

[연구논문]

Images of Storm in Melville's *Moby-Dick*

Judit Nagy

(Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church)

Beyond its Romantic and Transcendentalist origins, the literature of the American Renaissance is known for demonstrating traits of a precocious Modernity as well as for the suggestion of certain Post-modern features.¹⁾ Through a detailed analysis of Melville's rich and varied use of storm images in *Moby-Dick*, the current article endeavors to identify the Romantic and Transcendental motifs at work in these images while simultaneously demonstrating the presence of characteristically Modern features in them as well.

Moby-Dick's many storm images cluster around seven points in the novel: the tempestuous winds of the Euroclydon, ekphrastic storms, Father Mapple's moral storms, the theoretical storms of "The Lee Shore,"

1) For example, on the former, Sarbu holds that "what makes Melville and Hawthorne's work particularly interesting today is their incipient modernism." Aladár Sarbu, *The Reality of Appearances: Vision and Representation in Emerson, Hawthorne and Melville*. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1996), 217.

The existentialist reading of Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener" an oft-cited example of the latter. Richard, Findler, "Bartleby's Existential Reduction and its Impact on Others," in *Analecta Husserliana* 2005. Vol. 85. 118-139.

storms occurring during the *Pequod*'s voyage, Ahab's stormy character, and finally, storms as moments of disrupted calm. These points are not disconnected; they intersect, which poses some technical difficulty in the discussion: the reader is thrown into a "web of relations."

1. The Tempestuous Winds of the Euroclydon

The first storm image is found in the second chapter ("The Carpet Bag"):

In judging that tempestuous wind called Euroclydon it maketh a marvellous difference whether thou lookest out at it from a glass window where the frost is all on the outside, or whether thou observest it from that sashless window, where the frost is on both sides and of which the wight Death is the only glazier.²⁾

This sentence in its immediate context refers to the poverty and homelessness Ishmael experiences. In his cosy abode the wealthy Dives finds the frosty night beautiful, while outside miserably poor Lazarus-Ishmael shivers with cold. In the context of the larger novel, however, this sentence may acquire a more philosophical meaning: it makes a difference whether you watch the storm from the shore or from the sea. The two perspectives embody two different attitudes to knowledge, which are elaborated on in "The Lee Shore" chapter: that of landspeople living in blissful ignorance and that of seafarers wishing to investigate the world.

2) Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1983), 803.

Another reference to the Euroclydon is found upon sighting the Jeroboam.³⁾ Ahab asks for St. Paul's tempestuous winds "to be brought to his breezelessness." Here the tempestuous winds represent action as opposed to the lack of it characterized by breezelessness, especially in the context of Ahab being so intent on facing Moby Dick. Also, one must not ignore Ishmael's observation on Ahab's behaviour: "Aye? Well, now, that's cheering," cried Ahab, suddenly erecting himself, while whole thunder-clouds swept aside from his brow. "That lively cry upon this deadly calm might almost convert a better man.-Where away?"⁴⁾ Here calm represents distressing passivity as opposed to the vital forces of action symbolised by the storm. This passage is followed by the invocative "O Nature, O soul of man! how far beyond all utterance are your linked analogies! not the smallest atom stirs or lives in matter, but has its cunning duplicate in mind."⁵⁾ Such an invocation is transcendentalist in its essence, asserting that every natural phenomenon has a counterpart in the human mind. So does language referring to the storm as a "mighty alphabet."⁶⁾

3) Ibid., 1127.

4) Ibid.

5) Ibid.

6) "Emerson claimed that "the whole Nature is a metaphor or image of the Human mind" and favorably cited a key part of one of Coleridge's earlier poems: For all that meets the bodily sense I deem / Symbolical, one mighty alphabet/ For infant minds" *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism*. eds. Joel Myerson, Sandra Harbert Petrulionis, Laura Dassow Walls, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 112.

2. Ekhprastic Storms

Upon entering the Spouter Inn, Ishmael catches a glimpse of a Romantic painting depicting a turmoil of “unaccountable masses of shades and shadows.”⁷⁾ In emphasizing obscurity and darkness, Melville brings the sublime side of Nature into focus. Indeed, Melville even uses the word *sublime* here: the picture has an “indefinite, half-attained, unimaginable sublimity.”⁸⁾ Inviting the observer to decipher its indefinite, murky components, the picture reads in various ways: “It’s the Black Sea in a midnight gale,” “it’s the unnatural combat of the four primal elements,” “it’s a blasted heath,” “it’s a Hyperborean winter scene” and, to carry the generalization further, “It’s the breaking-up of the ice-bound stream of time.”⁹⁾ All of these descriptions involve the violent forces operating in nature. The final conclusion presents it as such: “a Cape Horner in a great hurricane; the half-foundered ship weltering there with its three dismantled masts alone visible; and an exasperated whale, purposing to spring clean over the craft, is in the enormous act of impaling himself upon the mast heads.”¹⁰⁾ Mingled with the storm, the vague outlines of a three-master and a whalish mass are pregnant with the course the Pequod will follow.

The second painting of a storm is displayed in the Whaleman’s Chapel. It is of a “gallant ship beating against a terrible storm off a lee coast of black rocks and snowy breakers,” with “flying scud and dark rolling clouds” in the lower regions, and a ray of hope, “a little

7) Ibid., 805.

8) Ibid.

9) Ibid.

10) Ibid., 806.

isle of sunlight, from which beamed forth an angel's face" in the right upper corner.¹¹⁾ A "distinct spot of radiance" is shed upon "the ship's tossed deck" by the angel, which is interpreted by Ishmael as divine encouragement for the ship to continue her justified and hopeful battle against the evil forces-either natural or supernatural-embodied by the storm.¹²⁾

3. Father Mapple's Moral Storms

The latter painting mentioned may represent echoes of a conflict affecting Father Mapple. Icy sleet and howling winds outside the chapel, an emotional turmoil inside the preacher concerning his quest, the battle of benevolent and malevolent forces on the painting, and Jonah's punishment for the denial of his mission seem connected. How do all these storm symbols come together? What is their implication?

The church has a rather unusual interior decoration as demonstrated by the ladder and the painting. Indeed, the church itself can be seen to represent a ship that, like the vessel in the painting, is battered by tempestuous sleet. This parallel is supported by the last lines of the chapter titled "The Chapel": "The world's a ship on its passage out, and not a voyage complete."¹³⁾ Life is a never-ending quest with many storms-trials, conflicts, tribulations-just like the vessel in storm suggests

11) Ibid., 836. The same imagery is exploited in "The Lee Shore" to illustrate a different point.

12) Another example of an ekphrastic storm is the Turneresque scene in "The Lee Shore," which will be discussed in detail under point 4.

13) Ibid.

on the church wall.

During the service, Father Mapple cites Jonah's story from the Old Testament. The storm therein is the token of God's wrath falling upon Jonah for "his willful disobedience of the command of God."¹⁴) The reason for Jonah's defiance is that he finds such a mission uncomfortable and does not want to be unpopular with the people of his homeland. A twofold moral follows from the biblical tale. Firstly, and this is a lesson "to all sinful men," man should not abandon himself to his fallen nature, but rather strive to overcome. Secondly, one may have to act against one's own will in the fulfilment of a mission. To obey God may mean to disobey oneself: "But all the things that God would have us do are hard for us to do [...] it is in disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists."¹⁵) This is the moral Father Mapple draws for himself, who, as "a pilot of the living God," is often beset by storms of his own. Melville, in fact, describes the priest, as he delivers his sermon, as though he were "tossed by a storm himself": "His deep chest heaved as with a ground-swell; his tossed arms seemed the warring elements at work; and the thunders that rolled away from off his swarthy brow, and the light leaping from his eye, made all his simple hearers look on him with a quick fear that was strange to them."¹⁶) Just as "the pulpit is the ship's prow," Father Mapple has to take a leading part in guiding others; what is more, he is literally bent under the heavy burden of doing so, as the Biblical Jonah too was bent. Nevertheless, he cannot

14) *Ibid.*, 838.

15) *Ibid.*

16) *Ibid.*, 843-44.

abandon this task; all that exists for him is “to preach the Truth to the Face of Falsehood” even if it may not be well-received.¹⁷⁾

As we have seen, the image of the storm carries several layers of meaning in this scene: punishment from God (Jonah), the trials and tribulations of life, Father Mapple's emotional upheaval reflected in the sleet battering the church-ship of life, all to be joined in the final generalization: human fate is that of whalemens sailing the stormy seas of life.

4. Theoretical Turmoils of “The Lee Shore”

The storm of The Lee Shore chapter is termed a theoretical one because it does not really befall the Pequod-it exists only in Ishmael's musings upon Bulkington. I will put forward three different interpretative projections a philosophical, a religious and a psychological one.

Let us consider the philosophical reading first, which has epistemological questions at its centre. The aim of most philosophical thinking is to understand the world. Those who wish to gain deep knowledge are seabound. The depths of knowledge, just as sailing the open sea, hide many dangers; the “boisterous Atlantic,” or the “stormy Capes”¹⁸⁾ appear along the perilous, tempestuous sea voyage. Also, the stormy winds-main philosophical or ideological currents in the world-push the daring voyager back towards the shore.¹⁹⁾

Land poses the most terrible threat to a ship tossed by high winds.

17) *Ibid.*, 845.

18) *Ibid.*, 903.

19) *Ibid.*, 906.

“But in the gale, the port, the land is that ship’s direst jeopardy.”²⁰⁾
And it is not only in a storm that it is presented as undesirable for real seamen:

“Know ye now, Bulkington? Glimpses do ye seem to see of that mortally intolerable truth; that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore?

But as in landlessness alone resides highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God-so, better is it to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety! For worm-like, then, oh! who would craven crawl to land!”²¹⁾

Those thriving on deep knowledge cannot attain bliss on the shore. They find the solid ground shallow and superficial. For them, the shore embodies saving dullness, it is “slavish” and “treacherous,” it has many restrictions and limitations for those who desire “great depths of knowledge.” To return to the point made earlier about the Euroclydon: It makes a difference from where one watches the storm! What is more, the stormwatchers on shore outnumber those who thrive on living through storms at sea. Again, Starbuck’s “to leeward-homeward” may be interpreted along these lines as the comprehension of the fact that the quest for deep knowledge is futile.²²⁾

In a more general way, the storm blowing leeward can be interpreted as a current, movement, or approach that results in the small-time philosopher’s going astray in his examinations. It is the embodiment

20) Ibid., 906.

21) Ibid., 906.

22) Ibid., 1331.

of constraining norms and laws of conformity, the consequence of which one is being cast upon the or shore made to fall into the trap of excessive pragmatization or Mammon-worship. As Percy Boynton explains, "The ocean is the boundless truth and land is the threatening reef of human error."²³⁾

In the religious reading, the image of storm may represent currents of religious thought resulting in a dogmatic approach. The land and the sea symbolise two different kinds of faith. For critic Sophie Hollis, those who inhabit the land possess a "bucolic, non-thinking faith," whereas the sea symbolises "the tree of knowledge which is fraught with dangers to the peace of the soul."²⁴⁾ Father Mapple is driven by this dangerous, "questioning" form of faith,, which may bring about the denunciation and defiance of dogmatic religion and its terrestrial representatives. Another possibility to consider here is the land versus sea symbolism standing for predesitnation against free will.

Displaying the psychological aspect of thinking, the analogy may imply the juxtaposition of what is sensible, rational and what is instinctual, irrational. Or, a related, Freudian interpretation of the mind has its unconscious component of deep waters (Id) while the surface--which by metonymy is also linked to the land--can be envisaged as the conscious (Ego)-the unconscious dominating over the conscious. The stormy wind embodies the superego in this sense, by providing the controlling force to enhance the rule of the Ego. In the Jungian

23) Percy H. Boynton, "The Allegory of Moby Dick," in *Moby-Dick as Doubloon*, eds. H. Parker-H. Hayford (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 171.

24) Sophie Hollis, "The Main Theme of Moby Dick", in *Moby-Dick as Doubloon*, eds. H. Parker-H. Hayford (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 179-191, p. 187.

reading, however, the same storm would be triggered by the unconscious, and the wind would blow seaward enabling us to comprehend why Ahab, stuck in a typhoon (“The Candles”), chooses to seek out and fight Moby Dick instead of turning back and sailing home with favourable winds in the Pequod’s stern. The very essence of his madness lies in his subconscious taking over his conscious, which anticipates the climax at this point in the story.

5. Storms of the Pequod’s Voyage

Three major storms break out during the sea voyage of the Pequod: the storm that is raging in the chapter titled ‘Midnight, Forecastle,’ the one following the first lowering, and the climactic storm of “The Candles.”²⁵⁾ All can be explained either as having an anaphoric or a cataphoric significance; that is, whether they bear the mark of God’s anger for human wrongdoing or rather, they carry the sinister germs of the Pequod’s ill-starred fate.

The first storm breaks out after the doubloon is nailed to the mast

25) In fact, two additional storms appear: a minor one when the Pequod sails around the Cape, famous for its stormy weather. Melville, 1043. The reason why I have not included the Cape storm in the above discussion is because of the lack of evidence for either its punishing or its foretelling function. Rather, it relates to Ahab’s madness. The sea rocks the Pequod in the same mad way as Ahab is rocking in his hammock in the gale. The second storm excluded precedes the current journey of the Pequod; it comes to life in the reminiscences of Bildad and Peleg. However, it is not completely irrelevant to the outcome of Ahab’s current quest for Moby Dick. The terrible typhoon recalled may have an anticipatory function, and indeed, the Pequod will finally sink near Japan, following the occurrence of a typhoon! At the same time, the tropical storm is associated with Judgement Day, which gives it a touch of divine punishment.

and Ahab openly declares his mission: the annihilation of the white whale. A heavy drinking session that follows is the celebration of the ratification of Ahab's pact with the crew to join him on his mission. In the three preceding chapters, Ahab, Starbuck, and Stubb's respective points of view with regard to the issue are put down. The chapter titled 'Midnight, Forecastle' can be interpreted as God's punishment of the crew through the instrument of a storm. Sneakily, with a storm wrapped in it, the night encroaches upon the crew while people are dancing in an ecstatic rave-like the sinful inhabitants of Nineveh. The dancing gradually ceases as the storm unfolds and "[t]he sky darkens-the wind rises"²⁶) Each sailor adds his own perception to the observation of the storm. The Lascar sailor's "By Brahma! Boys, it'll be douse sail soon. The sky-born, high-tide Ganges turned to wind! Thou showest thy black brow, Seeva!"²⁷) links Ahab with the storm, too, as he has "whole thunder-clouds sweep[ing] aside from his brow"²⁸). Other members of the crew similarly connect the two events. The fourth Nantucket sailor remarks, "I heard old Ahab tell him [the mate] he must always kill a squall, something as they burst a waterspout with a pistol-fire your ship right into it"; to which the English sailor responds, "We are the lads to hunt him up his whale."²⁹) The oldest one on board, familiar with the indispensable armoury of wisdom-supertitions of a whalemens' life, the Manx sailor utters the following remark: "This is the sort of weather when brave hearts snap ashore, and keeled hulls split at sea. Our captain has his birthmark; look yonder,

26) Ibid., 978.

27) Ibid.

28) Ibid., 1127.

29) Ibid., 980.

boys, there's another in the sky-lurid-like, ye see, all else pitch black."³⁰) He also associates Ahab's character with the storm. Moreover, his words prophesize the Pequod in the climactic "The Candles" scene with the corpusant-lit masts of the ship, bright and glaring, set against the stormy night!

Another potential interpretation involves considering that the night is the time when the unconscious emerges. Can the storm be interpreted as a message from the unconscious? In this sense, the storm may imply two things: the attack upon and enchantment of the crew's unconscious by Ahab's dominating personality or a sinister warning from the unconscious, casting a shadow on the happiness of the conscious minds of the crew.

The next big storm appears at the first lowering. As the crew are out hunting for whales, a storm is sneaking upon them. The signs of the approaching storm are scattered in dribs and drabs within the text of the chapter.

"The dancing white water made by the chase was now becoming more and more visible, owing to the increasing darkness of the dun cloud-shadows flung upon the sea. The jets of vapour no longer blended, but tilted everywhere to right and left; the whales seemed separating their wakes. The boats were pulled more apart; Starbuck giving chase to three whales running dead to leeward. Our sail was now set, and, with the still rising wind, we rushed along; the boat going with such madness through the water, that the lee oars could scarcely be worked rapidly enough to escape being torn from the row-locks."³¹)

The image of the storm depicted here evokes evil associations: "meanwhile the boat was still booming through the mist, the waves

30) Ibid.

31) Ibid., 1031-32.

curling and hissing around us like the erected crests of enraged serpents." The crew falls into "the white, curdling cream of the squall," which "roared, forked, and crackled around us like a white fire upon the prairie."³²⁾ The forked flames again have devilish overtones; moreover, their hellish-snakish image will reappear in "The Candles" with extended meaning. The imagery suggests that, in this case, it is more reasonable to interpret the storm as punishment for chasing whales and thereby upsetting the natural order. However, the interpretation of the storm being a forewarning cannot be excluded completely.

The climactic storm of Ahab's drama sweeps through "The Candles" chapter. In preparation, the reader is told that "Warmest climes breed the cruellest storms," or, in other words, that the area near Japan is Typhoon prone.³³⁾ Inevitably, the Pequod gets into a typhoon. The stormy sea smashes Ahab's boat, an incident that can be interpreted as either portent or punishment. There is lightning around, the rods should be dropped overboard but, out of defiance-the right worship of his fire God-Ahab keeps them on the deck crying "Let's have fair play here."³⁴⁾ The lightning also serves as a guide to Ahab. It is the lightning-sparked fire that guides Ahab's way to his place on the deck: "Suddenly finding his path made plain to him by elbowed lances of fire."³⁵⁾ He believes that the very light is going to lead him to the white whale.³⁶⁾ However, the chapter is full of warning

32) Ibid., 1033.

33) Ibid., 1329.

34) Ibid., 1331.

35) Ibid.

36) Stubb also misinterprets the corpusants as a sign of an auspicious hunt: "I take that mast-head flame we saw for a sign of good luck... Yes, our three mast will yet be as three spermaceti candles-that's the good promise we saw." Ibid., 1333.

images that can be connected to the storm. As the corpusants light the three masts, the masts glow like “three gigantic wax tapers before an altar,” “burning in that sulphurous air,” sulphur being an essential element of hell. “God’s burning finger” is “laid on the ship,” and “His Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin” are “woven into the shrouds and the cordage” of the Pequod.³⁷⁾ The Biblical reference-Daniel interpreting the writing for Belshazzar as God’s warning words-suggests a warning function here rather than an indication of intended punishment. Additional warning signs follow. The storm comes, for instance, from the very direction the Pequod’s crew is heading in their chase of Moby Dick. Indeed, it is the realization of this that prompts Starbuck’s sinister “to windward, all is blackness of doom [...] but to leeward, homeward” is sounded.³⁸⁾ Also, Ahab’s harpoon is baptized by “a levelled flame of pale, forked fire” and is said to have “burned there like a serpent’s tongue.” Starbuck interprets this as a sign of God’s opposition to Ahab’s goal.³⁹⁾ In response, Ahab waves the burning harpoon among the crew and reminds them to act according to their oaths. As a result, he is fled by his men, who are frightened of him. “As in the hurricane that sweeps the plain, men fly the neighborhood of some lone, gigantic elm, whose very height and strength but render it so much the more unsafe, because so much the more a mark for thunderbolts; so at those last words of Ahab’s many of the mariners did run from him in a terror of dismay”⁴⁰⁾

37) *Ibid.*, 1332.

38) *Ibid.*, 1331.

39) *Ibid.*, 1335.

40) *Ibid.*, 1337.

6. Ahab's Figure Carrying the Storm in Himself

The next important employment of storm images concerns Ahab's character. It revolves around Ahab's "mark," which Melville describes as such: "[Ahab's mark] resembled that perpendicular seam sometimes made in the straight, lofty trunk of a great tree, when the upper lightning tearingly darts down it, and without wrenching a single twig, peels and grooves out the bark from top to bottom, ere running off into the soil, leaving the tree still greenly alive but branded."⁴¹ Firstly, Ahab's "slender, rod-like mark, lividly whitish" had been burnt into him by lightning.⁴² The connection of his mark with natural forces lends him a touch of divinity. Moreover, it reflects how strongly the element of fire has become part of his soul. This fire seems to be a slowly consuming one. A later reference to the "same fiery emotion accumulated in the Leyden jar of his own magnetic life" adds another aspect to the nature of the lightning-sparked fire associated with Ahab.⁴³ The "magnetism" of his personality, which is the source of "spiritual terror."⁴⁴ Thus Ahab can be seen as the compass needle bent by his own stormy electricity.⁴⁵ He is a magnet bending his crew's will and, at the same time, he is being bent by the lightning that has branded him.

Another feature of Ahab's lightning mark is that it splits his

41) *Ibid.*, 924.

42) *Ibid.*, 1331. The reader learns relatively late in the story ("The Candles") that Ahab was indeed struck by lightning on an earlier voyage. How he got his mark is not revealed until the novel's climax.

43) *Ibid.*, 969.

44) *Ibid.*, 915.

45) *Ibid.*, 1345.

body-and perhaps his personality-into two. Upon approaching tropical seas Ahab is characterised as a “thunder-cloven old oak.”⁴⁶⁾ The word ‘*cleave*’ may convey two meanings: firstly, to *break, split esp. along a natural line*, secondly, to *remain attached or faithful to something*, for example, to the fork-flamed fire of the lightning Ahab openly allies with in “The Candles.”

An important indicator of Ahab’s state of mind that can be connected with the image of storms is his brow: “the clouds that layer upon layer were piled upon his brow.”⁴⁷⁾ Similarly to Ahab’s mark, whiteness and lightning are joined in the image of Ahab’s brow. Upon being “mentally” kicked by Ahab, Stubb utters, “I was so taken all aback with his brow somehow. It flashed like a bleached bone.”⁴⁸⁾ After the watchman on the Pequod’s mast-head cries out after glimpsing another ship in the distance, “whole thunder-clouds swept aside from his [Ahab’s] brow,” firstly because Ahab hopes to hear some news from Moby Dick, secondly, because he wishes to act rather than to wait around.⁴⁹⁾ At the first lowering, Ahab goes after his prey “with tornado brow.”⁵⁰⁾

Another storm-like character trait worth mentioning is Ahab’s voice characterised as “such was the thunder of his voice.”⁵¹⁾ Ahab is referred to as Old Thunder on two occasions: when he is first gossiped about in “The Prophet” by Elijah and in the climactic “The

46) Ibid., 926.

47) Ibid.

48) Ibid., 929.

49) Ibid., 1127.

50) Ibid., 1031.

51) Ibid., 1024.

Candles" chapter he calls himself the same name.⁵²⁾ Even though it was customary to address somebody as Old Thunder in those times, this address has peculiar overtones in the light of Ahab's strange mark and brow.

Ahab's character carries the storm in itself even in the way he is first described to Ishmael. "He's a grand, ungodly, god-like man, Captain Ahab; doesn't speak much; but, when he does speak, then you may well listen. Mark ye, be forewarned; Ahab's above the common; Ahab's been in colleges, as well as 'mong the cannibals; been used to deeper wonders than the waves; fixed his fiery lance in mightier, stranger foes than whales."⁵³⁾ The tension preceding his appearance is just like the electricity that accumulates in the charged storm clouds. Indeed, he is often associated with lightning, an elaborate example of which can be found in the chapter "The Chart."

"Often, when forced from his hammock by exhausting and intolerably vivid dreams of the night, which, resuming his own intense thoughts through the day, carried them on amid a clashing of phrensies, and whirled them round and round and round in his blazing brain, till the very throbbing of his life-spot became insufferable anguish; and when, as was sometimes the case, these spiritual throes in him heaved his being up from its base, and a chasm seemed opening in him, from which forked flames and lightnings shot up, and accursed fiends beckoned him to leap down among them; when this hell in himself yawned beneath him, a wild cry would be heard through the ship; and with glaring eyes Ahab would burst from his state room, as though escaping from a bed that was on fire."⁵⁴⁾

52) *Ibid.*, 890-891.

53) *Ibid.*, 863.

54) *Ibid.*, 965.

Ahab's nickname, "Old Thunder", is congruent with his stormy character.⁵⁵⁾

It goes in line with Ahab's stormy image that shortly before announcing the ultimate aim of the Pequod's voyage, "[Ahab] looked not unlike the weather horizon when a storm is coming up" and he was "rapidly glancing over the bulwarks, then darting his eyes among the crew," each glance a flash of lightning.⁵⁶⁾

Apart from the question of forewarning versus punishment, the storm of "The Candles" also sheds light upon Ahab's multi-layered relationship with his God. Ahab sees a kind of God or supernatural force in the corpusants, which reveals three different levels of the relationship between Ahab and his God. The first level shows Ahab's respect of the power embodied by lightning: Ahab "put his foot upon the Parsee; and with fixed upward eye, and high-flung right arm, he stood erect before the lofty tri-pointed trinity of flames."⁵⁷⁾ This implies that Ahab is a fire-worshipper, though he lacks the Parsee's humility and submission in his worship. The second level reflects the transcendentalist relationship between the individual and his God. The individual has God in himself through the Oversoul, therefore, in a way, humans are Gods in a finite form.⁵⁸⁾ The parallel of Ahab and pallidness can be informative in this respect: the corpusants envelope the deck in "pallid fire." Such pallidness enchants the crew just as

55) This nickname is first mentioned in the chapter entitled "The Prophet".

56) *Ibid.*, 964.

57) It is also here that it turns out where Ahab got his mark from. *Ibid.*, 1334.

58) *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism*. eds. Joel Myerson, Sandra Harbert Petrucci, Laura Dassow Walls, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 266.

Ahab's invincible will magically rules their souls when they make their pact with Ahab for the chase of Moby Dick. This pallidness is all-pervasive, it "finally covers everything."⁵⁹⁾ Also, Ahab owns the "speechless, placeless power" of this force, the fire of which he claims to be made of.⁶⁰⁾ Finally, there is the aspect of the relationship in which man is superior to God. For example, man knows his origins while God does not. The only way to worship this force is defiance without any humility or subordination to divine forces: "Thy right worship is defiance."⁶¹⁾ That Ahab worships the power as represented by the corpusants means that he is well-aware of the supernatural pact he has made and he is not backing out. As Charles Olson observes, this scene is the final declaration that Ahab has resigned himself to his fate.⁶²⁾

Ahab is also prone to fits of rage, which may link anger, another human quality with the image of the storm. As the carpenter puts it in "The Deck," "He goes aft. That was sudden, now; but squalls come sudden in hot latitudes."⁶³⁾ As Richard B. Sewal explains, the "hurricane" of Ahab's fury against which his crew feels compelled to stand up in the name of common sense, may imply his monomaniac ragings. The image of the storm befits the expression of the maniac raging of a lunatic.⁶⁴⁾ And indeed, the parallel is drawn in the text of the

59) Ibid.

60) Ibid.

61) Ibid.

62) Charles Olson, "Ahab and His Fool," in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Moby-Dick*, ed. M. T. Gilmore (London: Prentice Hall International Ltd., 1977), 51.

63) Melville, 1359.

64) Richard B. Sewal, "Moby-Dick," in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Moby-Dick*, ed. M. T. Gilmore (London: Prentice Hall International Ltd., 1977), 47.

novel: “In a straitjacket, he swung to the mad rockings of the gales.”⁶⁵⁾

Ahab is focused on Moby Dick. He remains looking at the compass even in his slumber in order not to miss the course he is to follow: “Terrible old man! [...] sleeping in this gale, still thou steadfastly eyst thy purpose.”⁶⁶⁾ Dreams may bring forth Ahab’s unconscious, which is likened to hell, “a chasm” containing “forked flames and lightnings.”⁶⁷⁾ Along the course of the voyage, the unconscious gradually takes over the ego. Continuing this train of thought we may arrive at the conclusion that Ahab chooses to ride the storm instead of turning homeward because his unconscious is no longer controlled. This is hinted at in a remark of Ishmael’s in the chapter entitled “Moby Dick”:

His special lunacy stormed his general sanity, and carried it, and turned all its concentrated cannon upon its own mad mark so that far from having lost his strength, Ahab, to that end, did now possess a thousand fold more potency than ever he had sanely brought to bear upon any reasonable object.⁶⁸⁾

Finally, towards the very end of the book Ahab admits to be ruled by emotions, a truly human trait of his character: “But Ahab never thinks, he only, feels, feels, feels.”⁶⁹⁾ In this sense, emotional turmoils can be interpreted as storms followed by calm periods like ebb and tide just as the teardrop may be interpreted as the fruit of Ahab’s “forty years of privation, and peril, and storm-time.”⁷⁰⁾ Ahab likens

65) *Ibid.*, 990.

66) *Ibid.*, 1044.

67) *Ibid.*, 1007.

68) *Ibid.*, 990.

69) *Ibid.*, 1396.

70) *Ibid.*, 1373.

himself to a “rope towing dismantled frigates in a gale,” strained, spent, yet, saving his remaining strength and energy for the final combat. As he notes, “Ere I break, ye’ll hear me crack; and till ye hear that, know that Ahab’s hawser [a large rope used when towing] tows his purpose yet.”⁷¹⁾

7. Storms as Moments of Disrupted Calm

Some significant events in the story are preceded by “a calm before the storm.” Examples include the calm preceding the climactic three-day chase that ends the story or a similar occurrence before the first lowering.⁷²⁾ In the chapter titled “The Line,” an even more explicit philosophical remark is made on the issue: “the profound calm which only apparently precedes the storm is perhaps more awful than the storm itself, for, indeed, the calm is but the wrapper and envelope of the storm.”⁷³⁾ In the images following, a parallel is drawn between the coating of calm and the potentials of the line to limit life by posing a threat with its sublime presence. Further generalization using the image of the umbilical chord suggests that every human being has this potentially fatal halter around his or her neck by birth, which, in part, amounts to an existentialist stance. The image of a storm is brought into the picture through Melville’s use of the phrase “ringed lightnings.”⁷⁴⁾ Why is the calm more awful than the storm?

71) *Ibid.*, 1395.

72) See *Ibid.*, 1042-43.

73) *Ibid.*, 1094.

74) *Ibid.*

Because the fear of death is worse than death itself; as an existential philosopher such as Sartre might argue, it induces the genuine angst that makes one face Nothingness.

In a number of scenes, the surface of the sea is depicted as calm whereas the depths display turbulent violence. As Ishmael remarks in “The Gilder” chapter of the novel, “these are the times of dreamy quietude, when beholding the tranquil beauty and brilliancy of the ocean’s skin, one forgets the tiger heart that pants beneath it”⁷⁵⁾ Philosophically, the superficial calm and the violence below the surface may represent a stance similar to that of the epistemological symbology of “The Lee Shore.” Or, they may simply suggest that appearances are deceptive. The same deceptiveness characterises Moby Dick’s nature. He may seem calm when observed from a distance, but in confrontations he reveals a stormy nature. As the narrator notes, the whale “allured” by its “serenity” and many “had fatally found that quietude but the vesture of tornadoes. Yet calm, enticing calm, oh, whale!” This way it “juggles and destroys many.”⁷⁶⁾

Storm is a frequently recurring condition of Ahab’s life: he sails through “life’s howling gale,” his being is likened to the “tornadoed Atlantic,” and he characterizes his life as “forty years of privation, peril and storm-time.” Yet, there are peaceful moments within this stormy existence: “But even so, amid the tornadoed Atlantic of my being, I do myself still for ever centrally disport in mute calm; and while ponderous planets of unwaning woe revolve round me, deep down and deep inland there I still bathe me in eternal mindless of

75) Ibid., 1318.

76) Ibid.,1378-1379.

joy.”⁷⁷) This joy is associated with “that enchanted calm which they say lurks at the heart of every commotion.”⁷⁸) Moreover, the image of the Typhoon—a hurricane in the Pacific ocean—suggests that in fact calm may not only precede storms but also, each storm essentially contains calm in it. This implies that calm and storm have grown together vitally, they cannot be separated.

The image of the storm is an expressive symbol meant to demonstrate Ahab's acceptance of his ultimate fate: “Methinks now that this coined sun wears a ruddy face; but see! aye, he enters the sign of storms, the equinox! ... from storm to storm! So be it then. Born in throes, 'tis fit that man should live in pains and die in pangs. So be it then!”⁷⁹) Yet, this defiant acceptance fuelled by pride is broken by the teardrop Ahab sheds marking “forty years of privation, peril and storm-time.”

Another implication of storm and calm alternating is the illustration of the point that there is no progress in life, that there is no ultimate goal to be achieved: “Would to God this blessed calm would last. But the mingled, mingling threads of life are woven by warp and woof; calms crossed by storms, a storm for every calm. There is no steady unretracing progress in this life; we do not advance through fixed gradations.”⁸⁰) This cyclical world view is here connected with the futility of existence.

As the many examples offered above demonstrate, the storm images

77) Ibid. 1210.

78) Ibid., 1209. Also, Ishmael keeps “a peaceful center.” (Note: the center of the hurricane is always calm).

79) Ibid., 1254.

80) Ibid., 1318.

of *Moby-Dick* display such a rich variety of functions within the novel that any attempt to ascribe to them a singular, allegorical logic is certain to fail. This is because certain symbols in the text function as carriers of multiple meanings and the different storm images of the novel belong to different consciousnesses.⁸¹⁾

More importantly, my analysis of Melville's multi-purpose employment of storm images suggests that (i) building on Western world literary ideas, the text of the novel furnishes numerous storm-related instances of the Romantic weather-emotion mapping (feeling, presentiment, intensity),⁸²⁾ just as some of its storms carrying religious and moral implications are infused with elements of Transcendental philosophy; (ii) being illustrative of the protagonists'-especially Ahab's-state of mind (rather than their mere feelings), psyche and psychological processes, certain storm images of *Moby-Dick* exemplify the "mindscape as landscape" exponent, a prominently Modernist feature;⁸³⁾ (iii) as suggested in the point "Lack of storms-the supernatural calm," images of storm/lack of storm may draw on Heideggerian *Nothingness* adding a touch of existentialism to the text.

81) That of Ishmael-Melville, Ahab, Father Mapple, Starbuck, etc.

82) The term *weather-emotion mapping* is used by Lakoff-scholar, Zoltán Kövecses. He also notes the popularity of this type of mapping in Romanticism. Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 19. On the Romantic use of storms to express feeling, presentiment and intensity, see Eli Mandel, *Contexts of Literary Criticism*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 20., Mihály Hoppál et al. *Jelképtár* (Budapest: Helikon Kiadó, 1990), 234-235., Crilot, J. E., *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* (London: Routledge, 1990), 315., Michael Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 235-236.

83) "Indeed, a central preoccupation of Modernism is with the inner self and consciousness." Josh Rahn, "Modernism" *The Literature Network*, accessed 19 May 2012. <<http://www.online-literature.com/periods/modernism.php>>.

Thus Melville's employment of storm images in *Moby-Dick* exceeds the palette of the then-available literary conventions and trends, making him a pioneer of his age. In linking older traditions with nascent philosophical and literary ideas, still years away from their full realization, he helped contribute to securing Nature's place in the collective consciousness of America.

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Abstract

Images of Storm in Melville's *Moby-Dick*

Judit Nagy

(Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church)

Apart from revealing a rich repository of Romantic and Transcendentalist elements, Melville's oeuvre testifies to some Modern and even Post-modern traits, which makes him a forerunner of his time. Not only does his multiple and versatile use of storm images in *Moby-Dick* illustrate the Romantic and Transcendental cultural context of the novel, it also provides evidence of its precocious Modernity and latent Post-modernity through the realized psychological and philosophical storm image exponents.

With a view to verifying the above premise, the article provides a detailed analysis of the seven centers around which images of storm group in the novel: the tempestuous winds of the Euroclydon, ekphrastic storms, Father Mapple's moral storms, the theoretical storms of "The Lee Shore," storms occurring during the *Pequod's* voyage, Ahab's stormy character, and finally, the antagonism of storm and calm.

Key Words

Moby-Dick, Nature (images of storm), Romanticism, Transcendentalism, Modernism, Post-modernism and Heideggerian Nothingness, epistemology, religion, psychology