

QUEEQUEEQ AS AN AMERICAN IMPERIAL SUBJECT IN MELVILLE'S *MOBY DICK*

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Abstract: Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* has been scrutinized for the imperialistic constructs within its multicultural, multiracial and multiethnic settings. This article focuses on how Ishmael, the main character of the novel, describes the character of Queequeeg, the ethnic harpooner, at the scenes in the novel before they go aboard the ship Pequod, during their early meetings in New Bedford. In these events, Ishmael interpellates Queequeeg into existence, as through Ishmael's narration here that Queequeeg is firstly depicted. The main character Ishmael serves as an organ of American Imperialism within the multicultural setting of the novel. The character Ishmael's Eurocentric gaze constructs the non-white characters Queequeeg the 'cannibal' as a disempowered colonial subject, mainly through colonialistic and religious themes, powered by capitalistic motives. Queequeeg's ethnicity is viewed by Ishmael through an Imperialistic, Eurocentric ideology that serves to frame non-white character, Queequeeg, into an inferior subject status. Queequeeg's cultural identity in the end is constructed, judged, and modified by cultural criteria imposed by Ishmael's Eurocentric gaze, which is colored by a capitalistic backdrop.

Keywords: *Moby Dick*, American Imperialism, *Moby Dick* Ishmael, Queequeeg

INTRODUCTION

Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* has been scrutinized for the imperialistic constructs within its multicultural, multiracial and multiethnic setting. Phillip Armstrong has noted how *Moby Dick* employs a multicultural setting that creates an unpredictable effect of intimate but fragile interactions (1039, 1060). Armstrong goes on to argue that the whale Moby Dick is fixated as the object of hatred that can 'iron out' the ethnic differences between the crew. Moby Dick serves as a common enemy to be defeated, an embodiment of the threat to American decaying imperialistic structure (1052). Jonathan Arac explores another aspect of American Imperialism in the novel, by arguing that Moby Dick provides a dual view of American Imperialism, providing a choice between the tyrant Ahab, and the democratic, liberty loving Ishmael (159). It is interesting that Arac can be seen as pointing to Ishmael as a sort of an imperial agent, since American imperialism is identified with notions of freedom of democracy in the high seas and economic dominance (153, 7). Similar to this particular perspective of Ishmael, I believe that Ishmael serves as an organ of Imperialism, within the seemingly multicultural setting of the novel. I argue that the character Ishmael's Eurocentric gaze constructs the non-white characters in *Moby Dick*, especially the character Queequeeg, as a disempowered subject, mainly through religious and capitalistic themes. Ishmael's gaze creates a distorted non-White identity of Queequeeg within the colonialistic setting of New Bedford.

Some scholarly studies have explored on the 'equalizing' theme of the multicultural setting of *Moby Dick*. Timothy Marr has explored on *Moby Dick*'s treatment about ethnic differences, in that he states that *Moby Dick* represents "ethnicity as an emblem of liberty of otherness" (8), drawing much on the theme of equality from the novel. Fred V. Bernard even goes so far as to suggest that Ishmael is a mullato voicing against the slavery and white superiority (384-5). I would, however, argue otherwise, that Ishmael is indeed voicing a sort of white superiority in terms of culture, and that ethnicity is viewed by Ishmael through an Imperialistic, Eurocentric ideology that in the end serves to frame non-white character, Queequeeg, into a subject status. Different with Bernard's analysis, which focuses much on the analysis of Ishmael and Queequeeg's segregation aboard the Pequod, I focus more on how Ishmael

and Queequeg's relationship happens before they went aboard the ship, especially during their early meetings in New Bedford.

Other studies have shed light on Queequeg's characters, most notably Geoffrey Sanborn's study on the real life counterpart of Queequeg, and Matthew C. Frankel's study on Queequeg's tattoos, which becomes the original voice of Queequeg (137). I would extend on how Ishmael is actually translating Queequeg's voice in the tattoos, by his inability to translate the tattoo, and dismissing Queequeg's voice through the tattoo, by using the tattoo as the main component of his construction of Queequeg's otherness, and a mark of his subject status.

The construction of an imperial subject has been one focus of Postcolonial studies, which is going to be used as the main perspective of this study. Postcolonial studies focuses on studying the cultural legacy of colonialism's exploitation of colonized native people, such as Queequeg, although Postcolonial study mainly focuses not on a tangible system of colonial governance, but rather acts as an ideological response to colonialists' thoughts and mind frame, and especially significant in this study are Postcolonial topics related to the discussion about racial identity, subaltern studies, and ideology (Ashcroft, 219-21). This study will analyze the construction of imperial subjects, as a result of power construction through interpellation of the colonial subject by the colonizers. In this study, I see Ishmael as interpellating Queequeg into existence, because it is only through Ishmael's narration that we get any sense of what Queequeg really is.

DISCUSSION

The setting of the meeting between Ishmael and Queequeg is a good place to being the discussion, as Ishmael refers to his state of being a stranger in a stranger place (30) as an important factor in making his judgment on Queequeg's character.

To begin with, the setting of the meeting and pairing between Ishmael and Queequeg is Nantucket, and it is highlighted in its ports and multiculturalism, especially in the description of the port of New Bedford (41). New Bedford's most significant feature in the novel is that it is a multicultural place where various ethnicities and cultures come together in contact, resulting in tension among them:

In thoroughfares nigh the docks, any considerable seaport will frequently offer to view the queerest looking nondescripts from foreign parts. Even in Broadway and Chestnut streets, Mediterranean mariners will sometimes jostle the affrighted ladies. Regent Street is not unknown to Lascars and Malays; and at Bombay, in the Apollo Green, live Yankees have often scared the natives. But New Bedford beats all Water Street and Wapping. In these last-mentioned haunts you see only sailors; but in New Bedford, actual cannibals stand chatting at street corners; savages outright; many of whom yet carry on their bones unholy flesh. It makes a stranger stare. (41)

New Bedford here is compared to Broadway and Chestnut Street of New York harbor, and Bombay, but New Bedford is considered as superior to them all in terms of its multiculturalism, with hints of tension between the White and non-White characters. New Bedford can be considered as a Metropolis, which is defined as a center for the colonial periphery (Ashcroft, 138). New Bedford is then a site of Transculturation where various modes and representation and cultural practices interact and influence each other (Ashcroft, 233). New Bedford fits Pratt's definition of a 'contact zone,' a social space where 'disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in a highly asymmetrical relationship of dominance and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today (Ashcroft, 233). New Bedford, by being compared to Bombay, a British colony during Melville's time, and populated by Malays, lascars, and 'cannibals', who were colonial subjects at that time, introduces a colonial discourse. New Bedford is thus a Metropolis setting that reflects global tension between colonizers and colonized.

The multicultural tension described in the novel is not only on the non-White people, but also on the White people as well, implying a sense of equality between them. This passage on page 41 implies the construction of the White people's Others: the cannibals, the natives of Bombay, Malays, Lascars, and so on, as a jumble of 'nondescript foreigners'. However, aside from a disdainful description of non-White cannibals with 'unholy flesh,' Ishmael then notices the White American Other as well: 'the comical' American, the country bumpkin (41). Ishmael goes on to describe the young 'comical green Vermonters and New Hampshire men,' who were 'athirst for gain and glory' and was so young that they appear 'a few hours old' (41). These White bumpkins are described as wearing peculiar clothing: beaver hats and swallow-tailed coats, girdled with a sailor-belt and sheath-knife, and 'sou'-wester and bombazine cloaks' (41). It is worth noting here that Queequeg, earlier in the story, is also described as wearing a beaver hat (38), similar to these bumpkins. Both non-white and white draw their 'strangeness' out of their strange clothing and locales: Bombay and New York despise foreigners; Vermonters and South

Pacific cannibals are both strange. Ishmael here is creating a surface sense of certain equality between these people, White or non-White alike, that they view each other as strange, and that some White people can look strange even to their own people as well.

Ishmael, however, does not truly pass an equal judgment to both White and non-White people. In the descriptions of non-White, the strangeness is assigned to cultural practices and the body, while on the American bumpkins, the weakness is assigned instead to inexperience and youth. The white bumpkins may ascend and overcome their negative strangeness, by being experienced in whaling, and getting the proper outfit, but the non-Whites may not change 'their unholy flesh.' Non-Whites' cultural practices, the 'heathenism' and 'cannibalism,' are also seen as the source of their weakness. As we will see later the similar inequality happen in Ishmael's descriptions of Queequeg, the body, especially the color of skin, flesh, tattoos, and cultural or religious practices become the source of permanent signifiers of weakness, as the permanent racial markers and important aspects of non-White identity, the cultural practices and religious beliefs, become the markers of non-White weakness. To conclude on this point, Ishmael makes the distinction between White and non-White strangeness: White strangeness is temporary, while non-White strangeness is racially permanent, embedded deeply within significant elements of non-White identity, the non-White culture and religion.

Religious theme seems to be prevalent in Ishmael's description of the setting, and indeed, the religious theme is mixed with the capitalistic and colonialistic themes in the construction of New Bedford. Aside from its multiculturalism, New Bedford is also described as the place where foreign commodities are brought, and that such international commodities have brought prosperity to New Bedford, confirming its wealthy Metropolis status. Its houses are described as most 'patrician-like' with most opulent parks and gardens (42). The residence have abundant whale oil taken from Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian seas, an expensive commodity that is 'recklessly burn' in candles (42). These descriptions refer much to the abundant wealth that the 'international' whaling has brought. It is worth noting here that the New Bedford port is essentially a place of trade and commercialism. The wealth and commerce themes highlight the Capitalistic aspect to the Metropolitan setting. Further, the town is "the dearest place to live in, in all New England. It is a land of oil, true enough: but not like Canaan; a land, also, of corn and wine," (42). Here a religious theme is introduced into the metropolitan setting, with the comparing of New Bedford with Canaan. Ishmael continues with such religious theme as he compares New Bedford's beautiful dames with that of Salem: "Elsewhere match that bloom of theirs (New Bedford girls), ye cannot, save in Salem, where they tell me the young girls breathe such musk, their sailor sweethearts smell them miles off shore, as though they were drawing nigh the odorous Moluccas instead of the Puritanic sands" (43). It is interesting how the Moluccas's odor is stated as more powerful than the Puritanic religious elements of Salem. The Moluccas, famous for its aromatic spices—a significant colonial commodity—is described as being superior than religious 'sands.' Religious theme is therefore mixed up with colonialistic aspects within the capitalistic setting of the New Bedford.

The particular place in New Bedford where Ishmael meets Queequeg the first time is the tavern. In this tavern, the theme of confusion is prevalent, and such confusion is then related to Ishmael's own confusion in constructing Queequeg's identity.

The entrance to the tavern is described as "wide, low, straggling entry," while the general atmosphere is dark (26). There were 'besmoked' and defaced' paintings, which contains 'unaccountable masses of shades and shadows' painted by a 'ambitious young artist' (26). These paintings were inscrutable on the account of 'crosslights' which were cast on the paintings (26). The entry, darkness, and shadowy paintings all create the impression of the tavern as a confusing setting, filled with illusions. Ishmael here may be likened to the young artist of these paintings, trying to make meaning out of, or through, confusing and shadowy setting. After that, Ishmael states that these shadowy things can only be dispelled by a 'diligent study and a series of systematic visits' and "careful inquiry of the neighbors, that you could any way arrive at an understanding of its purpose," and by "dint of much and earnest contemplation, and oft repeated ponderings, and especially by throwing open the little window towards the back of the entry" (26). Here multiple ponderings, observation, inquiry, and finally contemplations, are likened to a light streaming through the little window, required to see through all the illusions and shadows. Ishmael concludes that 'a wild idea,' can be proven acceptable or 'not be altogether unwarranted' (26). Ishmael tries to understand wild things and ideas using many ponderings, observations, visits, and especially through 'window' and thus light. By putting an emphasis to sight senses, in his metaphoric saying of opening the window, Ishmael is using mainly his sights, as will be revealed on his observations on Queequeg.

Then Ishmael observes another wild and strange object, 'heathen' weapons, harpoons, and other whaling equipment (27). Here, Ishmael makes comments based on close observation and ponderings of the savages' and the Westerners' whaling equipment, and the themes of savagery, religious observation, and colonialism are highlighted in Ishmael's observation through his gaze. Ishmael first impression is the cannibalistic aspect of the natives' weapons, with these having 'glittering teeth',

adorned with 'human hair,' and made by 'monstrous cannibal' as 'hacking, horrifying' death dealing implements (27). Ishmael made a religious-tinged observation by saying that these weapons were 'heathenish array of monstrous clubs and spears.' Western weapons, however, are not described as primitive 'clubs' or 'spears' but as 'storied weapons' of the famous 'Nathan Swift;' harpoons or Western lances that have killed whales in Javan seas (27). The mentioning of Java, a colonial space at the time, brings a colonial theme here as well. All of these weapons, too, serve a capitalistic purpose as tools in the whaling industry; Western equipment are put in a better light here since they were crooked and have killed whales—evidences of effective equipment of a successful whaling industry. In conclusion, the Western weapons and harpoons are highlighted by their effectiveness and colonial ties, while the natives' weapons are highlighted in their primitiveness, savagery, and cannibalistic attributes. Again, as in the case with his observation of the non-White people, Ishmael's observation here turns out to bring certain Eurocentric tendency as well.

The similar theme of savagery is then brought up when Ishmael talked with the Barkeep, who tries to impress the frightening aspects of Queequeeg, whom Ishmael is going to share a bed with. The barkeep noted Queequeeg's racial quality as a 'dark complexioned chap' (28), and he then noted Queequeeg's delight of eating rare steaks, hinting at his savagery and cannibalism. Ishmael retorted back to the Barkeep, saying the harpooner, Queequeeg, must be the devil (28), adding a religious theme into his conclusion. Further, a while later, the Barkeep also relates to Ishmael of Queequeeg's capitalistic enterprise, 'engaging in Cannibal's business' (32) of selling heads, avoiding the Christian Sunday Sabbath in doing so. Queequeeg's selling of heads implies his savagery and heathenism, and his 'cannibal's business' stands in contrast to the Westerners' business of whaling here. Queequeeg's businesses are mentioned as not profitable (32), while the whaling business so profitable it has made an entire city prosperous (42). The Barkeep's impression of Queequeeg, and Ishmael's agreeing to it, represent the mental picture of Queequeeg in Ishmael's mind before actually meeting Queequeeg, and this can be likened Ishmael's viewing of the 'besmoked' and 'defaced' paintings of black masses in the tavern; it represents the confusing gaze of the mental, illusory construction of non-yet existent Queequeeg.

Ishmael, after hearing the Barkeep's description of Queequeeg, asserts his power and superiority over Queequeeg, by stating that the 'dangerous' harpooner, Queequeeg, must undress and asleep first before Ishmael shares the bed with him (28). Queequeeg must be in a weaker, unconscious, passive condition before Ishmael is willing to share the same bed, in a close proximity and in a state of togetherness, with Queequeeg. Queequeeg must also shed the signifiers of his native culture, his savagery, embedded in his clothing—his 'skin'. Ishmael's statement concludes how Ishmael reacts to his whole conception of Queequeeg up until this point. He states that "when it comes to sleeping with an unknown stranger, in a strange inn, in a strange town, and that stranger a harpooner, then your objections indefinitely multiply, (29-30)." The strange setting, profession, and personality, therefore, are important in building Ishmael's anxiety over Queequeeg, which then leads to Ishmael adopting a defensive stance of power superiority and dominance over Queequeeg.

Being asleep in the bed together is a very important aspect in Ishmael's construction of Queequeeg. The bed is the place where Ishmael's view of Queequeeg takes a very different turn. The bed is also where Ishmael gazes the most at Queequeeg (38). Ishmael himself describes sleeping together in one bed as very important; the bed fellow becomes 'more than a brother,' in a relationship closer than filial relationship (29). It is so powerful even to override religious sentiment, as Ishmael mentions afterwards: "Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian" (36). Being asleep together might not directly relate to capitalistic aims, as Ishmael says that sailors, like bachelor Kings, don't sleep together (30). Most importantly, according to Ishmael, sleeping together is related very closely with retaining the ownership of one's identity and possessions, as he states the importance in having your own apartment, your own hammock, blankets, and being in your own skin (30). It is interesting how identity here is with put in the same context with material possession, and that identity is reduced to its most basic material aspect, the skin. The possession and ownership of the skin, the body, the very identity of a person, is for Ishmael being contested in the event of sharing the bed, which entails the conjoining of bodies, as we shall see later in the story.

Ishmael, however, trespasses his own boundaries by experimenting with the concept of possessing others' skin when he sort through Queequeeg's possession and tries on Queequeeg's clothing (32-33). The Barkeep actually hinted on this mixing of bodies when he tells that Queequeeg may beat Ishmael to become 'brown' if Ishmael mocks Queequeeg's head (31). The head can be taken metaphorically as identity as well: the facial features and the brain which dictates one's personality. It is however, the skin that is being focused here, as the term 'brown' suggests. It is worth noting that Ishmael reflects on his own perception of Queequeeg as being unwarranted, and starts to think that Queequeeg is perhaps 'a good bedfellow,' (31). Ishmael later, in the bedroom, first tries on Queequeeg's rather repulsive 'door mat' clothing (33). The strangeness of Queequeeg's clothing becomes very apparent to Ishmael when Ishmael sees himself in the mirror inside Queequeeg's 'skin,' and Ishmael

becomes very much fearful and repulsed with the sight that he “tore himself in such a hurry he hurt his neck” (33). Ishmael then “jumped out of [his] pantaloons and boots” into the bed and “blowing out the light” as well. This scene reiterates the importance of being in one’s own skin, and that Queequeeg’s skin is a rather inferior and repulsive skin. Ishmael then undresses, taking off his own ‘skin’ and gets into the bed, the contested space. His blowing off the lights into the darkness, as related to the setting of the dark tavern mentioned earlier, marks Ishmael’s state of darkness, confusion, and illusions without revealing light. Ishmael is now gazing to Queequeeg through his darkness and confusion, Ishmael renders himself weak by shedding his own skin, and, as the passage about the tavern has hinted, he blows off the light, making himself incapable to understand ‘wild ideas’ that he is about to encounter in his first meeting with Queequeeg.

Queequeeg enters into Ishmael’s gaze bringing light that dispels the darkness, revealing his skin to Ishmael, and in that moment Ishmael hides and gazes intently on him (34-5). This moment of meeting becomes the moment of intense othering of Queequeeg into a savage, inhuman Devil for Ishmael. The first impression of Queequeeg is of his skin, which is ‘purplish yellow’ face color, bald head like ‘mildewed skull,’ revealed when seeing Queequeeg through the dim light (34). Aside from the impossibility of such color that is described as a mix of both yellow and purple at the same time, being that these colors are not near in the color spectrum, Ishmael states that this purplish-yellow color is probably made by the tropical sun, that has “produced such extraordinary effects upon the skin” (34). The strange color is inhuman and unnatural for Ishmael, yet it is ‘natural’ in the ‘tropical’ setting, revealing the contradictory nature of racial construction. However, the strangeness of purplish yellow color of the tattoo can still be assigned to the white people, although for Ishmael the tattoo marks inferiority and disruption in white identity, as Ishmael recount how he had seen a ‘fallen’ white sailor with tattoos (34). Ishmael then finds out that Queequeeg is not a white sailor but “an abominable savage shipped from the South Seas in this Christian country,” bringing the religious damnation theme into the construction of Queequeeg’s Otherness.

Queequeeg’s identity construction depends a lot upon the power he wields upon Ishmael. Queequeeg brings a tomahawk into the bedroom, which symbolizes power over the defenseless, sleeping Ishmael. Similar to the whaling weapons that Ishmael has seen in the tavern’s wall, here the tomahawk at first seems menacing to Ishmael (35). When Queequeeg turns off the light and started smoking using his tomahawk, Ishmael feels intense fear of Queequeeg (35). Ishmael invokes prejudices against Queequeeg, in the form of the images of preserved heads, imagining that Queequeeg has killed his own brothers for the heads. Ishmael believes surely Queequeeg will kill Ishmael as well (34). Ishmael imagines such attack when Queequeeg joins in the bed with him: “the next moment the light was extinguished, and this wild cannibal, tomahawk between his teeth, sprang into bed with me” (35). The prejudice against cannibals wielding power in the form of the tomahawk as a weapon, and the darkness, all create a boiling point in Ishmael’s fear of Queequeeg, and this climaxes in Ishmael “sang out, I could not help it now; and giving a sudden grunt of astonishment he began feeling me (35).” Ishmael’s ultimate rejection and fear are the result of the anxiety over Queequeeg that has been built so far in the story. It is interesting to note that Ishmael could not stand in contact with ‘the savage’ wielding a weapon in the darkness, encroaching upon the bed. This invokes a colonialist context of defenseless, white settlers meeting the armed natives of a colonized land. The bed is, after all, Queequeeg’s bed. The barkeep has not informed Queequeeg on the new bed arrangement, therefore it is quite natural for Queequeeg to refer to Ishmael as an intruder and threatens Ishmael. Ishmael is the unarmed, powerless intruder in Queequeeg’s ‘territory.’ Queequeeg, being in the more powerful position than Ishmael, appears very terrible and menacing to Ishmael.

The power balance is, however quickly inverted, as the barkeep enters and introduces Queequeeg and Ishmael, and a peaceful friendship and identification between Ishmael and Queequeeg soon follows, but only after Queequeeg sheds his weapon and surrenders his bed to Ishmael. Similar to Ishmael’s demands that the savage harpooner must be sleeping and undressed before Ishmael can join him in the bed, Ishmael also make similar demands here:

“Landlord,” said I, “tell him to stash his tomahawk there, or pipe, or whatever you call it; tell him to stop smoking, in short, and I will turn in with him. But I don’t fancy having a man smoking in bed with me. It’s dangerous. Besides, I ain’t insured...”

This being told to Queequeg, he at once complied, and again politely motioned me to get into bed—rolling over to one side as much as to say—“I won’t touch a leg of ye.”

“Good night, landlord,” said I, “you may go.”

I turned in, and never slept better in my life. (36)

It is only after Queequeeg at once politely complies and surrenders his power and ‘territory’ to Ishmael that Ishmael agrees to share a bed with Queequeeg. Indeed, in the same page:

"You gettee in," he [Queequeeg] added, motioning to me with his tomahawk, and throwing the clothes to one side. He really did this in not only a civil but a really kind and charitable way. I stood looking at him a moment. For all his tattooings he was on the whole a clean, comely looking cannibal. What's all this fuss I have been making about, thought I to myself—the man's a human being just as I am: he has just as much reason to fear me, as I have to be afraid of him. Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian. (36)

In this passage, Ishmael's gaze instantly changes, as result of Queequeeg's polite and friendly manner. All of the sudden, after the Barkeep mediates them and brings light into the room, Queequeeg's purplish yellow tattooed body becomes 'clean and comely' for Ishmael, and the cannibal is being considered as a human being equal to Ishmael. Ishmael seems to repent his previous prejudiced gaze that was later considered as 'rudeness' (38). From this moment onward, Ishmael experiences a moment of intense cultural identification with Queequeeg. This identification and equality can be seen especially in the religious aspects, as seen in the passage quoted before, that a 'sober cannibal is better than a drunken Christian.' It must be noted however, that this happens only after Queequeeg politely submits to Ishmael demands, and indeed, as the story goes on, there are hints that Ishmael still assert power and dominance over Queequeeg.

It can be said, however, that true power does not lie with Ishmael, but rather, true power resides with the Barkeep, the real owner of the bed. Ishmael can only assert his demands through the Barkeep. The Barkeep is the one who relay Ishmael's demands to Queequeeg. Without the Barkeep's explanation, Ishmael would have no power at all to make demands of Queequeeg, and Queequeeg would never acknowledge Ishmael as a bedfellow. It is also the Barkeep who has the ability to take away Queequeeg's full ownership of the bed, forcing it to share it with Ishmael. The Barkeep's power comes from his ownership of the bed - his ownership of the whole establishment. Queequeeg and Ishmael are inferior to the Barkeep as they are only renters who must pay the Barkeep to be able to stay in the room. Capitalistic relationship, then, truly defines the structure of power.

Ishmael's assertion of power over Queequeeg can also be found in his disagreement with Queequeeg peculiarities. Although Ishmael experience intense cultural identification and understanding with Queequeeg, there are moments when Ishmael feels that Queequeeg's peculiarities are too much, even uncomfortable. In these instances, Ishmael again shows anxiety over Queequeeg. Ishmael comments on Queequeeg's sleeping with him, Queequeeg's over-friendliness in bed, as an "unbecomingness of his hugging a fellow male in that matrimonial sort of style" (38). Again, the relationship in the bed is of importance here, as it hints at certain power superiority of Ishmael over Queequeeg. Ishmael perceives his experience of sleeping with Queequeeg as peculiar and frightful, similar to when he saw a 'dark' phantom near his bed during his childhood:

... a supernatural hand seemed placed in mine. My arm hung over the counterpane, and the nameless, unimaginable, silent form or phantom, to which the hand belonged, seemed closely seated by my bed-side ...

Now, take away the awful *fear*, and my sensations at feeling the supernatural hand in mine were very similar, in their *strangeness*, to those which I experienced on waking up and seeing Queequeg's pagan arm thrown round me. (38, my emphasis)

The scene takes place in the morning after Queequeeg and Ishmael first sleep together, and here, the theme of fear, anxiety, and strangeness over Queequeeg's emerge again. The 'dark' hands of the phantom are now replaced with Queequeeg's dark arms wrapped around Ishmael. Further, Ishmael comments:

But at length all the past night's events soberly recurred, one by one, in fixed reality, and then I lay only alive to the comical predicament. For though I tried to move his arm—unlock his bridegroom clasere lay the tomahawk sleeping by the savage's side, as if it were a hatchet-faced baby. A pretty pickle, truly, thought I; abed here in a strange house in the broad day, with a cannibal and a tomahawk! (38)

The last night's predicament becomes, in the light of reality, a comic situation. Ishmael reconstructs Queequeeg's threat as comical and facile. The symbol of Queequeeg's power, the tomahawk, is now rendered impotent like a baby: the now non-threatening weapon is actually the result of their 'union' in bed. This hints at the disempowerment of Queequeeg after Ishmael demands are fulfilled. Ishmael's liking and identification with Queequeeg happens only after Queequeeg is rendered as a comical disempowered subject.

Ishmael's identification with Queequeg indeed grows to become intense friendliness, even love. They are sleeping together afterwards, and are enjoying intense connection and closeness, each other's "warmth", and they finally becoming a "cozy and loving pair." (57-8). They passed the tomahawk and smoked from it together, converting the weapon as a symbol of peace and brotherhood (56). Ishmael also makes praising remarks of Queequeg's body, reflecting to this tattoo now as of "Cretan" patterns (36), and his face and head similar to George Washington (55). Ishmael refers to Queequeg as "civilized and polite" (55), cool and "genteel" (40), having a good soul and an "honest heart" instead of "unearthly tattooings" (55). Queequeg is even described as having "Socratic wisdom" in his simplicity. All of this gives the impression of Ishmael seeing Queequeg as being a noble savage.

However, Ishmael points at Queequeg's imperfection as well, and in this Ishmael implies the superiority of Western culture over Queequeg's ways. Ishmael comments that:

Queequeg, do you see, was a creature in the transition stage—neither caterpillar nor butterfly. He was just enough civilized to show off his outlandishness in the strangest possible manners. His education was not yet completed. He was an undergraduate. If he had not been a small degree civilized, he very probably would not have troubled himself with boots at all; but then, if he had not been still a savage, he never would have dreamt of getting under the bed to put them on. (38)

Queequeg is still criticized as being incomplete, imperfect in his culturally-influenced ways, because he is not yet fully transformed his ways into Western-approved ways. Ishmael remarks at the Queequeg's inefficiency at dressing, a very much culturally influenced act, by comparing Queequeg's ways to his own (Western) notion of what dressing and clothing should be. Ishmael from his own point of view, believes that Queequeg is trying to emulate Western notion of politeness and dressing, yet Queequeg fails in this. Ishmael notes the evidences of Queequeg's failure: his crushed hat, creaking and limping movement, his being unaccustomed to boots, and his wearing a "pair of damp, wrinkled cowhide", seemingly pinching and tormenting Queequeg (38). By saying that Queequeg's ways are flawed, Ishmael refers to the superiority and perfection of his own culture, the Western culture, and judges Queequeg based on the rules of Western culture.

Ishmael, by making such contradictory comments about Queequeg, between his ennoblement of Queequeg, and his stating of Queequeg's imperfections, reveals Ishmael entrapment within the Western Eurocentric ideology. Ishmael's appraising or condescending gaze on Queequeg is framed on the superiority placed on Western culture. Queequeg's merits are considered through the Western eyes. Queequeg's philosophic qualities are praised as similar to Socrates, a prominent philosopher in Western philosophy. Queequeg's tattoo is defined as beautiful as "Cretan" figures, again referencing him to Western conception of classical beauty. Queequeg is never judged through Queequeg's own cultural context, but he is always constructed within the Western culture's perspective. Queequeg's identity is framed by Ishmael's gaze; however, Ishmael's gaze in turn is framed within the Western culture. Queequeg's own identity is then lost, as it is constructed and judged from the perspective of Ishmael's Western ideology.

Another aspect of identification and equality between Ishmael and Queequeg is perhaps most notably 'equal' in Ishmael's religious opinion on Queequeg. Christianity is seen as an equal to Queequeg's religion. Ishmael reveals that he is born and raised as a Presbyterian (57), but he seems to regard and honor Queequeg's religion. There are several references to Queequeg's heathen religion and god, Yojo, that are similar to Christianity, for example, the reference of Yojo's "chapel" in the fire pit (35) and Queequeg's singing that remind Ishmael of Christian singing or "psalmody" (35). Ishmael sees Yojo as black Congo-like god, and this hints at the construction of the religion as a black Other. However, Ishmael then honors this god (56), although he may not believe in Yojo's revelations about how to choose a ship to go whaling on (67). Ishmael shows a hint of affection towards Christianity, for example when he refers to America as a Christian country (35), and he refers to Christians' way of washing their face as contrasting with Queequeg's way (39). However, Ishmael often equates Christians with Heathens (36, 64), and he can also be seen as ambivalent to Christian faith, as he describes it at one point as a "jackal" (44). Queequeg's religion is also considered by Ishmael as strange, with Queequeg burned his hands while praying (35); his silly "Ramadan" (82), which itself a distortion of Queequeg's religion with Islamic Ramadan and Christian Lent; Queequeg's whittling away at Yojo (54); and his carelessly tossing Yojo in his bag (35). These events reflect how Ishmael considers Queequeg's religion in an unsympathetic light. Ishmael's ambivalence toward religion, both Christianity and Queequeg's heathenism, can be seen as a point of equality Ishmael sees himself sharing with Queequeg: both of them have a somewhat disagreeable, peculiar religions.

Ishmael, however, departs from such equal judgment of beliefs when he 'converted' Queequeg into Christianity. When Ishmael registers Queequeg as a harpooner position for the ship Pequod, Peleg

and Bildad require that Queequeeg must be a Christian, before they give Queequeeg the position (83). Ishmael answered that Queequeeg belongs to “the First Congregational Church” as a “deacon” (83-4). When Ishmael describes that this Church’s members are the people of “the whole worshipping world,” Peleg remarks on Ishmael’s missionary quality, seemingly converting the whole world into one all-embracing Christian Church (84). It is after Ishmael’s ‘converting’ Queequeeg into the Christian faith that Queequeeg could earn a job as a harpooner in Pequod (84). The Western religion is imposed upon the unknowing Queequeeg.

However, it is worth noting here that Ishmael, Peleg, Bildad, or even Queequeeg, do not aim at a religious objectives by doing such ‘conversion.’ Ishmael’s motive in saying that Queequeeg is Christian, is to enable Queequeeg to get a paying job as a crew in the Pequod (83-4). Ishmael’s motive is money. Queequeeg never seeks to be converted to Christianity as well (60). Peleg and Bildad, too, do not truly see Christianity as the deciding factor in accepting Queequeeg as a harpooner; they are impressed instead by his ability and worth as a harpooner (85-6). Peleg even remarks that pious harpooners are not good voyagers (85). These people, as owner and investor of Pequod, are more interested in Queequeeg’s worth as an asset. As we see here, the capitalistic drive of getting a job and earning money and good profit from their employees, is what finally drives the religious conversion.

CONCLUSION

Ishmael’s gaze in constructing Queequeeg’s identity is, therefore, draws much from the story’s colonialistic settings, and the play of religious and capitalistic elements within such setting. It is important here to note that all the colonialistic and religious themes as whole are powered by capitalistic motives. Queequeeg’s cultural identity in the end is constructed, judged, and modified by cultural criteria imposed by Ishmael’s Eurocentric gaze, which is colored by capitalistic backdrop. Queequeeg’s submission can be seen only through Ishmael’s reconstruction of Queequeeg. If we try to look at Queequeeg’s own voice, as it is hinted in the story, I would agree with Sanborn’s argument that Queequeeg does not submit himself into Western culture, stating Queequeeg never intends to mimic the Westerners and he actively withdraws from being too involved in Western culture (240-1). However, it seems that it is quite impossible that Queequeeg could ever escape Ishmael gaze, as the whole story is actually told from Ishmael’s point of view.

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