk legend, so did *Moby-Dick* come from "the great white whale of oral legend" (Norton 571). In 1839 an article called "Mocha Dick, or the white whale of the Pacific: A leaf from a Manuscript Journal," was published (571). Although Melville is not known to have read or used this article, it is representative of whaling stories current during this period. A summary of the account will illustrate its importance.

The narrator of the tale is a member of the crew of the *Penguin* [Pequod?], and the action takes place off the coast of Chile, near an island called the "Mocha." Mariners in this area had often

encountered a whale they had dubbed Mocha Dick, "an old bull whale, of prodigious size and strength," the victor of "a hundred fights with his pursuers" (574). The narrator describes his appearance:

From the effect of age, or more probably from a freak of nature, as exhibited in the case of the Ethiopian Albino, a singular consequence had resulted--he was white as wool! Instead of projecting his spout obliquely forward, and puffing with a short, convulsive effort, accompanied by a snorting noise, as usual with his species, he flung the water from his nose in a lofty, perpendicular, expanded volume, at regular and somewhat distant intervals; its expulsion producing a continuous roar, like that of vapor struggling from the safety-valve of a powerful steam engine.

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Viewed from a distance, the practised eye of the sailor only could decide, that the moving mass, which constituted this enormous animal, was not a white cloud sailing along the horizon. On the spermaceti whale, barnacles are rarely discovered; but upon the head of this lusus naturae, they had clustered, until it became absolutely rugged with the shells. In short, regard him as you would, he was a most extraordinary fish; or, in the vernacular of Nantucket [the Pequod's embarkation port], "a genuine old sog," of the first water (574).

Known to have sent many whalemens to a watery grave, Mocha Dick himself had not escaped unharmed, for "a back serried with irons, and from fifty to a hundred yards of line trailing in his wake, sufficiently , attested, that though unconquered, he had not proved invulnerable" (574). The fame of Mocha Dick foreshadows that of Melville's leviathan:

From the period of Dick's first appearance, his celebrity continued to increase, until his name seemed naturally to mingle with the salutations which whalemens were in the habit of exchanging, in their encounters upon the broad Pacific; the customary interrogatories almost always closing with, "Any news from Mocha Dick?" (574)

The sighting of an enormous whale is described by the first mate of the Penguin:

Lashing the sea with his enormous tail, until he threw about him a cloud of surf and spray, he came down, at full speed, "jaws on," with the determination, apparently, of doing battle in earnest. As he drew near, with his long curved back looming occasionally above the surface of the billows, we perceived that it was white as the surf around him; and the men stared aghast at each other, as they uttered, in a suppressed tone, the terrible name of MOCHA DICK! (579)

Although there are similarities in the encounters with Mocha Dick and Moby-Dick, only the former meets with his death. Even with this disparity, the measurements of Mocha Dick are worth quoting:

Mocha Dick was the longest whale I ever looked upon. He measured more than seventy feet from his noddle to the tips of his flukes; and yielded one hundred barrels of clear oil with a proportionate quantity of "head-matter." It may emphatically be said, that "the scars of his old wounds were near his new," for not less than twenty harpoons did we draw from his back, the rusted mementos of many a desperate encounter" (587).

It is apparent, then, that Rabelais's central figures, Gargantua and his son Pantagruel, and Melville's central figure, Moby-Dick, had their origins in folklore. Rosenberry finds that "In the main, . . . Moby-Dick is a folk-epic, a kind of national prose symphony, and the humorous idiom of the American frontier is one of the major keys in which it is composed" (101). And Pantagruel was published only forty years after the discovery of America. Exaggeration is one of the folklore elements that both authors use in their characters and their narratives.

One aspect of folk heroes is often their larger than life size. Book I opens with this idea, as the narrator explains:

I must refer you to the Great Chronicle of Pantagruel for the knowledge of that genealogy and antiquity of race by which Gargantua is come unto us. In it you may understand more at large how the giants were born in this world, and how from them by a direct line issued Gargantua, the father of Pantagruel (1).

In this opening paragraph the idea of the two giants as folk heroes is established. As we have seen, Gargantua is a giant from folk legend, the name "Gargantua" becoming an adjective meaning giant-sized or gigantic. In the Works, Books I and II, the enormous size of the two central characters is mentioned frequently but inconsistently. Schreech comments on the ambiguity of their size:

This ambiguity is most obvious when we try to imagine how big these giants are meant to be. Rabelais shares with numerous other writers a complete inconsequentialness about their size. Pantagruel can lift an otherwise immovable bell with his little finger, or cover an entire army with his tongue. At other times he can walk about quite normally and converse easily with his peers. This convention, which Rabelais and his contemporaries inherited from the past, is a liberating one, well adapted to the constantly shifting preoccupations of his first two books. He exploits it to the full (39).

It is interesting to note that for almost all of these first two books the idea of gigantic size is conveyed, not by description but by the magnitude of the giants' appetites for food and drink, their clothing, and their actions. Gargantua is born screaming, "Some drink, some drink, some drink!" (25). To satisfy his thirst, "Immediately thereafter were appointed for him seventeen thousand nine hundred and thirteen cows . . . to furnish him with milk" (25). To clothe the infant Gargantua requires enormous amounts of material:

To make him every shirt of his were taken up nine hundred ells of Chateleraud linen, and two hundred for the gussets There were taken up for his doublet, eight hundred and thirteen ells of white satin, and for his points fifteen hundred and nine dogs' skins and a half For his breeches were taken up eleven hundred and five and a third of white broad cloth For his codpiece were used sixteen ells and a quarter of the same cloth For his shoes were taken up four hundred and six ells of blue crimson velvet, and were very neatly cut by parallel lines, joined in uniform cylinders. For the soling of them were made use of eleven hundred hides of brown cows, shapen like the tail of a keeling For his coat were taken up eighteen hundred ells of blue velvet His girdle was made of three hundred ells and a half of silken serge For the jewel or broach which in his cap he carried, he had in a cake of gold, weighing three score and eight marks To wear about his neck, he had a golden chain, weighing twenty-five thousand and sixty-three marks of gold (28-31).

An incident in the Cake-Bakers War demonstrates the size of the adult Gargantua:

Gargantua mounted his great mare, . . . and finding in his way a high and great tree, which was commonly called by the name of St. Martin's tree, because heretofore St. Martin

planted a pilgrim's staff there, which in tract of time grew to that height and greatness, said, "This is that which I lacked: this tree shall serve me both for a staff and lance." With that he pulled it up easily, and plucked off the boughs, and trimmed it at his pleasure (141).

After the war, Gargantua goes to his father's castle. The description of his combing his hair gives some idea of the magnitude of Gargantua's size:

The truth was, that Gargantua, in shifting his clothes, and combing his head with a comb, which was nine hundred feet long of the Jewish cane measure, and whereof the teeth were great tusks of elephants, whole and entire, he made fall at every rake about seven balls of bullets, at a dozen the ball, that stuck in his hair, at the razing of the castle of the wood of Vede (144).

The infant Pantagruel, like his father Gargantua, requires an army of cows to satisfy his thirst. Comparing the infant to Hercules, Rabelais writes, "I pass by the relation of how at every one of his meals he supped up the milk of four thousand six hundred cows, and how, to make him a skillet to boil his milk in, there were set to work all the braziers of Samure in Anjou, of Villedieu in Normandy, and of Bramont in Lorraine" (242).

Not only is Pantagruel Herculean in appetite, but also in strength, for

One day in the morning, when they would have made him suck one of his cows--for he never had any other nurse, as the history tells us--he got one of his arms loose from the swaddling-bands, wherewith he was kept fast in the cradle, laid hold of the said cow under the left fore ham, and grasping her to him, ate up her udder and half of her paunch, with the liver and the kidneys, and had devoured all up, if she had not cried out most horribly, as if the wolves had held her by the legs, at which noise company came in, and took away the said cow from Pantagruel. Yet could they not so well do it, but that the quarter whereby he caught her was left in his hand, of which quarter he gulped up the flesh in a trice, even with as much ease as you would eat a sausage, and that so greedily with desire of more, that, when they would have taken away the bone from him, he swallowed it down whole, as a cormorant would do a little fish; and afterwards began fumblingly to say, "Good, good, good"--for he could not yet speak plain, giving them to understand thereby, that he had found it very good, and that he did lack but so much more. Which when they saw that attended him, they bound him with great cable-ropes (242-43).

As a student, Pantagruel continued to demonstrate his gigantic size and strength:

As he studied and profited very much, he saw that the scholars were oftentimes at leisure, and knew not how to bestow their time, which moved him to take such compassion on them, that

one day he took from a long ledge of rocks . . . a huge great stone, of about twelve fathom square, and fourteen handfuls thick, and with great ease set it upon four pillars in the midst of a field, to no other end but that the said scholars, when they had nothing else to do, might pass their time in getting up on that stone, and feast [sic] it with store of gammons, pasties, and flagons, and carve their names upon it with a knife; in token of which deed till this hour the stone is called the lifted stone (246).

At this point, emphasis shifts away from gigantic deeds and from the size of the giants. Near the end of volume two there is a brief reference to Pantagruel's size that is unusual in that it directly describes his height. Renowned for his "incomparable knowledge," he goes to Paris to meet with a scholar who has come from England to see him. Rabelais describes the scene: "At his [Pantagruel's] first entrance he [the English scholar] startled, and was almost out of his wits for fear, seeing him so great, and so tall" (344). And later, in the storm scene in volume four, Pantagruel holds the mast upright to keep the ship from capsizing, while he utters a prayer.

If the giants of Rabelais are the central figures in his folk epic, then the whales in Moby-Dick are the central figures in Melville's folk epic. From the earliest chapters in the novel, whales are presented as larger than life. The Indians, the earliest settlers of Nantucket,

in all seasons and all oceans declared everlasting war with the mightiest animated mass that has survived the flood; most monstrous and most mountainous! That Himmalehan, salt-sea Mastodon, clothed with such portentousness and unconscious power, that his very panics are more to be dreaded than his most fearless and malicious assaults! (42).

In the "Cetology" chapter, the Sperm Whale, "among the English of old vaguely known as the . . . Physeter [compare the physeter Pantagruel kills in chapter XXXIII, Book IV] . . . is without doubt the largest inhabitant of the globe; the most formidable of all whales to encounter" (120). The Sperm Whale is the subject of sea stories, where men who have not seen him will,

seated on their hatches . . . hearken with a childish fire-side interest and awe, to the wild, strange tales of Southern whaling. Nor is the pre-eminent tremendousness of the great Sperm Whale anywhere more feelingly comprehended, than on board of those prows which stem him (157).

Stubb's whale, having been killed some distance from the Pequod, requires three boats and eighteen men to tow it to the ship. Ishmael describes the great labor involved:

And now, as we eighteen men with our thirty-six arms, and one hundred and eighty thumbs and fingers, slowly toiled hour after hour upon that inert, sluggish corpse in the sea; and it seemed hardly to budge at all, except at long intervals; good evidence was hereby furnished of the enormousness of the mass we moved. For, upon the great canal of Hang-Ho,

or whatever they call it, in China, four or five laborers on the foot-path will draw a bulky freighted junk at the rate of a mile an hour; but this grand argosy we towed heavily forged along, as if laden with pig-lead in bulk (247-48).

In his description of the Right Whale, Ishmael uses a metaphor from Daniel Boone country when he declares that "with a lantern we might descend into the great Kentucky Mammoth Cave of his stomach" (280). Later he tells us that "A large whale's case generally yields about five hundred gallons of sperm" (286). To further convey the idea of enormous size, he says that the surface of "a full grown sperm whale [is] something less than 2000 square feet" (299).

In an early battle with a whale, the description of the whale's encounter with the crew of the Pequod moves beyond statistics to poetry:

As the three boats lay there on that gently rolling sea, gazing down into its eternal blue moon; and as not a single groan or cry of any sort, nay, not so much as a ripple or a bubble came up from its depths; what landman would have thought, that beneath all that silence and placidity, the utmost monster of the sea [emphasis added] was writhing and wrenching in agony. Not eight inches of perpendicular rope was visible at the bows. Seems it credible that by such thin threads the great Leviathan was suspended like the big weight to an eight day clock. Suspended? and to what? To three bits of wood. Is this the creature of whom it was once so triumphantly said--"Canst thou fill his skin with

barbed irons? or his head with fish-spears? The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold, the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon: he esteemeth iron as straw; the arrow cannot make him flee; darts are counted as stubble; he laugheth at the shaking of a spear! (Job 41:7, 26-29).

This is the creature? this he?" Oh! that unfulfilments should follow the prophets. For with the strength of a thousand thighs in his tail, Leviathan had run his head under the mountains of the sea, to hide him from the Pequod's fish-spears! (300).

Ishmael shifts from splendid rhetoric to prosaic mathematics as he measures the skeleton of a whale:

a Sperm Whale of the largest magnitude, between eighty-five and ninety feet in length, and something less than forty feet in its fullest circumference, such a whale will weigh at least ninety tons; so that, reckoning thirteen men to a ton, he would considerably outweigh the combined population of a whole village of one thousand one hundred inhabitants (376).

Still concerned with whale size, Ishmael cites more statistics:

Of all the pre-adamite whales yet exhumed, by far the largest is the Alabama one . . . and that was less than seventy feet in length in the skeleton. Whereas, we have already seen, that the tape-measure gives seventy-two feet for the skeleton of a large and modern whale. And I have heard, on whalemens

authority, that Sperm Whales have been captured near a hundred feet long at the time of capture (382).

Speculating further, Ishmael wonders if, even though whales of the present day are larger than those of all previous geological periods, whales before the time of Adam may have been even larger:

Assuredly, we must conclude so, if we are to credit the accounts of such gentlemen as Pliny, and the ancient naturalists generally. For Pliny tells us of whales that embraced acres of living bulk, and Aldrovandus of others which measured eight hundred feet in length--Rope Walks and Thames Tunnels of Whales! And even in the days of Banks and Solander. Cook's naturalists, we find a Danish member of the Academy of Sciences setting down certain Iceland whales (reydan-siskur, or Wrinkled Bellies) at one hundred and twenty yards; that is, three hundred and sixty feet. And Lacépède, the French naturalist, in his elaborate history of whales, in the very beginning of his work (page 3) sets down the Right Whale at one hundred metres, three hundred and twenty-eight feet. And this work was published as late as A. D. 1825 (382).

Tongue in cheek, even Ishmael has to admit that no whaleman would believe this exaggeration of all exaggerations. But it is Ahab, who, even though he is speaking in Promethean terms, describes a Paul Bunyan figure, suitable as a folk hero:

I'll order a complete man after a desirable pattern.

Imprimis, fifty feet high in his socks; then, chest modelled

after the Thames Tunnel [here we go again--p. 381]; then, legs with roots to 'em, to stay in one place; then, arms three feet through the wrist; . . . and about a quarter of an acre of fine brains (390).

It is Ahab, then, who calls for a giant to take on the giant whale.

In addition to the giant-sized folk hero, there is the narrative that describes his exploits, one that "is told in the oral comic tradition" (Stanonik 16-17). Both Gargantua and Pantagruel and Moby-Dick abound in tall tales. For example, there is Gargantua's first arrival in Paris when he, wearied by crowds,

was constrained to rest himself upon the towers of Our Lady's Church. . . . "I will now give them their wine, but it shall only be in sport." Then smiling, he untied his fair braguette, and drawing out his mentul into the open air, he so bitterly all-to-be-pissed them, that he drowned two hundred and sixty thousand four hundred and eighteen, besides the women and little children. Some, nevertheless, of the company escaped this piss-flood by mere speed of foot, who, when they were at the higher end of the university, sweating, coughing, spitting, and out of breath, they began to swear and curse, some in good hot earnest, and others in jest. "Carimari, carimara: golynoly, golynolo. By my sweet Sanctesse, we are washed in sport, a city truly to laugh at";--in French, Par is, for which that city hath been ever since called Paris (64-65).

One of the tallest tales of adventure is told by Panurge, who, during a drinking bout, remarks upon the abstinence of the Turks. In answer to Pantagruel's question, "Panurge, what is it that moves you to laugh so?" Panurge replies,

I was telling them [the rest of the company] that these devilish Turks are very unhappy, in that they never drink one drop of wine, and that though there were no other harm in all Mahomet's Alcoran, yet for this one base point of abstinence from wine, which therein is commanded, I would not submit myself unto their law (I, 321).

At Pantagruel's urging, Panurge proceeds to tell the story of his escape from the Turks:

The rascally Turks had broached me upon a spit all larded like a rabbit, for I was so dry and meagre, that, otherwise, of my flesh they would have made but very bad meat, and in this manner began to roast me alive. As they were thus roasting me, I recommended myself unto the divine grace, having in my mind the good St. Lawrence, and always hoped in God that he would deliver me out of this torment. Which came to pass, and that very strangely. For, as I did commit myself with all my heart to God, crying, Lord God, help me, Lord God, save me, Lord God, take me out of this pain and hellish torture, wherein these traitorous dogs detain me for my sincerity in the maintenance of thy law! the roaster or turnspit fell asleep by the divine will, or else by the

virtue of some good Mercury, who cunningly brought Argus into a sleep for all his hundred eyes. When I saw that he did no longer turn me in roasting, I looked upon him, and perceived that he was fast asleep. Then took I up in my teeth a firebrand by the end where it was not burned, and cast it into the lap of my roaster, and another did I throw as well as I could under a field-couch, that was placed near to the chimney, wherein was the straw-bed of my master turn-spit. Presently the fire took hold in the straw, and from the straw to the bed, and from the bed to the loft, which was planked and sealed with fir, after the fashion of the foot of a lamp. But the best was, that the fire which I had cast into the lap of my poultry roaster burned all his groin, and was beginning to seize upon his cullions, when he became sensible of the danger, for his smelling was not so bad but that he felt it sooner than he would have seen daylight. Then suddenly getting up, and in a great amazement running to the window, he cried out to the streets as high as he could, Dal baroth, dal baroth, dal baroth, which is as much as to say, Fire, fire, fire. Incontinently turning about, he came straight towards me, to throw me quite into the fire, and to that effect had already cut the ropes, wherewith my hands were tied, and was undoing the cords from off my feet, when the master of the house hearing him cry fire, and smelling the smoke from the very street

where he was walking with some other Bashaws and Mustaphas, ran with all the speed he had to save what he could, and to carry away his jewels. Yet such was his rage, before he could well resolve how to go about it, that he caught the broach whereon I was spitted, and therewith killed my roaster stark dead, of which wound he died there for want of regimen or otherwise; for he ran him in with the spit a little above the navel, towards the right flank, till he pierced the third lappet of his liver, and, the blow slanting upwards from the midriff or diaphragm, through which it had made penetration, the spit passed athwart the pericardium, or capsule of his heart, and came out above at his shoulders, betwixt the spondyls or turning joints of the chine of the back, and the left homoplat, which we call the shoulder-blade.

True it is, for I will not lie, that, in drawing the spit out of my body, I fell to the ground near unto the andirons, and so by the fall took some hurt, which indeed had been greater, but that the lardons, or little slices of bacon, wherewith I was stuck, kept off the blow. My bashaw then seeing the case to be desperate, his house burnt without remission, and his goods lost, gave himself over to all the devils in hell, calling some of them by their names, Grilgoth, Astabroth, Rappalus, and Griboullis, nine several times. Which when I saw, I had above five pennyworth of fear, dreading that the devils would come even then to carry away the fool, and, seeing me so near him, would perhaps snatch

me up too. I am already, thought I, half roasted, and my lardons will be the cause of my mischief; for these devils are very liquorous of lardons, according to the authority which you have of the philosopher Jamblicus, and Murmault, in the Apology of Bossutis, adulterated pro magistris nostros. But for my better security I made the sign of the cross, crying, Hagois, athanotos, ho theos, and none came. At which my rogue bashaw, being very much aggrieved, would, in transpiercing his heart with my spit, have killed himself, and to that purpose had set it against his breast, but it could not enter, because it was not sharp enough. Whereupon I, perceiving that he was not likely to work upon his body the effect which he intended, although he did not spare all the force he had to thrust it forward, came up to him and said, Master Bugrino, thou dost here but trifle away thy time, or rashly lose it, for thou wilt never kill thyself as thou doest. Well, thou mayest hurt or bruise somewhat within thee, so as to make thee languish all thy lifetime most pitifully amongst the hands of the chirurgeons; but, if thou wilt be counselled by me, I will kill thee clear outright, so that thou shalt not so much as feel it, and trust me, for I have killed a great many others, who have found themselves very well after it. Ha, my friend, said he, I prithee do so, and for thy pains I give thee my budget; take, here it is, there are six hundred seraphs in it and

some fine diamonds, and most excellent rubies (320-24).

To a listener's query, "And where are they?" Panurge replies, "By St. John . . . they are a good way hence, if they all keep going. But where is last year's snow? This was the greatest care that Villon the Paris poet took" (320-24).

Ishmael, Melville's narrator, is equally adept at exaggeration, as shown in this passage from "The Affadavit":

I have personally known three instances where a whale, after receiving a harpoon, has effected a complete escape; and, after an interval (in one instance of three years), has been again struck by the same hand, and slain; when the two irons, both marked by the same private cypher, have been taken from the body. In the instance where three years intervened between the flinging of the two harpoons; and I think it may have been something more than that; and the man who darted them happening, in the interval, to go in a trading ship on a voyage to Africa, went ashore there, joined a discovery party, and penetrated far into the interior, where he travelled for a period of nearly two years, often endangered by serpents, savages, tigers, poisonous miasmas, with all the other common perils incident to wandering in the heart of unknown regions. Meanwhile, the whale he had struck must have also been on its travels; no doubt it had thrice circumnavigated the globe, brushing with its flanks all the coasts of Africa; but to no purpose. This man and this whale again came together, and the one vanquished the other. I say I, myself, have

known three instances similar to this; that is in two of them I saw the whales struck; and, upon the second attack, saw the two irons with the respective marks cut in them, afterwards taken from the dead fish. In the three-year instance, it so fell out that I was in the boat both times, first and last, and the last time distinctly recognized a peculiar sort of huge mole under the whale's eye, which I had observed three years previous (176).

This tall tale becomes even taller when we remember that Ishmael is presently on his first whaling voyage (15-16).

Ishmael describes the process by which the legend of the White Whale developed:

For those who, previously hearing of the White Whale, by chance caught sight of him; in the beginning of the thing they had every one of them, almost, as boldly and fearlessly lowered for him, as for any other whale of that species. But at length, such calamities did ensue in these assaults--not restricted to sprained wrists and ancles [sic], broken limbs or devouring amputations--but fatal to the last degree of fatality; those repeated disastrous repulses, all accumulating and piling their terrors upon Moby Dick; those things had gone far to shake the fortitude of many brave hunters, to whom the story of Moby Dick had eventually come.

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No wonder, then that ever gathering volume from the mere transit over the widest watery spaces, the outblown rumors

of the White Whale did in the end incorporate with themselves all manner of morbid hints, and half-formed foetal suggestions of supernatural agencies, which eventually invested Moby Dick with new terrors unborrowed from anything that visibly appears. So that in many cases such a panic did he finally strike, that few who by these rumors, at least, had heard of the White Whale, few of those hunters were willing to encounter the perils of his jaw (156).

In the extended tall tale that is "The Town-Ho's Story," Moby Dick is the enabler for Stealkilt's revenge upon the Mate. The whale has been sighted:

"The White Whale--the White Whale!" was the cry from captain, mates, and harpooneers, who, undeterred by fearful rumors, were all anxious to capture so famous and precious a fish; while the dogged crew eyed askance, and with curses, the appalling beauty of the vast milky mass, that lit up by a horizontal spangling sun, shifted and glistened like a living opal in the blue morning sea. Gentlemen, a strange fatality pervades the whole career of these events, as if verily mapped out before the world itself was charted. The mutineer was the boatsman of the mate, and when fast to a fish, it was his duty to sit next him, while Radney stood up with his lance in the prow, and haul in or slacken the line, at the word of command. Moreover, when the four boats were lowered, the mate's got the start; and none howled more fiercely with

delight than did Steelkilt, as he strained at his oar. After a stiff pull, their harpooneer got fast, and, spear in hand, Radney sprang to the bow. He was always a furious man, it seems, in a boat. And now his bandaged cry was, to beach him on the whale's topmost back. Nothing loath, his bowsman hauled him up and up, through a blinding foam that blent two whitenesses together, till of a sudden the boat struck as against a sunken ledge, and keeling over, spilled out the standing mate. That instant, as he fell on the whale's slippery back, the boat righted, and was dashed aside by the swell, while Radney was tossed over into the sea, on the other flank of the whale. He struck out through the spray, and, for an instant, was dimly seen through that veil, wildly seeking to remove himself from the eye of Moby Dick. But the whale rushed round in a sudden maelstrom; seized the swimmer between his jaws; and rearing high with him, plunged headlong again, and went down.

Meantime, at the first tap of the boat's bottom, the Lakeman had slackened the line, so as to drop astern from the whirlpool; calmly looking on, he thought his own thoughts. But a sudden, terrific, downward jerking of the boat, quickly brought his knife to the line. He cut it; and the whale was free. But, at some distance, Moby Dick rose again, with some tatters of Radney's red woollen shirt, caught in the teeth that had destroyed him. All four boats

gave chase again; but the whale eluded them, and finally disappeared (221-22).

Dr. Bunger, surgeon of the Samuel Enderby, spins a yarn with the best of them:

"Do you know, gentlemen, that the digestive organs of the whale are so inscrutably constructed by Divine Providence, that it is quite impossible for him to digest even a man's arm? And he knows it too. So that what you take for the White Whale's malice is only his awkwardness. For he never meant to swallow a single limb; he only thinks to terrify by feints. But sometimes he is like the old juggling fellow, formerly a patient of mine in Ceylon, that making believe swallow jack-knives, once upon a time let one drop into him in good earnest, and there it stayed for a twelve-month or more; when I gave him an emetic, he heaved it up in small tacks, d'y see. No possible way for him to digest that jack-knife and fully incorporate it into his bodily system" (368).

It is apparent that there are elements of folklore in both Gargantua and Pantagruel and Moby-Dick. Rabelais and Melville have taken characters and plots from folk legends and shaped them into works that are known and loved all over the world.

CHAPTER VI

A COMPARISON OF STYLES

A great deal has been written about Rabelais's style, particularly its oral quality. Frame writes that, "for all his humanist enthusiasm for the printed page, in the main he harks back to the spoken style that was still strong in his time" (129). Both Frame and Tetel find the Prologues to the four Books good examples of the oral style. Here "Rabelais addresses his readers, draws them into his confidence, and talks to them throughout" (Frame 130). The Prologue to Pantagruel (the first volume written) begins with an address to his readers: "Most illustrious and thrice valorous champions, gentlemen and others" (II, 223). He urges his readers to commit his stories to memory:

And I do heartily wish that every man would lay aside his own business, meddle no more with his profession nor trade, and throw all affairs concerning himself behind his back, to attend this wholly, without distracting or troubling his mind with anything else, until he have learned them without book; that if by chance the art of printing should cease, or in case that in the time to come all books should perish, every man might truly teach them unto his children, and deliver them over to his successors and survivors from hand to hand, as a religious cabala (II, 223).

The Prologue to Gargantua opens with an address: "Most noble and illustrious drinkers, and you thrice precious pockified blades

(for to you, and none else, do I dedicate my writings)" (xxxiii); and closes with another: "remember to drink a health to me for the favour again, and I will pledge you instantly, Tout ares-metys" (xxxviii). The Prologue to Book III begins "Good people, most illustrious drinkers, and you thrice precious gouty gentlemen" (427), and ends with threats toward readers Rabelais does not desire. The concluding Prologue, to Book IV (assuming that he did not write Book V), opens with still another address: "Good people. God save and keep you!" (224); and closes with one more: "Now my lads, as you hope for good health. cough once aloud with lungs of leather; take me off three swingeing [sic] bumpers; prick up your ears; and you shall hear me tell wonders of the noble and good Pantagruel" (240).

It should be noted that the first two books were published under the pseudonym Alcofribas Nasier, anagram of François Rabelais. Not until Book III, with the support of the king, François I, did he feel he was no longer in danger of repercussions from the Sorbonne (Tetel, 49, writes that Rabelais's sense of safety was unfounded.)

The narrator persona in Moby-Dick is Ishmael, although some critics find that a great deal of the time Melville is speaking in his own voice instead of his character's. In the opening chapters, the narrative persona introduces himself:

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago--never mind how long precisely--having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It

is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off--then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings toward the ocean with me (12).

From this low-key, tongue-in-cheek beginning, Ishmael a short time later introduces one of the major themes of the book:

However, a good laugh is a mighty good thing, and rather too scarce a good thing; the more's the pity. So if any one man, in his own proper person, afford stuff for a good joke to anybody, let him not be backward, but let him cheerfully allow himself to spend and be spent in that way. And the man that has anything bountifully laughable about him, be sure there is more in the man than you perhaps think for (35).

This is the Ishmael who says, "But he who . . . throughout a care-free lifetime swears by Rabelais as passing wise, and therefore jolly;--not that man is fitted to sit down on tomb-stones, and break the green damp mould with unfathomably wondrous Solomon" (355). As Shurr writes, "Ishmael becomes the first fully liberated and secularized hero of our literature ('And I only am escaped alone to tell thee' [470; Epilogue]), the first to liberate himself in a conscious and methodological way" (33).

Also in the oral tradition is the use of dialogue, sometimes a rapidfire exchange resembling stichomythia. An example is Panurge's conversation with Dingdong:

Panurge: On which side you please, I hear you.

Dingdong: You are going to Lantern-land, they say.

Pan.: Yea, verily.

Ding: To see fashions?

Pan: Yea, verily.

Ding.: And be merry?

Pan.: Yea, verily.

Ding.: Your name is, as I take it, Robin Mutton?

Pan.: As you please for that, sweet sir.

Ding.: Nay, without offence.

Pan.: So I understand it.

Ding.: You are, as I take it, the king's jester; are not you?

Pan.: Yea, verily.

[Ed note: "The first edition of the second book of Rabelais contained

nothing injurious against Calvin; but Calvin, in the first of his letters, in the year 1553, having ranked Pantagruel among obscene and prohibited books, the reader has already seen how in his turn Rabelais delineates Calvin under the names of predestinator and imposter in the preface to the last editions of the said second book. Here, from scurrility he passes to raillery, and when he brings in Panurge answering Dingdong by 'so I understand it,' and by four 'yea verilys' running, it is visible he ridicules the too frequent use of words in Calvin's catechism"] (261).

Strikingly similar to Rabelais is Melville's use of dialogue in the dispute between the mariners and the "very learned and most Christian and charitable gentlemen, with a copy of Blackstone under his arm" over possession of the whale they had captured illustrates Melville's skill with dialogue:

"Please, sir, who is the Lord Warden?"

"The Duke."

"But the duke had nothing to do with taking this fish?"

"It is his."

"We have been at great trouble, and peril, and some expense, and is all that to go to the Duke's benefit; we getting nothing at all for our pains but our blisters?"

"It is his."

"Is the Duke so very poor as to be forced to this desperate mode of getting a livelihood?"

"It is his."

"I thought to relieve my old bed-ridden mother by part of my share of this whale."

"It is his."

"Won't the Duke be content with a quarter or a half?"

"It is his" (335).

Except for a line or two, Melville is also using the technique of stichomythia; note, however, the five repetitions of "It is his." Possibly Melville is engaging in his own bit of catechism parody patterned on Rabelais.

Not only are there stylistic techniques in common in the two books, but there are verbal echoes of Rabelais in Moby-Dick. Pantagruel, falling ill, is treated by physicians with "seventeen great balls of copper, each whereof was bigger than that which is to be seen on the top of St. Peter's needle at Rome" (II, 419). Compare Melville's pun, "Of erections, how few are domed like St. Peter's!" (261). In the Prologue to Gargantua Rabelais describes the contents of sileni (Tetel defines these as "small apothecary boxes," p. 86) containing "many rich and fine drugs, such as . . . ambergreese" (xxxiii). Later on Panurge attempts to decipher "invisible writing" by greasing paper with fat "to see if it was not written with the sperm of a whale, which some call ambergris" (368). Melville makes much of Stubb's hoodwinking the captain of the Rose Bud of the precious ambergris from the blasted whale. Stubb's thoughts of his wife, "What's my juicy little pear at home doing now?" (149) echo Panurge's "juicy little pear."

And there is even a reference in Rabelais to Ishmael (III, 409).

Even closer parallels between the two books have been found, the closest being the verbal echoes of Book I, Chapter X, "Of That Which is Signified by the Colours White and Blue," in Moby-Dick, Chapter XLI, "The Whiteness of the Whale." Wells has charted these parallels as follows:

<u>Moby-Dick</u>	<u>Rabelais</u>
" . . . and though besides all this, whiteness has been even made significant of gladness" (p. 163).	" . . . by white all the world hath understood joy, gladness, mirth, pleasure, and delight" (p. 39).
" . . . for among the Romans a white stone marked a joyful day--" (p. 163)	" . . . by white, nature would have us understand joy and gladness" (p. 41).
" . . . for among the Romans a white stone marked a joyful day--" (p. 163)	" . . . in former times the Thracians and Cretans did mark their good, propitious, and fortunate days with white stones--" (p. 39)
" . . . though in the Vision of St. John, white robes are given to the redeemed, and the four-and twenty elders stand clothed in white before the great white throne, and	" . . . With the like colour of vesture did St. John the Evangelist, Apoc. 4. 7, see the faithful clothed in the heavenly and blessed Jerusalem" (p. 40).

the Holy One that sitteth
there white like wool"--(p. 164)

* * * * *

" . . . whiteness . . .	" . . . when any man, after
contributes to the daily	he had vanquished his enemies,
state of kings and queens	was by decree of the senate
drawn by milk-white	to enter into Rome triumphantly,
steeds--" (p. 164)	he usually rode in a chariot
	drawn by white horses: which
	in the ovation triumph was
	also the custom--" (p. 40).

* * * * *

" . . . there yet lurks an	" . . . the lion, who with his
elusive something in the	only cry and roaring affrights
innermost idea of this hue,	all beasts, dreads and feareth
which strikes more of panic	only a white cock--" (p. 40).
to the soul than that redness	
which affrights in blood"	
(p. 164).	

Robert Shulman also finds similarities in the two works, although not as close as those of Wells. Shulman believes that Melville has become so deeply involved with Rabelais that he "unconsciously patterned himself on Rabelais" (68). The reference is to the last three pages of Book III, Chapter LI: "Why It Is Called Pantagruelion, and of the Admirable Virtues Thereof" (97). There is some mystery about this

herb that in reality is hemp, a mystery that becomes symbolic. Shulman relates this symbolism to the symbolism in Moby-Dick with the idea that Melville's interest in Rabelais goes beyond the "earthy" passages.

The passage in Moby-Dick referred to is Chapter 57, which Melville entitled "Of Whales in Paint; in Teeth; in Wood; in Sheetiron; in Stone; in Mountains; in Stars" (231). Ishmael describes whales in mountains:

Then again, in mountainous countries where the traveler is continually girdled [emphasis added] by amphitheatrical [emphasis added] heights, here and there from some lucky point of view you will catch passing glimpses of the profiles of whales defined along the undulating ridges (233).

Verbal echoes of the italicized words are found in this passage from Rabelais:

Soldiers are now-a-days much better sheltered under it [Pantagruelion], than they were in former times, when they lay in tents covered in skins. It overshadows the theatres and ampitheatres [emphasis added] from the heat of the scorching sun. It begirdeth [emphasis added] and encompasseth forests, chases, parks, copses and groves for the pleasure of hunters (201).

Not only are there obvious verbal parallels--"girdled" and "begirdled," "ampitheatrical" and "ampitheatres"--in these passages, but Rabelais's "tents" look forward to the conclusion of Ishmael's chapter. But first, he goes on to say:

But you must be a thorough whaler to see these sights; and not only that, but if you wish to return to such a sight again, you must be sure and take the exact intersecting latitude and longitude of your first stand-point, else--so chance-like are such observations of the hills--your precise, previous stand-point would require a laborious re-discovery; like the Solomon islands, which still remain incognito [emphasis added], though once high-ruffed Mendaña trod them and old Figueroa chronicled them (233).

The concluding sentence refers back to Rabelais, the passage following the one quoted earlier:

By the help thereof [Pantagruelion] those remote nations, whom nature seemed so unwilling to have discovered to us, and so desirous to have kept them still in abscondito and hidden from us, that the ways through which their countries were to be reached unto were not only totally unknown, but judged also to be altogether impermeable and inaccessible, are now arrived to us, and we to them (201-02).

Both the idea of difficulty and the word "discovery" that link Ishmael's "laborious re-discovery" and Rabelais's "so unwilling to have discovered to us," are enlarged upon in the rest of his sentence--"altogether impermeable and inaccessible." Even closer are the descriptions of these places that are off the beaten track: Ishmael says they "still remain incognito," while Rabelais writes that nature wants them to stay "still in abscondito."

Noting that "The specific exotic names in Ishmael's passage do not come from Rabelais" (64), Shulman feels that "the Solomon Islands, high-ruffled Mendaña, and old Figuera" carry the idea of exotic places and people in the following passage of Rabelais:

These voyages outreached the flights of birds, and far surpassed the scope of feathered fowls, how swift soever they had been on the wing, and notwithstanding that advantage they have of us, in swimming through the air. Taproban hath seen the heaths of Lapland, and both the Javas, the Rhiphaean mountains; wide distant Phebol shall see Theleme, and the Islanders drink of the flood of Euphrates. By it the chill-mouthed Boreas hath surveyed the parched mansions of the torrid Auster, and Eurys visited the regions which Zephyrus hath under his command; yea, in such sort have interviews been made, by the assistance of this sacred herb, that, maugre longitudes and latitudes, and all the variations of the zones, the Peraecian people, and Amtoecian, Amphiscian, Heteroscian, and Periscian have oft rendered and received mutual visits to and from other, upon all the climates" (III, LI, 202).

[Note the parallel between Ishmael's "latitude and longitude" and Rabelais's "maugre longitudes and latitudes".]

Ishmael enlarges further:

Nor when expandingly lifted by your subject, can you fail to trace out great whales in the starry heavens, and boats in pursuit of them; as when long filled with thoughts of

war the Eastern nations saw armies locked in battle among the clouds. Thus at the North have I chased Leviathan round and round the Pole with the revolutions of the bright points that first defined him to me. And beneath the effulgent Antarctic skies I have boarded the Argo-Navis, and joined the chase against the starry Cetus far beyond the utmost reach of Hydrus and the Flying Fish (233).

At this point, Ishmael's imagination knows no bounds; its range is global, like Rabelais:

From which amazement, when they saw how, by means of this blest Pantagruelion, the Arctic people looked upon the Antarctic, scoured the Atlantic Ocean, passed the tropics, pushed through the torrid zone, measured all the zodiac, sported under the equinoctial, having both poles level with their horizon; they judged it high time to call a council for their own safety and preservation (202).

Beyond the obvious parallels in scope and geographical terms--"Antarctic" and Pole"--Shulman finds a more general relationship not only in the passage just quoted "but more generally on the one which precedes it and on others that I will introduce in relation to the constellations and 'the starry heavens'" (66). Before developing that idea, Shulman quotes the conclusion of Ishmael's chapter, "since he has compressed a long passage from 'Pantagruelion,' and parts of it are interspersed throughout the two paragraphs of Moby-Dick that we are considering":

With a frigate's anchors for my bridle-bits and fasces of harpoons for spurs, would I could mount that whale and leap the topmost skies, to see whether the fabled heavens with all their countless tents really lie encamped beyond my mortal sight! (233).

For Rabelais, "The Olympic gods . . . affrighted at the sight of such achievements," are concerned that Pantagruel will be very prolific and, finding

an herb of such another virtue and prodigious energy . . . they may contrive a way for human kind to pierce into the high ææaerian clouds, get up into the springhead of the hail, take an inspection of the snowy sources, and shut and open as they please the sluices from whence proceed the flood-gates of the rain; then prosecuting their ethereal voyage, they may step in unto the lightning workhouse and shop, where all the thunderbolts are forged, where, seizing on the magazine of heaven, and storehouse of our warlike fire munition, they may discharge a bounding peal or two of thundering ordnance, for joy of their arrival to these new supernal places; and, charging those tonitruual guns afresh, turn the whole force of that artillery wherein we most confided against ourselves. Then it is like, they will set forward to invade the territories of the moon, whence, passing through both Mercury and Venus, the Sun will serve them for a torch, to show the way from Mars to Jupiter and Saturn. We shall not then be

able to resist the impetuosity of their intrusion, nor put a stoppage to their entering in at all, whatever regions, domiciles, or mansions of the firmament they shall have any mind to see, to stay in, or to travel through for their recreation. All the celestial signs together, with the constellations of the fixed stars, will jointly be at their devotion then. Some will take up their lodging at the Ram, some at the Bull, and others at the Twins; some at the Crab, some at the Lion Inn, and others at the sign of the Virgin; some at the Balance, others at the Scorpion, and others will be quartered at the Archer; some will be harboured at the Goat, some at the Water-pourer's sign, some at the Fishes; some will lie at the Crown, some at the Harp, some at the Golden Eagle and the Dolphin; some at the Flying Horse, some at the Ship, some at the great, some at the little Bear; and so throughout the glistening hostelries of the whole twinkling asteristic welkin. There will be sojourners come from the earth, who, longing after the taste of the sweet cream, of their own skimming off, from the best milk of all the dairy of the Galaxy, will set themselves at table down with us, drink of our nectar and ambrosia, and take to their own beds at night for wives and concubines, our fairest goddesses, the only means whereby they can be deified (203-04).

Ishmael's "starry heavens" echo Rabelais's "sparkling firmament" and "fixed stars." The "twinkling asterics" pictured by Rabelais develop

into "the bright points" which to Ishmael "first defined [the heavenly whale] to me." As Ishmael "boarded the Argo-Navis, and joined the chase against the starry Cetus" he was undertaking a voyage similar to "those voyages [that] outreached the flights of birds"; literally "prosecuting [his own] etherial voyage." The Southern constellations encountered by Ishmael on this voyage parallel those Northern stars encountered by Rabelais. Ishmael's fantasy is to "mount that whale and leap the topmost skies" to discover whether the heavens are actually there, and if they are, to see them himself; that is, he wishes to "contrive a way for human kind to pierce into the high aerian clouds, get into the springhead of the hall, take an inspection of the snowy sources, and shut and open as they please the sluices from which proceed the floodgate of the rain" (203). Ishmael yearns to go above those skies to discover "whether the fabled heavens with all their countless tents really lie encamped beyond my mortal sight!" He longs to become part of the

sojourners come from the earth, who, longing after the taste of sweet cream, of their own skimming off, from the best milk of all the galaxy, will set themselves at table down with us, drink of our nectar and ambrosia, and take to their own beds at night for wives and concubines our fairest goddesses, the only means whereby they can be deified (204).

It can be seen, then, that Rabelais has strongly influenced Melville's imagery, rhythms, and diction.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

It is apparent that there are similarities in Gargantua and Pantagruel and Moby-Dick. Both Rabelais and Melville lived at the time of discovery and new frontiers; both were learned men (Melville mainly self-taught); and both used their talents to explore and develop intellectual freedom. Rabelais all of his life opposed corruption in his church; Melville all his life opposed the hypocrisy he found in mid-nineteenth-century religion (for example, his criticism of missionaries he observed in Tahiti and elsewhere). As we have seen, both authors used similar methods of parody, burlesque, and satire to expose evils they saw in contemporary religious practices. In his personal life Melville was troubled because of his inability either to accept or deny Christianity. Rabelais was not so sure either. Perhaps his last words, "I go to seek a grand perhaps" (now considered apocryphal) might have served Melville as well.

I am told that most locker room humor is directed at the opposite sex; certainly the portrayal of women in both works has shown that both authors enjoy that kind of comedy. We have seen that both authors chose the quest-voyage motif for a major part of their novels and that there are elements of parody of the epic in both.

Both stories have their origin in folklore: characters, exaggeration, and tall tales. Finally, there are many similarities in style. I have discussed what seem to be the most important similarities:

(1) the oral tale; (2) the use of dialogue; (3) and finally, Melville's borrowing of words, phrases and sentences from Rabelais.

Taken together, all these similarities appear to indicate that Melville's debt to Rabelais is far greater than has previously been thought. In the three years between the publication of Mardi and Moby-Dick he had, we might say, assimilated one of his favorite authors to the extent that the author's ideas and style permeated the writing of his greatest book and possibly America's greatest book.

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