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AN UNFULFILLED ROMANCE: IMAGE, SYMBOL AND ALLEGORY IN HERMAN MELVILLE'S CLAREL.

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AN UNFULFILLED ROMANCE: IMAGE, SYMBOL AND ALLEGORY IN HERMAN MELVILLE'S CLAREL

by
James Edwin Camp

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Joe Lee Davis, Chairman
Associate Professor Richard J. Burgwin
Professor Marvin Felheim
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Not from brave Chaucer's Tabard Inn
They pictured wend; scarcely shall they win
Fair Kent, and Canterbury ken;
Nor franklin, squire, nor morris-dance
Of wit and story good as then:
Another age, and other men,
And life an unfulfilled romance.

Clarel

PREFACE

> In all these dances, these bodily contortions and intricate patterns, I sense a tiefer Bedeutung, a satire, an irony, and above all a genial humor.
>
> Walgamot, his book

This dissertation is primarily an analysis of the imagery, symbolism and allegory in Herman Melville's narrative poem, Clarel. As such it is one more attempt at uncovering the various meanings in Melville's long, difficult, and still neglected poem.

The firm G. P. Putnam's Sons published Clarel in the summer of 1876, when Melville's reputation had all but vanished. The public remembered him, if at all, as the once popular author of Typee and other South Sea romances. Moby-Dick had long been interred and would have to wait until the next century for resurrection. Most reviewers for the important periodicals of the day, such as Harper's Weekly, The Atlantic Monthly and The North American Review, either ignored the poem altogether, or dismissed it with a few casual remarks. The consensus was that the poem is nonsensical, ineptly written, boring, too long, and much more difficult than a poem should be. And in our own time it has fared scarcely better and has found only a few readers. Clarel remains, and is likely to remain, like Doughty's The Dawn in Britain, one of those curious long poems, sometimes mentioned, but seldom read.

As regards criticism and scholarship, Clarel has been more fortunate. Over the past forty-five years those writers who have undertaken full length works on Melville have consulted Clarel. Biographers, such as Raymond Weaver, Newton Arvin, and Leon Howard, have gone to the poem as revelation of Melville's later years. Such investigations, though they provide limited insights into Clarel's aesthetic nature, are not essentially critical, and in them the various authors generally try to force Clarel to fit some particular thesis, largely derived from a consideration of Melville's prose. Full length works on Melville, where the paramount interest is critical, suffer from the same fault. The very nature of these books has forced the authors to give only summary, reductive descriptions and assessments. Richard Chase's Herman Melville, A Critical Study and Lawrance Thompson's Melville's Quarrel with God are good examples of this tendency.

Over the years, three doctoral dissertations on Clarel have appeared. Of these, by far the most important is the first, Walter Bezanson's still unpublished doctoral dissertation, "Herman Melville's Clarel," Yale 1943. Bezanson treats three aspects of the poem: (1) he studies Clarel's genesis and shows how Melville made use of background material to shape his poem, particularly such nineteenth century works as Dean Stanley's Sinai and Palestine and William Henry Bartlett's popular descriptive works on the Holy land; (2) he probes the poem closely for revelations of Melville's inner psyche (notable is the analysis Bezanson makes of the character, Vine, in order to

gain insight into the Hawthorne-Melville relationship, and (3) he attempts an analysis and evaluation of the poem's complex structures, and makes some comment on the imagery. In 1960, Henricks House brought out a much needed edition of Clarel; and Bezanson provided a long introduction, maps of Jerusalem and the pilgrimage, a short treatment of each of the thirty-two characters, and a set of explanatory notes.

More recently, in his "Tortured Torturer of Reluctant Rhymes: Melville's Clarel, An Interpretation of Post-Civil War America," Minnesota, 1962, Joseph George Knapp did a background study which relates several of the important characters to late nineteenth century American culture, and in "A Study of Herman Melville's Clarel, Columbia, 1963, Robert Packard focuses on metaphysical doubt in Clarel. In his introduction Packard says:

> Another critical need is a study of prosody in Clarel which would, of course, include a careful examination of Melville's use of language. The imagery alone in Clarel invites a number of studies, among them that of the sea imagery which proliferates through the central metaphor of aridity.[1]

I have left the analysis of Melville's prosody in Clarel for some future student and have concentrated on the very real need for a study of the imagery, symbolism and allegory in Melville's complex work. Basically, I have followed the leads provided by Bezanson and have depended heavily on his pioneer achievement. Since most of the insights in his dissertation are now readily available in the Hendricks House edition, I have

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[1]Robert Vance Packard, "A Study of Herman Melville's Clarel," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of English, Columbia University, 1963), p. 6.

avoided restating Bezanson's positions except where continuity seemed to demand. The reader of this dissertation, therefore, should pay some attention to the critical apparatus in the Hendricks House edition, particularly the maps and explanatory notes at the end.

Finally, I wish to thank the members of my committee, particularly the chairman, Professor Joe Lee Davis, who persuaded me to take a first and then a second look at Clarel, and who should take credit for much of the best and none of the worst in these pages.

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INTRODUCTION

IMAGE, SYMBOL AND ALLEGORY

As this dissertation is basically an imagery study of a complex poem that contains both symbolism and allegory, definitions of image, symbol and allegory are in order. By image I mean those elements in language which evoke in the mind something akin to sensory perception. Thus imagery may be classified according to those categories commonly used to differentiate the various senses. Visual, auditory, olfactory and kinetic are the terms most generally employed and are sufficient for the purposes of this study.

In Clarel, as in much of his other work, Melville employs both allegory and symbolism. Allegory may be defined as proceeding from the abstract to the concrete. The idea and the concrete embodiment of the idea have a one to one ratio, and thus the two elements exist in a closed relationship. Spenser's moral allegory in the Faerie Queen and the last two thirds of Melville's early work, Mardi, are good examples. Clarel is to a large degree allegorical in that the story line and many of the characters tend toward allegory much in the manner of Mardi. However, Melville has managed to complicate his allegory with symbols in such a way that the two are not easily disentangled. Sometimes a character, for example, will stand for a trait or theological position which

can be stated abstractly, but the character's name contains an image which is part of a larger image complex in the poem. Thus the character, Vine, though he cannot be reduced to the allegorical simplicity of a Yoomy or Babbalanja, does tend toward allegory to the extent that he fits into the allegorical structure of the story. At the same time, his name as image-symbol belongs to a larger pattern of vine-grape imagery which serves, among other things, to link Vine with the prodigal Lyonese, a figure who allegorically stands for a pure form of hedonism.

Symbolism in Melville presents a difficult problem, and I have found Erich Kahler's distinction between descending and ascending symbols helpful in describing the particular way that Melville goes about building his huge image-symbol complexes by taking cultic symbols from the past and invigorating them in new and sometimes very strange contexts. Kahler describes these two kinds of symbols as follows:

> Descending I would call all symbolism in which symbolic representation detatches itself, descends to us, from a prior and higher reality, a reality determining, and therefore superior to, its symbolic meaning. That is to say, genuinely mythical and cultic works and not intended as symbolic representation, they are meant to describe real happenings. It is we who, a posteriori, derive a symbolic meaning from them. In the early ages, when all of life moves under cultic or mythical guidance, reality is so monumentally plain, so naturally comprehensive, undisclosed like a bud, that it holds for us a dormant wealth of meaning, all but inexhaustible. This is what makes for the grandeur of that primordial actuality. The ancient divine or mythical beings are by no means, as our modern rational thinking would have it, plainly and fully individual figures made to represent something common or general. They are, for all their characteristic personal singul-

> arity, inherently generic existences: the Greek gods, daemons, heroes constitute tribes or localities incarnate; the patriarchs of the Bible, the sons of Jacob, are their respective clans. They are not products of symbolic representation, they are real beings comprising their progeny . . . .
>
> In contradistinction to such descending symbolism that detaches itself for the interpreting mind from a religious, mythical, or historical reality, ascending symbolism is a new creation entirely, springing from artistic imagination. Here, no external pre-existent material is furnished to the artist; no longer is he guided by cultic patterns. He is free to creat images which, though being unique, singular forms, imply something commonly human. In such works the symbol reaches the stage of consummate representation. To be sure, even in such creations the symbol is not completely divested of its sign-quality, for they too are intended to convey a message, they too signify something to somebody. But the strained care that such work of free imagination requires, the growing awareness of artistic means, the artistic consciousness and conscience which it has developed, all this keeps the artist's attention focused on the effort to render his vision with utmost preciseness, to such a degree that the communicative purpose is wholly absorbed by the task of representation. The addressee of the message has become an ideal respondent, a postulate, an inner figure, of the artist; the demand of the artist's vision shapes him so that he almost belongs within the work itself.[1]

At first glance this might seem to be the familiar distinction between traditional and nonce symbolism; however, in a note Kahler is careful to point out,

> Whenever modern authors, as for instance Gide, Thomas Mann, Giradoux, Satre, use Biblical or mythical motifs to elucidate problems of our age, they do so in a completely independent manner. To them these motifs are no longer a true superior reality to be followed, but raw material like any other from which they build their symbols.[2]

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[1]Erich Kahler, "The Nature of the Symbol," Symbolism in Religion and Literature, ed. Rollo May (New York: George Braziller, 1960), pp. 65-68.

[2]Ibid., p. 67.

Kahler's terms and his distinctions are useful in categorizing and evaluating Melville's symbols, particularly those Melville shares with his gifted contemporaries. His approach to symbols will help show why some of the seemingly grotesque juxtapositioning of images in Clarel, such as the huge sea-desert analogy, are not only more successful than would at first appear, but, perhaps, given Melville's intentions, artistically necessary.

Gnosticism and Manicheism in Clarel

Some knowledge of gnosticism and that special form of gnosticism, Manicheism, is essential for an understanding of Clarel. Melville came to gnostic ideas fairly early in his career when he read Pierre Bayle's Dictionary (probably in the summer of 1849) with its sly use of gnostic ideas. He also encountered use of gnosticism in some of Hawthorne's works, notably "The Birthmark" and "Rappacini's Daughter." Gnosticism in one form or other pervades Melville's work after Mardi, certainly after White Jacket. Though it seems to me that Lawrance Thompson's Melville's Quarrel With God oversimplifies Melville's use of gnosticism, Thompson is probably right in making one of the germinal ideas of the gnostics--this world is an unstable and evil combination of material and spiritual forces created by a demonic and man-hating god--a central theme which permeates Melville's work. That gnosticism runs through most of Melville's work is easy to establish; that it dominates all of Melville's work is a matter for controversy. Thompson's

position is to my mind an oversimplification of Melville, as I hope the following analysis of Clarel will show.

Timoleon, a volume of poetry published shortly before Melville's death, contains the following short poem.

Fragments of a Lost Gnostic Poem of the
12th Century

. . . . . .

Found a family, build a state
The pledged event is still the same:
Matter in end will never abate
His ancient brutal claim.

. . . . . .

Indolence is heaven's ally here,
And energy the child of hell.
The Good Man pouring from his pitcher clear,
But brims the poisoned well.

Though it poses as fragments, this short poem is a fairly full poetic expression of a key idea found in gnostic and Manichean doctrine, an idea sometimes used by certain sects of the Albigenses in the Middle Ages to advocate celibacy: namely, that any furthering of the material world through procreation helps the powers of darkness. Though undoubtedly older than Manes, the prophet who founded the Manichean doctrine, this idea was one of the fundamental tenets of that religion. In a dualistic world, composed of matter and spirit, matter was the agent of the Power of Darkness, which at some primordial time invaded the Spirit or Power of Light. It was the duty of Man, composed of light and dark, to reject the dark material world and make his way through the aid of arcane gnostic secrets (gnosis) to the world of light. The Elect were forbidden to

engage in sexual intercourse and were even forbidden to prepare their own food. Though they are often ingeniously disguised in his work, gnostic ideas fascinated Melville and an awareness of this is important, particularly for understanding Clarel.

"The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids"

Perhaps no single work illuminates Clarel as much as Melville's diptych story, "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," where the gnostic ideas, found throughout Melville, are near the surface in a concentrated form. This can be demonstrated by focusing on a key image-symbol complex from Clarel and relating it to Melville's story.

The arch is an omnipresent image in Clarel. One meets it in canto after canto and it is present in all four parts of the poem. Though it is often merged with rainbow, dolphin, tortoise shell and hump imagery, and occurs in a large number of more or less differing contexts, it comes initially as the gate leading out of the pleasant coastal town of Joppa from which Clarel emerges to cross the plain in order to reach the gaunt, gray city of Jerusalem.

> Nor thus when mounted, full equipped,
> Out through the vaulted gate we slipped
> Beyond the walls where gardens bright
> With bloom and blossom cheered the sight.
> (I,i,2)

This initial passage is from garden to desert. Thereafter, the arch as gateway to Jerusalem, specifically the gate of Stephen the Martyr, dominates Part I, and by extension all the arch

imagery in the poem is connected with the arch as gateway to whatever life and death have to offer. The relation of this arch imagery to Melville's use of gnosticism is best illustrated by reference to "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids."

The two parts of this diptych story, present two gateways: the gate of celibacy and the gate of sexuality. In the first, the Arch of Wren in London (ironic symbol of the Englightenment) leads to the Temple, where a group of bachelor lawyers, modern degenerated remnants of Templars, entertain the narrator at a bachelor dinner. A waiter named Socrates presides over this <u>almost</u> heavenly feast. Careful study of the story shows it to be a mock <u>Symposium</u> where Socrates is a mere waiter who serves a delightful but distinctly epicurean banquet. In Plato's original the subject is love, and gradually, through dialectic, Socrates leads his friends up the ladder of love, from a love that is purely physical to a transcendent love where beauty and wisdom merge. Transmuted by Dante, this is the basic pattern of the <u>Divine Comedy</u>. However, the banquet in "The Paradise of Bachelors" is no <u>Symposium</u> and ends on a note of sadness when the guests disperse after telling what one assumes to be some mildly bawdy stories. Thus though the temple is said to be near heaven, it is merely a temporary substitute for heaven and not a very good one at that. The gate of celibacy leads to a shallow, transient hedonism.

The second gate is sexual intercourse, and in "The

Tartarus of Maids," this gate is presented on at least three different levels. There is a literal level where the narrator, here identified as the Seedsman, rides a black horse in the dead of winter, through a mountain pass, by a blood red river, to a snow covered papermill, in order to get paper for his seed business. This entrance is also the entrance to hell, for the narrator calls it a "Dantean gateway." On the third level, the entrance is a gate to the vagina, and throughout the story there is a fairly consistent allegory which equates the process of making paper with the sexual process of reproduction.

The "happy" yet unsatisfied bachelors in the first story, have their counterparts in the pale, hardworking girls who are apparently engaged in slave labor in the papermill. The blank sheets of paper, which they produce under conditions that cause their untimely deaths, are the minds of children at birth, and these blank sheets remind the narrator of Locke's tabula rasa. A dark man, appropriately named Bach (bachelor), runs the mill, and a young man, Cupid, conducts the narrator through the mill on an inspection tour. He tells the narrator that the sheets of paper are always blank, but the narrator sees, or thinks he sees, a small rose imprinted on the corner of each sheet. Thus Cupid may be lying when he says that the sheets are totally blank when they come from the machine. And thus by symbolic implication the souls of the newly born may not be merely blank sheets but may be stamped with "intimations of immortality," which quickly fade on exposure to common light.

Once we interpret the images, symbols and allegory, it becomes apparent, I think, that these two stories do not present a neat symbolic projection of gnostic ideas. The stories give us, rather, an ambiguous neo-gnosticism. The entrance to the papermill leads to a mechanical inferno where the only hope is the rose and this rose is most likely an illusion, and the entrance to the temple leads to hedonism. The evil world remains; the gnostic keys have been lost.

This gnostic pattern is at the heart of Clarel, but it is not all of that poem as I hope to demonstrate in the chapters which follow.

CHAPTER I

CLAREL: SOME QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

I saw him riding o'er the Desert Sands,
With the fleet waters of the drowning world
In chase of him, whereat I wake'd in terror,
And saw the Sea before me; and the Book,
In which I had been reading, at my side.

Book V., The Prelude, Wordsworth

"Passage to India" is generally thought the highest achievement of Whitman's later years. Though it is possibly not as optimistic in tone as its surface, superficially considered, would indicate, its total effect is hardly pessimistic. Whitman has little in common with the poets affected by nineteenth century disillusionment, what Hyatt Howe Waggoner has called, in reference to Robinson, the cosmic chill.[1] In the first significant attempt to span the Old World and the New, an attempt that reaches a glorious and yet disastrous climax in Hart Crane's The Bridge, Whitman sets forth a series of concrete accomplishments which include the newly laid Atlantic Cable. The old myths of religion and the new science are mystically connected in one grand progressive design.

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[1]Hyatt H. Waggoner, The Heel of Elohim, Science and Value in Modern American Poetry (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), p. 38.

Singing my days,
Singing the great achievements of the present,
Singing the strong light work of engineer,
Our modern wonders, (the antique ponderous Seven outvied,)
In the Old World the east the Suez canal,
The New by its mighty railroad spann'd,
The seas inlaid with eloquent gentle wires;[2]

How far Melville is removed from this easy optimism can be seen from the way he uses the image of the Atlantic Cable to close the last narrative section of Clarel. The hero, Clarel, having been gradually exposed to and then systematically stripped of the surety of all his available religious crutches, is seen for the last time, walking down the Via Crucis. As he moves along the ancient way, we see with him a series of suffering and sterile fellow-travellers, who like Eliot's figures in "The Waste Land" are "dying with a little patience."

As 'twere a frieze, behold the train!
Bowed water-carriers; Jews with staves,
Infirm gray monks; over-loaded slaves;
Turk soldiers--young, with home-sick eyes;
A Bey, bereaved through luxuries;
Strangers and exiles; Moslem dames
Long-veiled in monumental white,
Dumb from the mounds which memory claims;
A half-starved vagrant Edomite;
Sore-footed Arab girls, which toil
Depressed under heap of garden-spoil;
The patient ass with panniered urn;
Sour camels humped by heaven and man,
Whose languid necks through habit turn
For ease-forease they hardly gain.
In varied forms of fate they wend--
Or man or animal, 'tis one:
Cross-bearers all, alike they tend
And follow, slowly follow on. (IV,xxxiv,521,522)

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[2]Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass, ed. John Kouwenhoven (New York: Modern Library, 1950), p. 321.

Myth and science are featured in the final passage but not as in Whitman:

> But, lagging after, who is he
> Called early every hope to test,
> And now, at close of rarer quest,
> Finds so much more the heavier tree?
> From slopes whence even Echo's gone,
> Wending, he murmurs in low tone
> "They wire the world--far under sea
> They talk; but never comes to me
> A message from beneath the stone."
>
> Dusked Olivet he leaves behind,
> And, taking now a slender wynd,
> Vanishes in the obscurer town. (IV,xxxiv,522)

The tone here is chilling despair; the myths of the past will not suffice, neither will the new material achievements. Communication, the only kind of communication that will finally satisfy man, has broken down; there is no communion. To rephrase Father Mapple in Moby-Dick, man has outlived the lifetime of his God.

This is about as far removed in tone from the opening of "Passage to India" as one can get, and although the final position or attitude of the poem cannot be described as completely futile, and though the Epilogue definitely serves to mitigate and give final reinforcement to the death-and-rebirth-of-the-god which is at the core of the poem's imagery, and move the poem into a final perspective which is neither acceptance nor despair, the total effect of Clarel's personal tragedy is a highly controlled bitterness, and, he like Celio, a character who dies early in the poem, is "humped by heaven and man." He disappears into the modern city of ruined hope and broken faith.

Stone-desert, water-sea is the basic image-symbol complex of Clarel; the first gives the dominant tone of pessimism, the second the never quite faded hope of the renewal of life and faith. The closing word of the narrative is stone; this feeds back through and is prepared for by all that has gone before. Stone as image-symbol had long been in Melville's mind. Earlier, Melville wrote in the journal he kept while making his trip to the Holy Land,

> Stones of Judea . . . no wonder that stones should so largely figure in the Bible. Judea is one accumulation of stones--Stony mountains & stony plains; stony torrents & stony roads; stony vales & stony fields, stony homes & stony tombs; effaced: stony eyes & stony hearts. Before you & behind you are stones. Stone to right & stones to left . . . stone walls of immnse thickness are thrown together, less for boundaries than to get them out of the way. But in vain; The removal of one stone only serves to reveal those stones still lying, below it.[3]

This imagery, akin to the first part of the closing section of Eliot's "The Waste Land," is constantly interplaying with the water and sea imagery, dominating that imagery and thus providing the dominant tone of Clarel.

Clarel, like The Magic Mountain of Thomas Mann, may be described as a quest-romance; in fact, as Newton Arvin has observed, the two works have much in common. Clarel is a kind of earlier Hans Castorp and like Hans is exposed to a battery of arguments and a series of formative episodes so that the work develops on both logical and pyschological levels. Thus like The Magic Mountain Clarel is more than just a novel of

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[3]Jay Leyda, The Melville Log (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951), p. 547.

ideas; it lives on many different interrelated levels that are never easy to reduce, and ultimately impossible to reduce to the discursive level of ideas.

In his Anatomy of Criticism Northrop Frye says of the quest-romance:

> The quest-romance has analogies to both rituals and dreams, and the rituals examined by Frazer and the dreams examined by Jung show the remarkable similarity in form that we should expect of two symbolic structures analogous to the same thing. Translated into dream terms, the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality. The antagonists of the quest are often sinister figures, giants, orges, witches and magicians, that clearly have a parental origin; and yet redeemed and emancipated paternal figures are involved too, as they are in the psychological quests of both Freud and Jung. Translated into ritual terms, the quest-romance is the victory of fertility over the waste land. Fertility means food and drink, bread and wine, body and blood, the union of male and female.[4]

Clarel is a quest-romance, but it is a quest-romance treated ironically, the dream of fulfillment is never realized, the ritual never enacted, male and female never joined, and at the end relief from sterility never more than suggested as a possibility.

Superficially considered, the book has a simple romantic plot. Clarel, a young divinity student has come to the Holy Land to recapture his dying faith. He is driven, as Melville was driven, back to the site of the beginnings of

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[4]Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 193.

Christianity in hopes that here at the source he can reexamine and recover his happier state. In Jerusalem he falls in love with a young Jewish girl, Ruth, whose father, Nathan, an American convert to Judiasm, has come to Palestine as a Zionist. Guided by Nehemiah, member of a fundamentalist sect who has come to Palestine to await the millenium, Clarel meets not only Ruth but several other powerful characters whom he feels can help him find his way out of his particularly dark wood, and when Nathan is killed by marauding Arabs while attending his farm, and Clarel, according to Jewish custom, is kept from seeing Ruth until the mourning period is over, he joins these questing characters to go on what is a pilgrimage for some and a tourist trip for others, a circular trip that includes the Dead Sea, the monastery Mar Saba, Bethlehem and back to Jerusalem. Characters join and leave the caravan in ways that seem arbitrary on first reading. There are, again, on first reading, what seem to be interminable and repetitious arguments on the nature of man and God, church and state, individual and society, and finally Clarel returns to Jerusalem to find both Ruth and her mother dead of grief and his quest for a faith unresolved.

But as Walter Bezanson points out in his introduction to the poem:

> The apparent failure of either the love plot or the travel line to provide a sufficient architecture lies at the root of one's initial discomfort before the poem. The poem lacks availability. Only a deeper reading opens an interior order beneath the loose outer form. Clarel's falling out of faith and into love, his particular kind of subsequent journey, the layered

> context of situation and personality in which the pilgrimage occurs, and the predictable return to tragedy, provide a series of large and powerful movements.[5]

Of first reading it might seem that Clarel's circular route from Jerusalem to the various historical sites of the Holy Land and back to Jerusalem is pointless, that nothing has been achieved by the journey, that the hero begins with a loss of faith and ends no better or no worse off than before. A closer reading, however, shows this is not exactly so, even though the general tone of the work is pessimistic. Not only is Clarel allowed to move between a number of polar positions in his character development and finally settle on the only set of attitudes that is acceptable to him, but he is allowed to act out his tragedy without being totally aware of what has happened. The reader who is following the imagery and discursive material presented by the narrator is in a position to experience more, even if he doesn't understand it all, than the hero himself; he experiences a total complexity that is not available to Clarel. Thus, while it is true that the poem may be described as an ironic quest-romance, it is also true that the pilgrim's quest is not in all senses futile. Although Clarel does not get the specific answer he seeks, one that will either restore or completely destroy his hope for some sort of salvation, he does gain, like Hans Castorp, an experience that is beyond his own immediate awareness, and it is the way that Melville handles this growth which takes place on so many

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[5]Walter Bezanson, Introduction to Clarel, p. li.

interrelated levels poetically, that provides the extraordinary below-the-surface power that the poem undoubtedly possesses.

Even more than his other works, Clarel is a huge complex of image, symbol and allegory. As soon as one looks below the surface of the narrative, he notices many of the key images, symbols and allegorical patterns found in Melville's other works; so many, in fact, that the work may be regarded in one way as a vast summing up of almost everything that has gone before in Melville's unique literary development. The interplay of this material, usually drawn from the sea or from nautical life, with images, symbols and allusions specifically associated with the Old and New Testaments and the history and literature of the Levantine world, gives the poem an astonishing complexity and depth. The poem's constricted surface, the at times almost prose-like iambic tetrameter, helps to provide a melopoeia which masks the poem's depths. To describe this poetry one is inevitably reminded of Heminway's image of the iceberg, where seven-eighths of the meaning is below the surface. The hard, uninviting surface is not arbitrary on Melville's part. It is part of the total artistic intention and fits the dominant meaning of the poem and the dominant symbol, hard impenetrable stone. Realizing Melville's intention may not excuse some of his excesses and automatically establish the poetry as great, but it does help us to see some logic in what otherwise may seem willfully perverse. Not that there probably wasn't an element of willfull obscurantism in Melville's mind when he wrote Clarel.

It is as though he set out deliberately to make the poem as formidable as he could, to make the kinds of demands on his readers that would be made in another century by Eliot, Pound and Joyce. Melville's cryptic reply to James Billson, when Billson asked about works by Melville, other than the ones he had been able to acquire, would seem to bear this out.

> "Clarel," published by George P. Putnam's Sons, New York--a metrical affair, a pilgrimage or what not, of several thousand lines, eminently adapted for unpopularity.--The notification to you is ambidexter, as it were: it may intimidate or allure.[6]

To penetrate Clarel and bring it into relationship with the other major achievements of nineteenth century literature is no easy task. Typical Romantic patterns isolated and discussed in W. H. Auden's The Enchafed Flood will help us, I think, to arrive at some of the key questions necessary for any thorough investigation of the inner workings of Melville's long poem. Near the beginning of the fifth book of Wordsworth's The Prelude, Auden finds a passage that contains three pairs of symbols which are to become dominant in the literature of the nineteenth century:

1) The desert and the sea.
2) The stone of abstract geometry, and the shell of imagination or instinct, which between them offer alternative routes of salvation from the anxiety of the dreamer, a promise which is not realized.
3) The double-natured hero, half Bedouin, i.e., Ishmael, the exile, the Wandering Jew, The Flying Dutchman, and half Don Quixote, i.e., the dedicated man, the Knight of Faith who would restore the Age of Gold.[7]

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[6]Leyda, op.cit., p. 786.

[7]W. H. Auden, The Enchafed Flood (New York: Random House, 1950), p. 6.

The sea and the desert have their archetypal, traditional associations. The sea, according to Auden, is "the symbol for the primordial undifferentiated flux, the substance which became created nature only by having form imposed upon or wedded to it." The sea, even though it is the source of terrible dangers which may engulf man, is a potential source of life, of expansion of horizon, and expansion of the ego. Thus as in Robert Frost's "Neither Out Far Nor in Deep,"

> The people along the sand
> All turn and look one way.
> They turn their back on the land
> They look at the sea all day.[8]

Melville captures this need of man to return to the sea in order to revitalize himself, in the opening pages of Moby-Dick, where he asks the reader to,

> Circumambulate the city of a dreamy Sabbath afternoon. Go from Corlears Hook to Coenties Slip, and from thence, by Whitehall, northward. What do you see?--Posted like silent sentinels all around the town, stand thousands upon thousands of mortal men fixed in ocean reveries. Some leaning against the piles; some seated upon the pierheads; some looking over the bulwarks of ships from China; some high aloft in the rigging as if striving to get a still better seaward peep. But these are all landsmen; of week days pent up in lath and plaster--tied to counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks. How then is this? Are the green fields gone? What do they here?[9]

Also, the sea as the great giver of life and death is found as a constant in Whitman, particularly in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," which according to Leo Spitzer, synthesizes

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[8]Robert Frost, Selected Poems (New York: Random House, 1950), p. 6.

[9]Herman Melville, Moby-Dick or the Whale, ed. Luther S. Mansfield and Howard P. Vincent (New York: Hendricks House, 1952), pp. 1-2.

and sums up fifteen hundred years of sea associations. Examples that at least partially fit the patterns suggested by Auden proliferate almost endlessly and in varying levels of profundity: Tennyson, Arnold, Longfellow, Swinburne, Rimbaud, Baudelaire are characteristic nineteenth century examples. In the twentieth century, Crane, Stevens, Auden, Lowell, Eliot, Valery, St. John Perse, and Gide have employed pretty much the same patterns.

According to Auden, the Romantics used the traditional association of the sea, but with novel attitudes:

> The distinctive new notes in the Romantic attitude are as follows:
>
> 1) To leave the land and the city is the desire of every man of sensibility and honor.
> 2) The sea is the real situation and the voyage is the true condition of man.
> 3) The sea is where the decisive events, the moments of eternal choice, of temptation, fall, and redemption occur. The shore life is always trivial.
> 4) An abiding destination is unknown even if it may exist: a lasting relationship is not possible nor even to be desired.[10]

Passage over the sea may be treated optimistically as in Whitman's "Passage to India," with its closing lines,

> O my brave soul!
> O farther farther sail!
> O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?
> O farther, farther, farther sail![11]

or with a tone perhaps best described as loneliness and woe as in Moby-Dick where the Pequod goes to its infatuate destruction, or terror as in Poe's Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym and "The

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[10] Auden, op.cit., pp. 13-14.

[11] Whitman, op.cit., p. 328.

Descent into the Maelstrom," or to give a more unusual and somehow unexpected example, the undeveloped narrative of Mark Twain, where all of mankind is on a ship sailing into the unknown on a sea that seems immense to the travellers but is actually only a drop of water seen through a microscope, and where the travellers are frightened by The Great White Glare which is only the reflection of the microscope's mirror. No matter the variation, there is little doubt of how useful the pattern was to writers who found themselves in a century of political and material expansion and shrinking religious ardor.

For Auden the desert also has its archetypal associations.

> 1) It is the place where the water of life is lacking, the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel's vision.
> 2) It may be so by nature, i.e., the wilderness which lies outside the fertile place or city. As such, it is the place where nobody desires by nature to be. Either one is compelled by others to go there because one is a criminal outlaw or a scapegoat (e.g. Cain, Ishmael), or one chooses to withdraw from the city in order to be alone. This withdrawal may be temporary, a period of self-examination and purification in order to return to the city with a true knowledge of one's mission and the strength to carry it out (e.g. Jesus' forty days in the wilderness.
> . . . . . .
> In the second case, when the desert is the purgative place, the image is primarily associated with the idea of chastity and humility. It is the place where there are no beautiful bodies or comfortable beds or stimulating food and drink or admiration. The temptations of the desert are therefore either sexual mirages or the more subtle temptation of pride when the devil appears in his own form.
> . . . . . .
> 5) Lastly, the desert may not be barren by nature but as the consequence of a historical catastrophe. The once-fertile city has become, through the malevolence of others or its own sin, the waste land. In this case it is the opportunity for the stranger hero who comes

> elsewhere to discover the cause of the disaster, destroy or heal it and become the rebuilder of the city and, in most cases its new ruler.[12]

There are haven archetypes for both sea and desert. These are either true or false havens. For the sea, the true haven is the happy island, the false haven is the island of destruction or penal island; for the desert the happy island counterpart is the oasis; the false haven is the mirage.

There is also the city which is traditionally a place of destination and refuge and considered as destination and refuge the city is often symbolic of attained truth. Of the stone, the shell and the city, Auden says:

> In Wordsworth's dream, then as in all dreams, there are a number of ambiguities.
>
> 1) The stone and the shell are alike in that they both signify Truth. They are also opposites. The stone is valuable because it stands for freedom from disorder and passion. The shell is valuable because it stands for life-giving power. Incidentally, also, the stone stands for the Divine Unity, the shell for the Divine Multiplicty.
> 2) Both are the means through which the True City is built. Men become brothers through the recognition of a common truth in the several hearts. But at the same time both are dangers to the city. The truths of abstraction are unrelated to the historical reality of the human moment and distract from the historical task. The truths of feeling may overwhelm individual identity and social order in an anarchic deluge.[13]

Although Auden applies his archetypes to Melville's prose and at least one of the later short poems, "The Berg,"

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[12] Auden, op.cit., pp. 14-16.

[13] Ibid., p. 46.

he does not apply them to Clarel, Melville's one work which uses in some way almost all of the patterns described above.

Clarel brings together the two great image clusters mentioned earlier, desert-stone imagery and sea and fresh water imagery. In most of Melville's earlier work it is the sea imagery that dominates. Whatever interpretation one chooses to impose on Moby-Dick, it is the chaotic, ever-shifting, never to be completely understood sea, which provides both life and death, that dominates the work and gives it so much of its crushing power. To a lesser extent this is also true of Mardi, Redburn and White Jacket. Over this Melvillean sea travel ships with different destinies. Contrasts are set up between the ships and within the ships themselves. Some ships, the Pequod is one, Taji's shallop in Mardi another, are set apart from the mundane trading ships of the sea. On each of these there is at least one character who is the Romantic hero, more fully aware of the potentialities for life and death, the Byronic hero of expanded sensibility. Most often, as in Moby-Dick, there is not one character but several, who taken together complete the range of sensibilities of the Romantic hero. The Romantic hero's capacity for both action and contemplation has been expanded, but very often two or more characters share the extended sensibility. Thus in Moby-Dick, we must take the Ahab-Fedallah, Ishmael-Queequeg, relationship together to get a full range that includes great powers of action and contemplation, Ahab, great and brooding as he is, seems incapable of

the kind of probing analysis found in the chapter on the Whiteness of the Whale, nor does he contain the largesse of soul found in Queequeg.

The Romantic hero is usually, in at least one sense, "chartless voyaged" and, at the instigation of one or more members of the crew, the ship the hero is travelling in, often a micrososm of the world, is also "chartless voyaged." Most often both men and ship are bound for destruction, self sought by at least one member on board. Other ships are bound for terrestrial destinations; some will reach them, some will not. The nine ships that meet the Pequod, with their varying attitudes toward the White Whale, hence toward the sea and by extension toward life and death itself, though they may in varying degrees participate in awareness of the potentialities of the White Whale, are not capable of duplicating Ahab's return engagement in the Pequod. Within the Pequod itself, Starbuck, Stubb and Flask, represent a somewhat similar hierarchy of more or less mundane sensibilities that can never completely share the emotions of Ahab or the insights of Ishmael.

In addition to the symbolic pattern of ship and sea, Melville's sea contains the two traditional havens mentioned earlier. The prototype of the happy islands are the Marquesas of Typee. In the works of Melville's later years these are utilized in two ways. They are either havens that exist in memory only, or they hint at possibilities of a world to come. The clearest expression of both of these uses is found in the

short poem, "To Ned" in John Marr and Other Sailors.

> Ned, for our patheistic ports:--
> Marquesas and glenned isles that be
> Authentic Edens in a Pagan sea.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> But tell, shall he, the tourist, find
> Our isles the same in violet-glow
> Enamoring us what years and years--
> Ah, Ned what years and years ago!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> But we, in anchor-watches calm,
> The Indian Psyche's languor won,
> And, musing, breathed primeval balm
> From Edens ere yet overrun;
> Marvelling mild if mortal twice
> Here and hereafter, touch a Paradise.[14]

Opposite to the luxurious tropic islands are two kinds of treacherous destructive islands, the desert island and the iceberg. The desert island is best represented in Melville by The Encantadas, his allegorical-symbolic treatment of the Galapagos Islands, discussed in Chapter II. These are the deceptive enchanted islands, a microcosmic view of the world as a penal colony held in thrall by some malevolent enchanter. Here, the deceptive harlot world, glorious in the distance, is shown upon actual landing as the barren hag she really is. Here, one finds the lowest forms of life, life at its most primitive and hence most fundamental state, but this is no world as described in Darwin's The Voyage of the H.M.S. Beagle. The more one moves in the direction of earlier forms of life,

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[14]Herman Melville, Collected Poems, ed. Howard P. Vincent (Chicago: Packard and Company, 1947), p. 201.

the more repulsive and evil life becomes, and by extension the creator of such a life is made to be a thoroughly malignant agent. The tortoise is the symbol of endurance in a dreary world. "Little but reptile life is here found: tortoises, lizards, immense spiders, snakes, and that strangest anomaly of outlandish nature, the iguana. No voice, now, no howl is heard; the chief sound of life here is a hiss."[15] The islands are the islands of sin and shame. "Apples of Sodom, after touching them, seem those isles."[16]

The waters of the sea are dangerous enough, but as Auden points out, when they congeal into ice they are a special danger. The iceberg is a kind of floating dangerous island as in Melville's poem, "The Berg." Ice may be associated with the inmost reaches of hell as Melville does in "The Tartarus of Maids" through an echoing of the Cocytus imagery of Dante's Inferno. And finally we must remember that Moby-Dick himself is described at times as a floating island and at other times as "one grand hooded phantom, like a snow hill in the air,"[17] so that both of these image-symbols, plus many others, are part of the White Whale symbol complex.

Although there is no actual sea voyage in Clarel, all the patterns and symbols, found in the passage from Wordsworth, with the exception of the shell, are present. As regards

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[15]Herman Melville, Selected Writing of Herman Melville (New York: Modern Library, 1952), pp. 50-51.

[16]Ibid., p. 53.

[17]Melville, Moby-Dick, p. 6.

technique and content Melville makes use of his earlier work. He particularly seems to have merged the allegorical techniques of Mardi and the dialectical debates of that work with the more deeply bedded and hard to fathom symbolic techniques of his later prose works. Though he obviously reacted against the allegorical method he adopted for most of Mardi and rejected allegory for the densities of Moby-Dick and Pierre, he never really rejected his delight in contemplating various philosophic systems and obviously took great delight in conversations that were more or less dialectical investigations. That he was as good at this as he was at story telling we have the following account for evidence.

> . . . We [Darley and Field] started in a buggy to call upon Melville, intending to go from there to Dr. Holmes's, then to the hotel at Pittsfield to dine, and thence home. We found Melville, whom I had always known as the most silent man of my acquaintance, sitting on the porch in front of his door. He took us to a particular spot on his place to show us some superb trees. He told me that he spent much time there patting them upon the back. When we were about to start for Dr. Holmes's, we invited Melville to accompany us, and he accepted. We found the poet-physician, to whom I was presented for the first time, at home, and he took us into a room at the back of his house, which overlooked the mountains. For some time the talk, in which we all tried to participate, dragged . . . . At length, somehow, the conversation drifted to East Indian religions and mythologies, and soon there arose a discussion between Holmes and Melville, which was conducted with the most amazing skill and brilliancy on both sides. It lasted for hours, and Darley and I had nothing to do but listen. I never chanced hear better talking in my life. It was so absorbing that we took no note of time, and the Doctor lost his dinner, as we lost ours.[18]

With its sometimes seemingly interminable debates and its at times caustic stabs at the lack of fulfillment in the

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[18]Leyda, op.cit., p. 506.

New World, Clarel seems in many ways a rewriting of Mardi by a man who has now lived a long life that has been filled with bitter disappointments, so many that he can no longer conjure up the Rabelaisian jocularities of Yoomy, Mohi, Media and Babbalanja which always mitigate and make slightly ridiculous whatever is serious in that youthful effusion. There are occassional touches of humor in Clarel, but mostly the humor is either wry and cutting or has an empty bravado about it, so that when it comes, as in the jocularity of Don Hanibal, it is strangely grotesque. But the groups of characters in Clarel, more or less allegorical, hammering with such insistency at the same questions, seeking to find a true way for the individual and for society, are a deeper and more mature expression of a similar pattern found in the germinal Mardi. Also, the Vivenza section of Mardi is recapitulated in Clarel where the thesis later developed by Frederick Jackson Turner, is repeated. Also Melville's attacks on the United States are now made much more personal and meaningful than the conventional attacks on slavery in Melville's earlier work. Yillah and Hautia, sacred and profane love, become combined in a single figure, Clarel's love, Ruth. The initial journey to the islands of revelation, the discovery and abduction of Yillah, her incarceration by the wicked Hautia, the pilgrimage through the islands of Mardi in search of the abode of bliss, the rejection of head in favor of heart by Babbalanja, the returning of all to the island of Serenia (island of Christianity) except Taji, who remains isolated and who goes to his death rather than

compromise an ideal love, all are mirrored in ambiguous and obverse ways in Clarel.

But though these and other patterns are found in the later work, Clarel is no repetition in verse of the prose writings of Melville's earlier period. There is a rigour and detachment in Clarel not found in the earlier work. The tempestuous sea has not been forgotten but it has been supplanted by the desert. Monomania, so strongly evident in the middle works, is certainly not absent in Clarel, but it is never allowed to occupy the center of the stage for very long. Mortmain is a powerful character as are the other monomaniacs, but they are not Ahabs or Pierres and Clarel is no Taji--there is not the slightest indication that Clarel will destroy himself out of grief for Ruth. Vine and Role, the central characters in Clarel, cannot be found anywhere else in all Melville; they are unique.

Thus, although Clarel serves to evoke almost all of Melville's earlier writing, it is also quite different. In Mardi the intellectual debates have a manufactured quality; in Clarel the seemingly interminable debates suddenly become very much alive as soon as one begins to penetrate the imagery, symbolism and allegory and connect them to this discursive material. The wealth of Biblical, historical and philosophical allusion ranges from those easily detected to those that can be ferreted out only with great attention to the original source, and when this is experienced along with the other features of the poem, the effect is the one described earlier. It is like

looking down into a great depth of water, making out some objects distinctly, seeing others as more shadow than substance and not being quite sure whether some objects are being seen at all. The poem is a good mimetic construct for life itself.

In light of the foregoing, it seems important for any analysis which hopes to probe the secrets of Clarel to ask the following questions:

1. What is the function of the sea imagery in relation to the desert imagery?
2. How are the other key image-symbols related to this larger image-symbol complex?
3. What is the relationship of the foregoing elements to the thematic material presented to the reader either in a direct discursive manner or as allegory?

I hope to provide at least a partial answer in the following chapters.

CHAPTER II

THE ENCROACHING DESERT AND THE RECEDING WAVE

The sea-desert imagery in Clarel seems grotesque at first, but as soon as one grasps that it is a traditional, archetypal material for the kind of literary edifice that Melville wishes to build, it seems natural and almost a necessity. Using Erich Kahler's terminology it can be seen as a massive set of descending and ascending symbols--Melville making his own particular use of available materials. Clarel becomes a much clearer poem when the reader is at least able to partially see the way this imagery is connected to the poem's other elements.

In order to explore this relationship further, we must establish, at least partially, what the poem is about. Here, past criticism and scholarship, though it has been more extensive than is generally realized, has been, I think, misleading. No scholar-critic to date has successfully explored and given a satisfactory reading that relates all the parts of Clarel. Most scholars and critics have come to Clarel ready to see only that which will fit the particular thesis about Melville they happen to be developing at the time. Even Walter Bezanson, who has done more than anyone to really dig into the structure of the poem and not merely skim its surface, readily admits that there are cantos, passages and aspects of Clarel which are as

yet unexplored territories. Clarel, like "The Waste Land," is a dense poem that calls for a very close attention to image symbol and allusion, but unlike Eliot's allusive poem it is very long. This accounts for the directly contradictory and the almost contradictory analyses and assessments the book has elicited over the past forty years. In his introduction Bezanson gives an admirable and fair summary of these positions to which the reader can refer. In the following analysis, I am not so much concerned with treating every aspect of Clarel as in probing under the surface of the narrative to answer the questions listed in the previous chapter. Closer attention to recurrent image pattern is essential to any complete reading and a new interpretation of the poem is an inevitable result.

Unwisely bypassing the romantic plot as having little to do with the core meaning of the poem, most recent critics have tended to ignore the plot and the complexities of the verse and see the poem either as a gallery of interesting characters or an assemblage of dialectically opposed ideas expressed by characters who are relatively static and who serve only as mouthpieces. There also has been almost as much divergence as to the central meaning of the poem as there has been over the meaning in Billy Budd. Some critics have found the poem a testament of acceptance, others have found it essentially a document of rejection and despair. In one way or another Clarel is all of the foregoing and much more besides, and like most big complex works is not easily reduced

except to satisfy a thesis. One should hold in mind that Melville's ideal was Shakespeare whose birthplace is compared to Bethlehem in Clarel in such a way as to leave little doubt as to the extent of Melville's bardolatry.

Frost has a little poem which states succinctly,

> We dance around in a ring and suppose,
> While the Secret sits in the middle and knows.[1]

If we make the existence of God in the center of the circle purely hypothetical, we can say that Clarel makes a pilgrimage around that circle. The trip that the pilgrims take from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, the monastery at Mar Saba, Bethlehem and back to Jerusalem is roughly circular and the circularity is meant to be symbolic. The trip ends where it begins and thus signifies the sterility of Clarel's quest.

But the circle is also a descent and a return. Beginning at Jerusalem, 2200 feet above sea level, the pilgrims journey to the Dead Sea, 1312 feet below sea level, and back again. This descent and return is symbolic as well as actual. It suggests many similar trips in literature and myth: Orpheus' trip in search of Eurydice, Odysseus' journey to Hades and the parallel journey in the Aeneid, and, more than any of these, Dante's journey in the Divine Comedy. The shore of the Dead Sea is called "Pluto's Park." This and use of gnostic and Manichean ideas makes Clarel a further development of much that is found in "The Tartarus of Maids."

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[1]Frost, op.cit., p. 235.

This ascent and descent of the pilgrims works against the circle pattern to suggest that even though in one sense the journey has been a sterile circle, in another it has been a revelation. What the reader experiences, particularly if he pays close attention to the imagery, is more than what Clarel experiences. Moreover, one feels at the end of the poem that Clarel has not digested all his experiences; he has merely reached a plateau in his understanding and his development. Though he has clearly found no solution to the questions that plague him, he has changed and he is no longer the same, even though he does not understand all of these changes. When the narrator gives a last glimpse of the sorrowful Clarel still burdened by his great unanswered question, the narrator stops the narrative and closes with an epilogue. The effect is similar to the narrator's saying goodbye to Hans Castorp in The Magic Mountain; it signals the end of one cycle and the beginning of another. Of course, the narrator cannot speak to Clarel as God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind; he can only be a surrogate and can give no final assurance.

These two patterns, the circle and the descent and return can, I think, be only understood in relation to the often neglected romantic plot. If the romantic plot is taken not as an unrelated excuse for the pilgrimage, but as an integral part of the total structure, a larger frame to which the symbolic pilgrimage must be subordinated, then much that is otherwise obscure becomes at least partially illuminated, and we can see that the work has greater coherence than is at

first apparent.

The characters in Clarel are all more or less a combination of symbol and allegory, and Ruth, the Jewish girl that Clarel falls in love with in Jerusalem, is no exception. In Hebrew Ruth means mercy and in the poem she stands ambivalently for God's mercy as evidenced on Earth, physical love, and a promise of God's mercy in Heaven. She is Clarel's Beatrice with complications. As such, she contains elements of both Yillah, symbol of ideal love, and Hautia, carnal love. On one level, the love between Clarel and Ruth is presented as an Edenic love before the Fall.

> Clarel and Ruth--might it but be
> That range they could green uplands free
> By gala orchards, when they fling
> Their bridal favors, buds of Spring;
> And, dreamy in her morning swoon,
> The lady of the night, the moon,
> Looks pearly as the blossoming;
> And youth and nature's fond accord
> Win Eden back, that tales abstruse
> Of Christ, the crucified, Pain's Lord,
> Seem foreign--forged--incongruous.
>
> (I,xxviii,90)

But as usual all is not well in the garden of love.

Perhaps more than anything else Clarel is a study of the relation of the self to the other-than-self, the desire of the questing self to remain the self and at the same time seek annihilation of self through some sort of merging with the other-than-self. The word self is used over and over in Clarel with cumulative insistence. Clarification of the nature of the self may be said the key theme of the poem (the name Clarel stands for clarity or light). But this is not just any

kind of self; the selves presented and explored in Clarel are those that strongly need to feel the "oceanic sense," selves that feel strong pangs of isolation, questing selves that are seeking some haven of rest. Clarel tries to relate these selves to all the worlds open to the imagination.

When Clarel first comes to Jerusalem he is in a perplexed state, in which, to use the words Hawthorne used to describe Melville's mental state when Melville was making his own pilgrimage to the Holy Land, "He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous to not to try to do one or the other."[2] It is also noteworthy that Clarel is described in much the same way that Melville almost invariably uses to describe Christ; that is, soft and almost feminine.

> But anon
> His face he lifts--in feature fine,
> Yet pale, and all but feminine
> But for the eye and serious brow--
> (I,i,3)

And in a remarkable series of images and symbols, Clarel muses retrospectively about his recent landing at Jaffa and his present perplexed position. These opening images foreshadow the whole poem, excluding the epilogue. The movement is from a literal description of the sea,

> Not thus it was but yesterday
> Off Jaffa on the clear blue sea:
> Not thus, my heart, it was with thee
> Landing amid the shouts and spray
> (I,i,4)

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[2]Leyda, op.cit., p. 529.

which is nevertheless symbolic, to one of the major symbols in Melville's poetry. Jerusalem is described metaphorically in images that recall Poe's description of Antarctica in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym,

> Like the ice-bastions around the Pole,
> Thy blank, blank towers, Jerusalem!
> (I,i,4)

Here the image-symbol complex is particularly rich. The passage is most easily associated with the iceberg images that occur later in the poem. The most striking of these occurs in the Wilderness section when Vine sees the Mount of Temptation.

> Meantime, with slant reverted eyes
> Vine marked the Crag of Agonies.
> Exceeding high (As Matthew saidth)
> It shows from skirt to that wild path
> Bare as an iceberg seamed by rain
> Toppling awash in foggy main
> Off Labrador. Grottoes Vine viewed
> Upon the flank--or cells or tombs--
> Void as the iceberg's catacombs
> Of frost. He starts. A form endued
> With living guise, from ledges dim
> Leans as if looking down toward him.
> Not pointing out the thing he saw
> Vine watched it, but it showed no claw
> Of hostile purpose; . . .
> (II,xiv,188)

This passage in turn suggests Melville's "The Berg" in John Marr and Other Sailors, an iceberg being greatest danger for ships at sea. The connections between this symbol and the Great White Whale have already been commented on. The specific use of a devil image "no claw of hostile purpose" not only alludes to the Temptation but suggests the image of Satan frozen in the Guidecca and the whole complex of association built up in "The Tartarus of Maids," the absence of color in

Chapter XLII, "The Whiteness of the Whale." The absence of color and the blank sheets of paper, symbol of the mechanical manufacturing of minds and its connection with the tabula rasa of Locke, invest the line "blank, blank towers, Jerusalem," with one of the richest sets of associations in all literature.

Moreover, one moves from the "clear blue sea" of yesterday to the terrible ice-bound fortress over a plain that is deceptively attractive, where the rose, traditional symbol of Divine Love, is identified as a "scarlet poppy," traditionally used as a symbol of sleep and associated with Death as in Donne's sonnet:

> And was it, yes, her title Rose,
> That scarlet poppy oft at hand?
> Then Ramleh gleamed, the sail-white town
> At even.
>
> (I,i,4)

The poppy image is immediately followed by a romantic, almost Tennysonian passage.

> There I watched day close
> From the fair tower, the suburb one;
> Seaward and dazing set the sun:
> Inland I turned me toward the wall
> Of Ephraim, stretched in purple pall.
> Romance of mountains!
>
> (I,i,4)

Here, the word "dazing" instead of the more probable word, dazzling, reinforces the poppy image, and "purple pall" suggests gorgeous richness combined with death as in Milton's "Som time let Gorgeous Tragedy/In Scepter'd Pall com sweeping by."[3]

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[3]John Milton, The Poetical Works of John Milton, Vol. II, ed. Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 144.

After this evening passage which sets the stage, Clarel, having moved from romance to dream to what he suspects may be the reality, is bewildered by the various tribes, religions and sects of religions that crowd Jerusalem. He sees that the Holy Bible carries only a partial story of the complex history of the cradle of the world. Here, of all places, it may be that he can probe deep into his own nature as well as that of God and Man in general.

> 'Twas scarce surprise; and yet first view
> Brings this eclipse. Needs by my soul,
> Purged by the desert's subtle air
> From bookish vapors, now is heir
> To nature's influx of control;
> Comes likewise now to consciousness
> Of the true import of that press
> Of inklings which in travel late
> Through Latin lands, did vex my state,
> And somehow seemed clandestine. Ah!
> The underformings in the mind.
> Banked corals which ascend from far,
> But little heed men that they wind
> Unseen, unheard--till lo, the reef--
> The reef and breaker, wreck and grief.
> But here unleaning, how to me
> Opes the expanse of time's vast sea!
>
> (I,i,5)

Not only does the above passage offer a remarkable analogy of the relation of the unconscious to the conscious mind, but it subtly introduces the acceptance-or-rejection of the world theme, the major conflict in Clarel, but the possible answer, to be provided by history, is linked to the sea imagery and "the oceanic sense." This acceptance-rejection conflict moves on an intellectual-dialectic level which is related to the personal development of Clarel. Always it is accompanied by images and symbols which give a richness and complexity.

This pull between two poles, acceptance or rejection of the physical world, is developed throughout the poem by Clarel's vacillating attitude toward Ruth and his vacillation between Vine and Rolfe.

At the beginning of the poem, after Clarel's problem has been posed, he decides,

> . . . could I but meet
> Some stranger of a lore replete,
> Who, marking how my looks betray
> The dumb thoughts clogging here my feet,
> Would question me, expound and prove
> And make my heart to burn with love--
> Emmaus were no dream to-day.
> (I,vii,27)

He meets Nehemiah, blind faith, and Celio, raging disbelief, and finds that he can appreciate but not really identify with the state of mind of either. Although it is Nehemiah who introduces Clarel to Ruth, he unconsciously carries what may be a great evil burden and is destined to drown in the sea of Sodom. Celio is likened to Savonarola, and is associated in an ironic manner with Stephen, the martyr who was stoned by the wall, but he is really modeled on Leopardi, the bitter, hunchbacked, Italian poet, who, because he could not be loved, cried out against the world.

The whole relationship between Celio and Clarel is fairly subtle. Celio's condition foreshadows, at least in part, what will happen to Clarel. In the closing passage quoted earlier, Clarel, along with the other "strangers and exiles," like the camel, is "humped by heaven and man." When we recall Melville's very conscious use of sexual symbols, the

following passage illuminates Ruth's relationship as a Beatrice figure to Clarel.

> One day
> When from St. Peter's balcony,
> The raised pontific fingers bless
> The city and the world; the stress
> He knew of fate: Blessest thou me,
> One wave here in this heaving sea
> Of heads? how may a blessing be?
> Luckless, from action's thrill removed,
> And all that yields our nature room;
> In courts a jest; and, harder doom,
> Never the hunchback may be loved.
> Never! for Beatrice--Bice--O,
> Diminutive once sweet, made now
> All otherwise!--didst thou but fool?
> Arch practice in precocious school?
> Nay, rather 'twas ere thou didst bud
> Into thy riper womanhood.
> Since love, arms, courts, abjure--why then
> Remaineth to me what? the pen?
> Dead feather of ethereal life!
> Nor efficacious much, save when
> It makes some fallacy more rife.
> (I,xii,39)

Fortunately, one doesn't have to go to psychoanalysis to see that this passage is rife with sexual symbols, and any mere psychoanalytic interpretation would reduce their significance. Where Thomas Mann in The Magic Mountain makes Pribislav Hippe's pencil into a sexual symbol and later in the novel has Hans Castorp get a pencil from his love, Clavdia, the symbolism is too easily reduced to psychoanalytic theory. Melville, not having read Freud, is up against no such obstacle. As in "The Tartarus of Maids," the symbols ultimately have a religious-philosophic significance. The technique is somewhat the same as in Chapter LCV, "The Cassock," in Moby-Dick; although the tone is quite different. There is a bitter comic irony in the way symbols are employed here. The pun on "fallacy" and its

association with "pen," "love, arms, courts," and Celio's removal from "action's thrill" and the Pope's "raised pontific fingers" from "St. Peter's balcony" are hardly accidental. The line "Arch practice in precocious school?" with its double meaning, prepares for the beast-sexual symbol in the canto where Clarel meets Ruth.

Like Clarel, Celio is disillusioned with his religious faith, but his disillusionment is in one sense more profound. Travel in lands dominated by Roman Catholicism has caused Clarel to search out Palestine; Celio, dismissing Rome, wishes to probe into the backgrounds of Judaism.

> Methinks I catch a beckoning sign,
> A summons as from Palestine.
> Yea, let me view that pontiff-land
> Whose sway occult can so command;
> Make even Papal Rome to be
> Her appanage or her colony.
> Is Judah's mummy quite unrolled?
> To pluck the tailsman from fold!
>
> (I,xii,41)

Celio is a doomed man and as his pathetic end comes near, the narrator describes Clarel as passing Celio like one ship passing another in a storm. One is about to be wrecked but the other can do nothing.

> Blue-lights sent up by ship forlorn
> Are answered oft but by the glare
> Of rockets from another, torn
> In the same gale's inclusive snare.
>
> (I,xiii,41)

Here the sea symbolism is an ironic treatment of stock nineteenth hymn symbolism as for example found in P. P. Bliss's "Send a gleam across the wave / Some poor fainting, struggling seaman / You may rescue, you may save." One rarely gets this

sort of revitalizing in the cross and crown symbolism of Melville's earlier Battle Pieces. The sick Celio, symbolically wandering outside the gates of Jerusalem, finds that when he tries to get back in at night, the gates have been closed. He then goes to a glen, described as islanded, to find sanctuary for the night. The island is a false haven and metaphorically it is also an iceberg.

> Hour after hour slow dragged along.
> The glen's wall with night roundabout
> Blended a cloud with cloud-rack may.
> But lo--as when off Tamura
> The splash of north-light on the sea
> Crimsons the bergs--so here start out
> Some crags aloft how vividly.
> (I,iv,46)

A group of monks come down from a gate. As they come winding down out of the city carrying flambeaux they are described as a flow of red lava from a volcano. They go, followed by Celio to the cave of Lazarus, where they sing:

> "O death, where is thy sting? O grave,
> Where is thy victory?"
> (I,iv,48)

Celio questions that the miracle ever took place.

> "But died he twice?
> He comes not back from Paradise
> Or Hades now. A vacant tomb
> By Golgotha. They show a cell,
> A void cell here. And is it well?
> Raiser and raised divide one doom;
> Both vanished now."
> (I,iv,48)

The next set of images, which show Celio's mind, bring together the miracles of Christ and fish, deny (in Celio's mind) those miracles and foreshadow the line closely associated with Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," "Laid bare by faith's receding

wave," which comes just after Celio's death.

> No thrills forewarn
> Of fish that leaps from midnight tarn;
> The very wave from which it springs
> Is startled and recoils in rings.
> So here with Celio and the word
> Which from his own rash lips he heard.
> (I,iv,48)

Celio goes again to St. Stephen's gate and when morning comes encounters Clarel. They pause and stare at each other, but Clarel is too shy to receive Celio's message. The close connection between Celio and Clarel is indicated in the following passage.

> Howbeit Celio knew his mate:
> Again, as down in Gihon late
> He hovered with his overture--
> And overture that scorned debate.
> But inexperienced, shy, unsure--
> Challenged abrupt, or yea or nay,
> Again did Clarel hesitate;
> (I,xv,50,51)

Clarel's passing Celio is again described as a passing ship. The images are so arranged as to possibly suggest the death-in-life passage in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," where the nightmare death-in-life comes "to thick man's blood with cold."

> What speck is that so far awy
> That wanes and wanes in waxing day?
> Is it the sail ye fain had spoken
> Last night when surges parted ye?
> But on, it is a boundless sea.
> (I,xv,51)

The whole episode recalls that part of Moby-Dick where the Pequod encounters the last of the nine Gams, The Delight. This ship, itself wrecked by the White Whale, cannot convince Ahab to give up the chase. Here Celio cannot even warn Clarel

of what is coming.

After Clarel ignores Celio's overture, he is led by the almost senile Nehemiah to the wailing wall where he sees Ruth, daughter of Nathan, the converted Jew, for the first time. Her double nature, both material and spiritual, is immediately pointed up.

> Among the maids those rites detained,
> One he perceived, as it befell,
> Whose air expressed such truth unfeigned,
> And harmonies inlinked which dwell
> In pledges born of record pure--
> She looked a legate to insure
> That Paradise is possible
> Now as hereafter.
> (I,xvi,55,56)

At first Clarel sees here as an image of pure innocence and happiness, but looking closer he perceives that she is not completely happy.

> 'Twas the grace
> Of Nature's dawn: an Eve-like face
> And Nereid eyes with virgin spell
> Candid as day, yet baffling quite
> Like day, through unreserve of light.
> A dove she seemed, a temple dove,
> Born in the temple or its grove,
> And nurtured there. But deeper viewed,
> What was it that looked part amiss?
> A bit impaired? what lack of peace?
> (I,xvi,56)

Clarel learns that Ruth is the daughter of Nathan. Nathan furthers the allegorical nature of the poem. His name in Hebrew means the gift of God and that Ruth is his daughter is ironically fitting in that the promised redemption is an outgrowth of the Old Testament. That he is a converted Jew with a Puritan background serves, I think, to further the irony.

In a canto entitled "Night," somber Jerusalem is contrasted with serene Damascus as a foreshadowing of the dialectic between Clarel and the hedonistic Lyonese in the crucial "Prodigal" canto in Part IV where Clarel is presented for the last time with contrasting ascetic and hedonistic attitudes. Clarel cannot help thinking about Ruth, but is forced to associate her image with Celio.

> But every thought
> Of Ruth was strangely underrun
> By Celio's image. Celio--sought
> Vainly in body--now appeared
> As in the spiritual part
> Haunting the air, and in the heart.
>
> (I,xviii,68)

He goes back to his chamber and tries to sleep but is haunted by a vision of Celio.

> For midnight, rending all her graves,
> Showed in a vision far and dim
> Still Celio--and in pallid stress
> Fainting amid contending press
> Of shadowy fiends and cherubim.
>
> (I,xviii,68)

Going out on the roof he encounters Abdon, an Indian Jew who is keeper of the inn where Clarel is staying. The Jew is engaged in prayer. Feeling a premonition of disaster, Clarel disturbs the Jew's prayers and asks to stay with him. He immediately hears a cry coming out of the darkness and Abdon exclaims,

> "'Tis for some parted spirit--gone,
> Just gone. The custom of the town
> That cry is; yea, the watcher's breath
> Instant upon the stroke of death."
>
> (I,xviii,69)

The cry is heard again and Clarel compares it to a tongue of

flame (I take the comparison to be allusive), and an association is made with Celio.

> "Anew! 'Tis like a tongue of flame
> Shot from the fissure; "and stood still:
> "Can fate the boding thus fulfill?
> Such premonitions.--Thrillest yet
> 'Tis over, but we might have met?--
> For him it is--found now--nay fled!"
>
> (I,xviii,69)

In learning the facts of Celio's death, Clarel discovers a second self, and we are brought to the almost quotation from Arnold's "Dover Beach." The passage telling how Celio died not only parallels to some extent the closing line of the narrative, before his death Celio found lodging in the "deeper town," and Clarel disappears in the "obscurer town," but his turning to the wall at death recalls the wall imagery in "The Berg" and more importantly, the wall imagery in "Bartleby, the Scrivener."

> And, turning toward the wall, found rest.
> 'Twas Syrians watched the parting hour--
> And Syrian women shrilled the cry
> That wailed it. This, with added store
> Learned Clarel, putting all else by
> To get at items of the dead.
> Nor, in the throb that casts out fear,
> Aught recked he of a scruple here;
> But, finding leaves that might bestead,
> The jotted journaled thoughts he read.
> A second self therein he found,
> But stronger--with the heart to brave
> All questions on that primal ground
> Laid bare by faith's receding wave.
>
> (I,xiv,70)

With the Arnoldian line we are brought to the major metaphor in the sea imagery of the poem. In Arnold's poem the Sea of Faith recedes leaving the "bare and naked shingles of the world." The first part of Clarel is crowded with sea images

and while these do not die out entirely, they lessen as one approaches Part II, "The Wilderness." It is as though one possible function of the sea imagery is to match structurally the "long withdrawing roar" of Arnold's "Sea of Faith." Melville, in general, is not a haphazard writer, and carefully placed recurrent images are an important part of Clarel.

There is no direct connection in the plot between Celio's death and the events which follow, but there is a symbolic connection. After "The Fulfillment" canto, Clarel follows Celio's bier to the funeral place, but not wishing to be present for the funeral services, he retires with Nehemiah, who is guide in these cantos, to the Vale of Ashes (the Valley of Jehosphat) which Melville calls the "hollow of Melchizadek." Here, in the place where supposedly the trumpet shall sound the Day of Judgment, Clarel feels, alternately, assurance and then despair. The autumn image recalls a similar one in "Misgivings," one of the poems in Battle Pieces.

> Withdrawing to this quiet bay
> He felt a natural influence glide
> In lenitive through every vein,
> And reach the heart, lull heart and brain.
> The comrade old was by his side,
> And solace shared. But this would pass,
> Or dim eclipse would steal thereon,
> As over autumn's hill-side grass
> The cloud.
>
> (I,xx,71,72)

At the end of this canto, Nehemiah asks Clarel to visit him in his room. In "By Places" the route they take leads them through a narrow alley, through out-of-the-way places described as refuges where trapped beasts can die unmolested. Images

used to describe some of the wrecked houses they pass are similar to images in the coming Dead Sea section. Particularly,

> Dismantled, torn
> Haggard as Horeb, or the rock
> Named Hermit, antler of Cape Horn--
> (I,xxi,73)

is similar to images which immediately foreshadow Nehemiah's death. The description of Nehemiah's abode continues this pattern. The arched entrance, instead of being a gateway to heaven, is described as the mouth of some horrible beast; the keystone has become a fang.

> An arch, with key-stone slipped half-down
> Like a dropped jaw--they enter that;
> (I,xxii,74)

The beams of the ceiling (ceiling may here be an echo of Celio) are made of driftwood from wrecks on the coast of Joppa.

> Scant the live timber in that land.

Here the symbolic play on dead-live vegetation recalls a similar pattern in the story of the Choala widow in "The Encantadas" where the green cross becomes withered and desdicated.

Nehemiah plays a kind of Juliet's nurse or Pandarus role, for it is here the Clarel meets Ruth for the first time; formerly, he only caught a glimpse of her. The description of Ruth is important since it furthers her symbolic meaning.

> Hark! yea, she comes--my bird!"
> Cried Nehemiah who hailed the hap;
> "Yea, friend in Christ, quick now ye'll see
> God's messenger which feedeth me;"
> And rising to the expected tap
> He oped the door. Alone was seen
> Ruth with a napkin coarse yet clean,
> Folding a loaf. Therewith she bore

> A water-pitcher, nothing more.
> These alms, the snowy robe and free,
> The veil which hid each tress from sight,
> Might indicate a vestal white
> Or priestess of sweet charity.
> (I,xxii,75)

The water pitcher image is both sexual and religious. It brings in a suggestion of the Rebekah story in Genesis as a poignant and ironic implication of what is not to come.

> And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Kilcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.
>
> And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her; and she went down to the well, and lifted the pitcher and came up.[4]

Nehemiah refers to Ruth as a raven who brings daily bread to him, and he clearly means a reference to the passage in Kings where Elijah is fed by ravens, but the fact that Ruth taps on his door (the word, tap, is used, and also the expression of "nothing more"), seems to me a possible reference to another Beatrice figure, the lost Lenore of Poe's "The Raven." If so, the allusion works perfectly, and the white veil which covers the raven-hued tresses of Ruth fits the other white-black, light-dark patterns such as the movement from the white sail town of Ramleh to the purple pall of night in the opening passage, and the other white-black symbolism of Melville and Poe. One recalls that in Poe's poem the raven comes to perch on the "pallid bust of Pallas," symbol of the reasoning and

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[4]Gen. 24:15,16.

rational mind of the narrator, who learns that he will not meet the lost Lenore in the hereafter, and that there is no balm in Gilead. The pattern is somewhat like the way the dark and somber Bartleby confronts the plaster of Paris bust of Cicero, symbol of balanced law and order. In both poem and story, the narrators are faced with darknesses they cannot cope with (in "Bartleby" the meaning of darkness is quite different from Poe's poem). These light and dark patterns are closely related to gnosticism. In light of this, the fanged-serpent entrance to Nehemiah's room is important. In addition to being like the mouth of a serpent, the entrance suggests the female sexual orifice, and like the "Dantean gateway" in the "Tartarus of Maids" is meant to suggest the entrance to Hell. As in "The Man of Law's Tale" in Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales, female and serpent images are often combined in medieval and renaissance literature.

In a case of psychological projection made symbolic, Nehemiah makes fun of Nathan, Ruth's father, as a dreamer,

". . . Well, well! meseems--
Heaven help him; dreams, but dreams--dreams, dreams!

and in a lamia-like passage, later that night, Clarel, dreaming of Ruth, is awakened by Nehemiah's snoring and sees some unutterable evil (or perhaps it is something beyond good and evil) in the old man's face. The imagery suggests that ice has been penetrated. It is seen again only when the pilgrims see Nehemiah's face after he drowns himself, sleepwalking, in the Sea of Sodom.

but apace
He turned him, for he heard the breath,
The old man's breath in sleep. The face
Though tranced, struck not like trance of death
All rigid; not a masque like that,
Iced o'er, which none may penetrate,
Conjecturing of aught below.
Death freezes, but sleep thaws. And so
The inmate lay, some lines revealed--
Effaced, when life from sleep comes back.
And what their import? Be it sealed.
But Clarel felt as in affright
Did Eliphaz the Temanite
When passed the vision ere it spake.
(I,xxii,74,75)

In the cantos that follow, the growing love between Clarel and Ruth is compared to a budding rose which is here used symbolically as in Billy Budd, that symbolic story of innocence "nipped in the bud." But as Ruth's love is associated with water, doubt is associated with drouth, and sea images in these cantos are more and more replaced with desert and dessication images until love and desert combine in the arid moon as viewed through the telescope of science.

In his journal Melville described Jerusalem as

> The color of the whole city is grey & looks at you like a cold grey eye in a cold old man. [5]

The following passage presents probably the closest association of what is called in Part II "the oceanic sense" and love with desert imagery in all Clarel. Ruth, like Beatrice in Hawthorne's "Rappacini's Daughter," exists in a poisonous context, her kiss like that of Hawthorne's waterer of poisonous flowers is also dangerous and ocean is crossed by desert in her fatal gaze of love. Clarel is, of course, all innocence.

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[5]Leyda, op.cit., p. 546.

But by the sage was Clarel viewed
With stony and unfriendly look--
Fixed inquisition, hard to brook.
And that embarrassment he raised
The Rabbi marked, and colder gazed.
But in redemption from his glance--
For a benign deliverance--

On Clarel fell the virgin's eyes,
Pure home of all we seek and prize,
And caressing with their humid ray
The Levite's arid eyes of gray--
But skill is none to word the rest:
To Clarel's heart there came a swell
Like the first tide that ever pressed
Inland, and of a deep did tell.

(I,xxiii,78,79)

Following this canto, Clarel and Nehemiah encounter Margoth by the dung gate, the gate in the Jerusalem wall through which the Biblical Nehemiah, rebuilder of the walls of Jerusalem, went out by night in order to inspect them. Margoth's name probably contains two intended symbolic meanings. Bezanson interprets it to mean "to mar like a Goth," but it could also mean to mar the gothic; that is, the supernatural.[6] Margoth is the harsh scientific critic of religious faith, but his criticism is never given much weight in Clarel, and he is treated almost as a comic character. Significantly, the rest of this canto is filled with images of seas drying up and re-forming again. The possibility of a new ocean is suggested.

What object sensible to touch
Or quoted fact may faith rely on,
If faith confideth overmuch
That here's a monument in Zion:
Its substance ebbs--see, day and night
The sands subsiding from the height;

---

[6]See Bezanson's character sketch of Margoth in Clarel, p. 520.

> In time, absorbed, these grains may help
> To form new sea-bed, slug and kelp.
> (I,xxiv,81)

Thus the "oceanic sense" is never completely allowed to fade; there is always the possibility of a new ocean. Here the epilogue is prepared for, but the next canto takes up and symbolizes this particular evaporation. Clarel and Nehemiah pass through the gate of David and in a passage that recalls both The Old Testament and The Inferno, Clarel remarks that the encroaching sands are like a leopard creeping into the city, and he hears the cries of the damned. These are the lepers, suffering from a kind of dry rot. The ironic contrast between these damned bodies, condemned through no fault of their own and the lost souls of The Inferno, condemned because of sin, is the main intention here.

> The student mused: "The desert, see,
> It parts not here, but silently,
> Even like a leopard by our side,
> It seems to enter in with us--
> At home amid men's home would glide.
> But hark! That wail how dolorous;
> So grieve the soul in endless dearth!
> Yet sounds it human--of the earth.
> (I,xxiv,82)

The lepers signify the fate of Celio multiplied. Here are the real hollow men, and in this cactus land there is no longer any hope of Eliot's multifoliate rose. Melville could have placed on the Jerusalem wall the sign, "Abandon hope, all ye who cannot enter here." In a marvelously condensed image, Melville signifies their plight. Through the agency of Galileo, later referred to, the moon, symbol of love, has become a lifeless satellite with arid seas. The Church used to care for the

lepers in the Middle Ages, but now they are abandoned. Their symbol is a dried up lunar sea.

> That lava glen in Luna's sphere,
> More lone than any earthly one--
> Whereto they Tycho's name have given--
> Not more from visitant is riven
> Than this stone lane.
> (I,xxv,82)

And we learn in the next canto, "The Gate of Zion," that though Nehemiah seemingly ignores the lepers while showing Clarel various nameplaces important in the Gospel story, he is the only friend Toulib, one of the lepers, has left. Nehemiah, of course, is helpless and can do nothing really to help.

In the next canto, the pattern of Clarel as quest romance becomes more important. Both Ruth and her mother are in the Holy Land against their will. Agar, Ruth's mother, feels instinctively that she and her child are trapped in a wicked place. She longs to return to the New World, having come to Palestine with her husband from America.

> 'Twas not that Agar reasoned--nay,
> She did but feel, true woman's way.
> What solace from the desert win
> Far from known friends, familiar kin?
> How nearer God? The chanted Zion
> Showed graves, but graves to die on.
> (I,xxvii,89)

and Ruth as a child showed instinctive wisdom.

> Ruth, too, when here a child she came,
> Would blurt in reckless childhood's way,
> "'Tis a bad place."
> (I,xxvii,89)

Ruth is the chained princess in the tower.

> Restrictions of that Eastern code
> Immured the maiden. From abode
> Frequent nor distant she withdrew
> Except with Jewess, scarce with Jew.
>
> (I,xxviii,90)

And both Ruth and her mother look to Clarel as the prince-deliverer.

> --With Clarel seemed to come
> A waftage from the fields of home,
> Crossing the wind of Judah's sand,
> Reviving Agar, and of power
> To make the bud in Ruth expand
> With promise of unfolding hour.
>
> (I,xxvii,89,90)

But Clarel, instead of proposing marriage, continues to go about with Nehemiah and is lulled into a sort of contentment.

Immediately after we learn that Ruth is held capitve by the Hebrew faith, Clarel meets Vine. The name Vine is easily associated with Christ through the expression from the New Testament, "I am the true vine . . ." and the description of Vine is similar to the way Melville described Christ in the Gospels. As Nathalia Wright says:

> . . . His constant adjectives to describe the Gospels "meek" and mild"; Jesus is "beautiful" and "genial" but represented by the soft, curled, hemaphroditical Italian pictures. The picture is one of Renan; of Sabatien, who was recreating St. Francis of Assissi along the same lines; of St. Eremond, author of a sentence Melville copied on a flyleaf of his New Testament: "Who well considers the Christian religion would think that God meant to keep it in the dark from our understandings, and make it turn upon the motions of our hearts"; of Joubert, whose words, quoted by Arnold, Melville marked in his copy of Arnold's Essays: "the Old Testament teaches the knowledge of good and evil; the Gospel on the other hand seems written for the predestined; it is the book of innocence, the one

made for earth, the other for heaven." Clarel is full of such images.[7]

It is probably unnecessary to point out that this is the way Clarel is described at the beginning of the poem.

But Vine is no simple allegorical representation of Christ. As Bezanson notes, the vine is a rich image which occurs throughout the Bible and which may be given many meanings. The circumstances of Clarel's meeting with Vine have more than usual symbolic density. Whoever and whatever he is, Vine is destined to remain throughout the poem pretty much as he is introduced, a man of mystery, among other things a mysterious combination of Hebraism and Hellenism. The place where Clarel encounters him would seem to indicate that he is no ordinary Christ figure, since the Sepulcher of Kings is not the Holy Sepulcher.

> The twain were one mild morning led
> Out to a waste where beauty clings,
> Vining a grot how double dead:
> The rifled Sepulcher of Kings.
> Hewn from the rock a sunker space
> Conducts to garlands--fit for vase
> In sculptured frieze above a tomb:
> Palm leaves, pine apples, grapes. These bloom
> Involved in dearth--to puzzle us--
> As "twere thy line, Theocritus,
> Dark Joel's text of terror threading:
> Yes, strange that Pocahontas-wedding
> Of contraries in old belief--
> Hellenic cheer, Hebraic grief.
> The homicide Herods, men aver
> Inurned beneath that wreathage were.
>
> (I,xxviii,90,91)

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[7]Nathalia Wright, Melville's Use of the Bible (Durham: Duke University Press, 1949), pp. 112-113.

The religious seekers in Clarel long for a "grace beyond medallions," and in the passages describing Vine and Clarel's meeting with him, the word grace connects the description of Vine with the frieze.

> But who is he uncovered seen,
> Profound in shadow of the tomb
> Reclined, with meditative mien
> Intent upon the tracery?
> A low wind waves his Lydian hair:
> A funeral man, yet richly fair--
> Fair as the sabled violets be,
> The frieze and this secluded one,
> Retaining each a separate tone,
> Beauty yet harmonized in grace
> And contrast to the barren place.
> But noting that he was discerned,
> Salute the stranger made, then turned
> And shy passed forth in obvious state
> Of one who would keep separate.
> (I,xxviii,91)

Vine in "intent upon the tracery" of the sculptured tomb that possibly contains the remains of the Herods, and a few lines later Clarel "recalls / The colonnades that Herod traced"--In light of the description of Vine, the reference to Theocritus, the Greek pastoral poet, the Arnoldian reference to "Hellenic cheer, Hebraic grief" and reference to the homicide Herods, it is interesting to note the charges made against the enemies of Judah in The Book of Joel.

> And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.[8]

And,

> The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them from their border.[9]

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[8]Joel 3:3. [9]Joel 3:6.

Vine and fountain images are important in the short book and the imagery recalls the frieze that Vine is staring at when encountered.

> He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree . . ."

> The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered; because joy is withered away from the sons of men.[10]

> Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things.[11]

The fountain image is prominent in:

> And it shall come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim.[12]

After the emphasis on the tombs of the Herods, Clarel and Nehemiah see the Mosque of Omar as growing out of the temple of Solomon. Temples seem to fade into other temples. The thematic material suggested by the scenery is immediately enacted in a passage that looks forward to the closing stanza of Wallace Stevens' "Sunday Morning" with its tomb, porch and sun imagery.

> Anon
> A call he hears behind, in note
> Familiar, being man's remote
> No less, and strange in hollowed tone
> As 'twere a voice from out the tomb.
> A tomb it is; and he in gloom
> Of porch there biddeth them begone.

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[10]Joel 1:12. [11]Joel 1:21.

[12]Joel 3:18.

Clings to his knee a toddling one
Bewildered poising in wee hand
A pictured page--Nehemiah's boon--
He passive in the sun at stand.
Morosely then the Arab turns,
Snatches the gift, and drops and spurns.
(I, xxviii,92)

Here, "suffer the little children to come unto me for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" gets a savage ironic treatment, and the voice, which should be the voice of Christ, is merely the voice of a disgruntled Arab. Coming to the fountain of Siloam, they again encounter Vine; thus the shift from tomb to fountain parallels the death-rebirth pattern of Joel's prophecy. Here the fountain's chronic ebb and flow symbolize the cycle nature of the death and rebirth of the gods. Science explains what previously seemed miraculous, but we are told that,

Science explains it. Bides no less
The true, innate mysteriousness.
(I,xxviii,93)

This miracle, explained by science, is associated to the statue of Ammon Ra, king of the Egyptian gods, and linked to Zeus and Jupiter.

Did he but list the fountain moan
Like Ammon's in the Libyan wild,
For muse and oracle both gone?
(I,xxviii,93)

This reverie is broken and reduced to common reality by a pebble that drops down the stair and,

Siloam was but a rural well.
(I,xxvii,93)

The Christain and Egyptian gods juxtaposed here foreshadow the scene, several cantos later, where Rolfe connects the death and

rebirth of Christ with Osiris.

> Rolfe, in tone
> Half elegaic, thus went on:
> Phylae, upon thy sacred ground
> Osiris' broken tomb is found:
> A god how good, whose good proved vain--
> In strife with bullying Python slain.
> For long the ritual chant or moan
> Of pilgrims by that mystic stone
> Went up, even much as now ascend
> The liturgies of yearning prayer
> To one who met a kindred end--
> Christ, tombed in turn, and worshipped there,"
> And pointed.--"Hint you," here asked Vine,
> "In Christ Osiris met decline
> Anew?"--"Nay, nay; and yet past doubt,
> Strange is that text St. Matthew won
> From gray Hosea in sentence "Out
> Of Egypt have I called my son."
> Here Clarel spake, and with a stir
> Not all assured in eager plight:
> "But does not Matthew there refer
> Only to the return from flight,
> Flight, into Egypt?"--"May be so,"
> Said; "but then Hosea? Nay,
> We'll let it pass."--And fell delay of
> Talk; they mused.--
> (I,xxxi,105)

The above scene takes place on rocks above the garden of Gethsemane, the site of the betrayal, and has been carefully prepared for. After Vine is seen at the brook of Siloam, a whole canto is devoted to him.

Vine is described as a man who does not deny the physical senses, but at the same time does not feel that any ultimate happiness can be obtained through them. It is said that he may have a hidden "grace" underneath an unpolished surface. His subtle virtue is compared to the odors traditionally associated with angels, but he is no saint.

> Nay, the ripe flush, Venetian mould
> Evinced no nature saintly fine,
> But blood like swart Vesuvian wine.
> What cooled the current? Under cheer

Of opulent softness, resigned austere
Control of self. Flesh, but scarce pride,
Was curbed: desire was mortified;
But less indeed by moral sway
Than doubt if happiness through clay
Be reachable.
(I,xxix,95)

The narrator says,

Like to the nunnery's denizen
His virgin soul communed with men
But through a wicket.
(I,xxix,95)

As with Nehemiah, there is the hint of something unknown, perhaps some dark secret plagues him such as Miriam's secret in Hawthorne's The Marble Faun. He may be a recluse not so much from his own innate nature as from the debilitating effect of some past experience.

Was it clear
This coyness bordered not on fear--
Fear or an apprehensive sense?
Not wholly seemed it diffidence
Recluse. Nor less did strangely wind
Ambiguous elfishness behind
All that: an Ariel unknown.
(I,xxix,95)

The next canto, "The Site of the Passion," takes place in Gethsemane. This canto and the next two are packed with images that have been previously introduced. The wicket image used to describe Vine's relation to the outside world is now used to describe the entrance to the garden. The garden itself is associated not only with the Passion but also with the Garden of Eden. The convents which adjoin the garden are symbolic of what has been added to the Gospels.

In an earlier canto, sands of doubt entering the City of Faith are compared to a leopard. In this canto, after a

a passage that recapitulates the kiss of Judas and compares it to the kiss of a serpent, a pard, short for leopard, springs on Clarel.

> Ah, now the pard on Clarel springs.
> The Passion's narrative plants stings.
>
> (I,xxx,97)

Nehemiah has through this passage been staring at a passage in the gospel of St. John but is actually asleep, and when Clarel asks Nehemiah to read aloud to him so that his thoughts may be from the disbelief (Judas betrayal) that has been entering his mind, Nehemiah can only stare vacantly. Although the overt reference is to St. John, the leopard allusion is probably an allusion to both the leopard in Revelations and the leopard in Jeremiah, most probably the latter. If I read the passage correctly, concurrent with the leopard springing on Clarel, there is a pun on "pard on" signifying Clarel's pardoning of Judas. The passage from Jeremiah that is being played on is probably,

> Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities; every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.
>
> How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods; when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses.[13]

Here in the garden, Clarel, a backslider, betrays Christ just as Judas did before him, except that Clarel's betrayal takes the form of apathy. The rest of the canto is devoted to images

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[13]Jer. 5:6,7.

of the tourist playing the pilgrim. As in the poem, "To Ned," the tourist is referred to as Paul Pry. A mocking smile crosses Vine's face which shocks Clarel.

The next canto is devoted to introducing Rolfe and Rolfe's already discussed idea that Christ and Osiris may be examples of the same mythic pattern. It may be that Rolfe is a continuation of the beast imagery of Jeremiah. His name is Teutonic in origin and means "guarded by the wolf," since he plants ideas in Clarel's mind which can only lead to intellectualizing the backsliding that has already begun.

Though one of Rolfe's functions is to act as a catalytic agent to complete the destruction of Clarel's naive faith, as mentioned earlier, he is no atheist, and he constantly stresses the theme of continuity, the death and rebirth of the gods. He compares the present religious drouth to the time just before the appearance of Christ when no one but the slave and artisan could believe in the old gods. The tone of the Epilogue usually hovers over what Rolfe says.

> But why
> Crowd examples here; the gods were gone.
> Tully scarce dreamed they could be won
> Back into credence; less that earth
> Ever could know yet mightier birth
> Of deity. He died. Christ came.
> And, in due hour, that impious Rome,
> Emerging from vast wreck and shame,
> Held the fore-front of Christendom.
> The inference? the lesson?--come:
> Let fools count on faith's closing knell--
> Time, god, are inexhaustible.--
> (I,xxxi,106)

Rolfe, the second great test figure, has been introduced. Clarel is bewildered by Rolfe and strongly attracted to Vine.

> Their sway he owned. And yet how Vine--
> Who breathed few words, or gave dumb sign--
> Him more allured, suggestive more
> Of choicer treasure, rarer store
> Reserved, like Kidd's doubloons long sought
> Without the wand.
> (I,xxxi,106)

These are interesting images in light of the omnipresent sea-desert imagery. Kidd's treasure is, of course, pirate treasure, and though taken at sea, was buried, according to at least one popular legend, somewhere on the beaches of the Carolinas. As a symbol for the immature Clarel's attitude toward Vine it is rich in meaning. Not only does the treasure carry the aura of illegality, but the association of Kidd with popular stories for boys fits the idea that Melville is developing. There may even be a pun on Kidd's doubloon.

The next canto, "Of Rama," which, according to Bezanson, seems complete in itself and was possibly inserted into the poem after it was written, appears to me highly integrated and very much a part of the death-and-rebirth-of-the-gods theme that is being developed. It tells the story of Rama, the human embodiment of Vishnu the Preserver, who, when mankind was threatened by a great demon, volunteered to be born as a human savior of man. In his human incarnation he did not know that he was a god, but yet could sense his divine origin. The narrator asks if such persons may not be alive today, and the canto is devised so as to suggest that both Vine and Rolfe may be gods in disguise. This closing of the canto places more emphasis on Rolfe as a Rama figure than Vine. Gnostic ideas are present throughout this canto. For example, the mixture

of dark and light in the following lines which seem to suggest Vine:

> The innocent if lawless elf,
> Etherial in virginity,
> Retains the consciousness of self.
> Though black frost nip, though white frost chill,
> Nor white frost nor the black may kill
> The patient root, the vernal sense
> Surviving hard experience
> As grass the winter. Even that curse
> Which is the wormwood mixed with gall--
> Better dependent of worse--
> Divine upon the animal
> That cannot make such natures fall.
> (I,xxxii,108)

One cannot help noticing here how linking the death and rebirth of the god to fertility anticipates Eliot's "The Waste Land" and also how differently the images and ideas are treated. We are now at the heart of Clarel with this theme which is the most prevalent in all Melville: the agonizing discrepancy between man's intimation of his immortality and the impossibility of his either arriving at perfection on earth or imagining adequately a perfection after death. This is the dilemma of the woman in Wallace Stevens' "Sunday Morning." She feels the need of some "imperishable bliss," yet cannot imagine a state where death is not the mother of beauty. Yet where in "The Tartarus of Maids" all is blank and hopeless, here, gnostic ideas make for a more encouraging frame of mind.

> Mince ye some matter for faith's sake
> Heaven's good name? 'Tis these Rama characters,
> shall make
> Revolt there, and the gloss disclaim.
> (I,xxxii,108)

This analogy which closes the canto serves at least two functions: (1) It offers a hope that man may break down and

separate matter from spirit by leading the good life, and (2) it serves as a contrast to the buried treasure of Captain Kidd, the symbol which closes the preceding canto.

> The riches in them be a store
> Unmerchantable in the ore.
> No matter: "'Tis an open mine:
> Dig; find ye gold, why, make it thine.
> The shrewder knack has thou, the gift;
> Smelt then, and mold, and good go with thy thrift."
> (I,xxxii,108)

The narrator then hints that such a character may be in the poem, an open mine for Clarel. Since the "Kidd's doubloons" image is associated with Clarel's interest in Vine, the open mine image probably suggests the potential that Rolfe holds for Clarel.

The next two cantos contain Rolfe's sometimes lyric, sometimes ironic lament for the fate of Jerusalem. These passages bring together both Jesus's lament and the lamentations of Jeremiah which give irony and poignancy to Rolfe's quite different lament, since his is for the death of the Holy City through the higher criticism of the Bible. The stone referred to here is the same as the stone in the closing narrative section; it is the city and also it is the stone that was never rolled away from the tomb. These cantos also serve another function; they identify Rolfe, through association with the Hebrew prophets, as a Rama figure. Rolfe mourns not only the passing of Christian faith but all belief in the supernatural. Diana's moon is rapidly being reduced to a "clinkered blot," but,

> New things elate so thrust their birth
> Up through dejection of the old,
> As through dead sheaths; is here foretold
> The consummation of the past . . .
> (I,xxxiv,113)

All things change, are born anew, but the Lord of the Flies, Beelzebub, persists along with the good; there is always something that destroys Man's dream of Paradise.

Through these cantos, the pilgrims have been visiting key sites of the last days of the Passion. As a culmination of this they now go to the place where Christ was supposed to have ascended. Leaving Nehemiah, who is caught up in a revery of the Ascension, they pay customary notice to the footprint, supposedly made by Christ just as he left the earth. They then climb a pagan tower that marks the spot, a tower that enables them to see Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside. All are so struck by the dreary prospect that someone asks if Jerusalem isn't Dante's City of Dis above ground. Rolfe replies that it is more like an "Old, blurred, bewrinkled mezzotint," and compares it to the glen which "blacked the blood / O' the son of Kish." The allusion is to the glen of the Witch of Endor, visited by Saul before his destruction. The passage that immediately follows associates the Dead Sea with Jerusalem.

> Far peep they gain
> Of waters which in cauldron brood,
> Sunk mid the mounts of leaden bane:
> The Sodom Wave, or Putrid Sea,
> Or Lot's, or Death's Asphaltite,
> Or Asafoetida; all these
> Being names indeed with which they gyve
> Abhorred.
> (I,xxxvi,118)

If we look at the poem in terms of developing images, the scene where Clarel, Vine and Rolfe view Jerusalem and the Dead Sea simultaneously is the big crucial scene of the opening part of the poem. Here we get a clue as to why Vine must remain a mystery. Vine seems reminded of earlier disillusionment, some old catastrophe.

> With wordless look intent,
> As if the scene confirmed some thought
> Which in heart's lonelier hour was lent,
> Vine stood at gaze.
> (I,xxxvi,118)

We, of course, cannot be told what Vine's secret is. As a Rama figure, or as a present reincarnation of some older figure who fought the great battle, he probably has only vague intimations that he cannot put into words. Clarel senses that Vine, the true Vine, is part of the secret in the middle of the circle; that is why he immediately feels an affinity, love at first sight, the emotional way of the heart.

When Clarel, Vine and Rolfe come down from the tower, Nehemiah suggests they go on to Bethany, but they are in no mood to share the enthusiasm of the innocent old man. In the next canto, "A Sketch," Rolfe tells a tale about an old master mariner who is shipwrecked two times. After the first he is forced to cannibalism in order to survive. He returns to sea only to have a whale destroy his second ship, and though he survives, no one will trust him with a third venture and he is reduced to patrolling the shipyards in his native port. The tale presents a vague analogy to Melville's own literary ventures, but knowing this adds very little to the poem. The

tale's main purpose is to present Rolfe's speculations about the nature of Nehemiah's character, and the main theme here is the indomitable will of the old man. After his first wreck he tells his rescuers that he survived through sheer determination.

> 'Strong need'st thou be,' the rescuers said,
> 'Who hast such trial sole survived.'
> 'I willed it,' gasped he.
> (I,xxxvii,121)

Though designed to give some insight into the mysterious nature of Nehemiah, the sketch is much more a foreshadowing of Agath, an old salt who joins the pilgrim's caravan at the monastery of Mar Saba and who is a symbolic replacement for Nehemiah, destined for death in the Dead Sea. The key theme here is man's survival under almost hopeless conditions, and it foreshadows Agath's description of one of the islands in the Galapagos where the giant tortoise is the symbol of imprisoned life and also Clarel's violent, defiant cry when he learns of Ruth's death.

In the closing cantos of Part I, we learn that Ruth tidies up Nehemiah's room and, besides Clarel, seems the only one who brings comfort to the old man, and that Clarel's budding love for Ruth seems to remove some of her and her mother's misgivings about staying in the Holy Land. A symbolic trip by the mounds of the dead prefaces the death of Ruth's father who is killed by marauding Arabs. Cut off from visiting Ruth by Jewish custom, Clarel is invited to go on a trip to the Dead Sea and back by way of Bethlehem. Clarel wavers, not wanting to

leave Ruth. He has a vague presentiment of coming evil, but dismisses these fears as childish and decides to accompany Nehemiah, Vine, and Rolfe who, among others, will make up the caravan.

CHAPTER III

THE LOW DESERT AND THE TRANSIENT RAINBOW

Each section of Clarel prepares the way for the next so that what appears on first reading as random and arbitrary is found upon closer scrutiny to be connected and highly ordered. Parts II, III and IV present descending and ascending levels geographically and each of these levels is its own kind of desert. The action in each section presents and explores its own desert and at the same time prepares for the desert to come. Part II is a descent to "the low desert" that ends with the arrival of the pilgrims at the Dead Sea and the death of Nehemiah. Part III is a trip to "the high desert" at Mar Saba and ends with the death of Mortmain. Part IV is a still higher desert and in a sense encompasses all that has gone before, gives further meaning to it, comes to a crisis in a snare that traps Clarel, and concludes with the symbolic deaths of Ruth and Agar and a final glimpse of Clarel.

Although there are repetitive patterns throughout the whole poem, Parts II and III are constructed so that they especially present repetitive and constrastive patterns. They have something of the same sort of balancing effect found in the diptych stories though here the diptych pattern is subordinated to the larger whole. Thus, though both parts share in the typical symbols found throughout the entire poem, each

has its particular symbol-image complex wherein certain symbols receive particular emphasis. Images of traps and snares are frequent in Part II and are set against the rainbow, God's covenant, a recurrent image throughout. Images of the sun open and close Part III and closely related to this sun imagery are images of light and fire which, though present in Part II, receive striking symbolic use in Part III where they are set against the Palm, symbol of redemption.

The dramatic action in both parts is to a certain extent parallel. In both parts somewhere close to the beginning there is emphasis on a character concerned with the free and easy life. In Part I, Glaucon, and his father-in-law, a banker, afraid of robbers, turn back from the pilgrimage and are thus going in opposite direction from the pilgrims; in Part II the pilgrims encounter the Cypriote, another hedonistic figure, who is returning from Mar Saba. Each section ends with a death that seems to mark the end of an extreme course that Clarel cannot take, and just before each death there is a temptation episode that is traumatic for Clarel, and, finally, both sections taken together move something in the manner of the musical form known as the crab-canon where a theme moves forward and then turns on itself and occurs backward. The journey up to Mar Saba tends to repeat in reverse the journey to the Dead Sea while at the same time presenting a parallel pattern.

Part I is a journey to the low desert. The temptations presented in this section are carnal, materialistic,

the sins associated traditionally with Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet toward the end of Part I we learn that the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were not only sins of the flesh and sins of greed but also dark, inscrutable sins, sins that cannot be named but can be thought of as close to pure evil. One thinks of Claggart, the symbol of Natural Depravity in Billy Budd. Melville uses the phrase "formal will" to suggest these sins, and it is the effort to impose the will over nature that distinguishes Melville's monomaniac figures. Rolfe's tale in Part I about the often-shipwrecked mariner as a possible clue to the earlier life of Nehemiah, and the strange look that Clarel sees in Nehemiah's face when Nehemiah is asleep would seem to include even that gentle figure as one who at one time had an incredibly strong will.

In Part I the images are so placed as to suggest the Sea of Faith is gradually shrinking to the size of the Dead Sea. Just as Chaucer's Canterbury Tales may be regarded on one level as a journey to the Heavenly City in which all the characters may be measured by the standards set up in the Parson's Homily so the pilgrims in Clarel are journeying toward not the Heavenly City but the Dead Sea. Melville makes the ironic contrast explicit.

> Not from brave Chaucer's Tabard Inn
> They pictured wend; scarcely shall they win
> Fair Kent, and Canterbury ken;
> Nor franklin, squire, nor morris-dance
> Of wit and story good as then:
> Another age, and other men,
> And life an unfulfilled romance. (II, i, 141)

The canto presents a gallery of character types which parallel to a certain extent those in the famous Prologue. In addition to Vine, Rolfe and Nehemiah, we are introduced to two important characters, Derwent, a liberal churchman, and Mortmain, a disillusioned revolutionary. Derwent, in a passage that recalls "The Paradise of Bachelors," is likened to a Templar.

> A priest he was--though but in part;
> For as the Templar old combined
> The cavalier and monk in one;
> In Derwent likewise might you find
> The secular and cleric tone. (II, i,142)

The opening canto says little about Mortmain but the next canto immediately focuses on the black skull cap he wears, which symbolizes his despair. Other characters include a banker and his son-in-law already mentioned. The description of the ass which Nehemiah rides is related to the passage in The Encantadas that describes Hunilla riding into her native village.

> The ass, pearl gray,
> Matched well the rider's garb in hue,
> And sorted with the ashy way;
> Upon her shoulders' jointed play
> The white cross gleamed, which the untrue
> Yet innocent fair legends say,
> Memorializes Christ our Lord
> When Him with palms the throngs adored
> Upon the foal. (II,i,146)

As the pilgrims move toward the Dead Sea the poem focuses on several important Biblical sites. Of these, four have special symbolic importance: Gethsemane; Jericho, where the pilgrims see the Mount of Temptation; a stop by the Jordan river, presumably where John baptized Christ, and the shore of the Dead Sea.

Perhaps the stop at Gethsemane is most important because once again it deals with the Judas kiss. In Part I, the kiss of Judas is connected with the Leopard and more important with the serpent. Here, Mortmain describes it as the kiss of a woman.

> O abyss!
> Here, upon what was erst the sod,
> A man betrayed the yearning god;
> A man, yet with a woman's kiss. (II,iii,153)

This accretion of leopard, serpent, woman is, I think, importantly related to the celibate canto in Part III and Clarel's crucial decision to marry Ruth after he has been influenced by the prodigal Lyonese.

This part of Clarel is filled with dismal images, and the images get more and more bleak and devilish as the pilgrims near the Dead Sea. Images of the desert-ocean continue to appear and what is implicit in Part I is suddenly made much more explicit. Canto xi, "Of Deserts," is a little treatise on the nature of this mystery. Here the phrase, "Sands immense, impart the oceanic sense," gives a clear connection to the image complex and what comes before and after in the canto develops the import of this phrase. Palestine is compared to ruins in Egypt, and to unspecified places of worship constructed to honor havoc, supposedly created by the thunderbolts of Jove. In a rather roundabout way the oceanic sense is related to the god of the Hebrews and Christians in this canto. It is said that the sands create an oceanic sense for the faithful Moslems who make their pilgrimage from Cairo to Mecca. The faithful also see pillars of sand which as they whirl seem like water

spouts. This not only further connects the sea-desert imagery but suggests the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day by which the Lord led the people of Israel. However, the image of the caravan travelling to Mecca is not presented in pleasant pictures.

> With storm, see there the caravan
> Straggling long-drawn, dispirited;
> Mark how it labors like a fleet
> Dismasted, which the cross-winds fan
> In crippled disaster of retreat
> From battle. (II,xi,178)

The whole canto places emphasis on the fact that though there is something wondrous and strange and even beautiful about deserts and desert places, they always have something dreadful about them, as though they are places where great destruction has taken place and where destruction may still await the traveller. The desert, like the ocean in Moby-Dick, holds traps for the unwary. The closing lines of this canto are important for their ironic foreshadowing of the fate that awaits Nehemiah. The desert has traps,

> But to pure hearts it yields no fear;
> And John, he found wild honey here. (II,xi,179)

But John the Baptist was at home in the desert, and the honey referred to in the poem is not only the locusts and wild honey that John ate but Christ himself.

Part II is named "The Wilderness" and Christ was the voice crying in the wilderness who received no answer. Now it is the pilgrims who cry out for some sign of God but receive none, but it is clear that this desert is all deserts and these pilgrims are all pilgrims of the modern world who would

see a sign. As the narrator says, John was pure in heart, but who now is pure when such purity seems a fraudulent over-simplification of life.

As the pilgrims near the Dead Sea the wasteland images occur with greater frequency and intensity, and images of devils and reptiles, both natural and supernatural, are added, as well as night and fog. As a counter to these, the arch, almost always treated ironically in Part I, becomes linked to the rainbow, obviously meant to recall God's promise to Noah after the Flood. This image, introduced early in Canto iv, "Of Mortmain," is repeated ambiguously at the end of Part II. Here, it is linked to the oceanic sense.

Mortmain, disgusted at what has happened to the high hope of the French revolutions, has come to hate man and doubt God. Like Nehemiah he is destined for death. The rainbow, which shows as a pale transient image, fading with the coming of the sun's rays, is presented here as a hope for Mortmain. Derwent, the eternal optimist, says after one of Mortmain's bitter speeches,

> "...One fine day
> I saw at sea, by bit of deck--
> Weedy--adrift from far away--
> The dolphin in his gambol light
> Through showery spray, arch into sight:
> He flung a rainbow o'er that wreck." (II,iv,158)

The Mortmain canto is a microcosm of a larger pattern often found in the later Melville; that is, a patterned sequence of illusion, disillusion and a suggested but only suggested hope of redemption. Thus it is somewhat like the larger but similar

pattern found in Billy Budd. There Melville connects the political fate of man with the fate of man as individual just as he attempted to do in Mardi. At the beginning of Billy Budd the "crisis for Christendom," namely the French Revolution, is said to have finally meant a political advance in most of the countries in Europe, and this sets the pattern for the whole story, so that Billy Budd when he is finally victimized by the very forces that Captain Vere is officially warring against--Benthamite Utilitarianism lifted to the level of madness through the pressures of expediency--is made the hope, the rainbow over the wreck, so to speak, by which mankind can possibly justify the nature of this life. This symbolic treatment of what, in connection with Battle Pieces, Robert Penn Warren has called Melville's historical meliorism, is an important part of Clarel in that it follows and in a sense defines the largest, the most inclusive, pattern in the poem. The political dialectic to which Clarel is a witness and which is similar to the battles between Settimbrini and Naptha which are educative for Hans Castorp in The Magic Mountain is very much relevant to Clarel's fate. Later, the political arguments announced by Mortmain are developed much more fully; here Rolfe presents the melioristic nature of this dialectic, while he is musing on Mortmain's nature.

> The flood weaves out--the ebb
> Weaves back; the incessant shuttle shifts
> And flies, and wears and tears [italics mine] the webb,
> Turn, turn thee to the proof that sifts:
> What if the kings in Forty-Eight
> Fled like the gods? even as the gods

Shall do, return they made; and sate
And fortified their strong abodes;
And to conform them there in state,
Contrived new slogans, apt to please--
Pan and the tribal unites.
Behind all this still works some power
Unknowable, thou'lt yet adore.
That steers the world, not man. (II,iv,157)

Here, the "ebb and flow of human misery" of "Dover Beach" is changed so as to suggest that each ebb and flow is like a shuttle which though it weaves yet at the same time tears the veil. This expression of Rolfe is not the final stance of the poem, despite the epilogue; yet it is the furthest that hope is allowed to travel, and it is a step further than Clarel is able to come at the end of the poem.

The canto which follows is important because it presents the fate that Clarel will finally succumb to. Glaucon, a hedonistic Greek who is a short time later to desert the pilgrims because he, like the banker, is afraid of robbers, tries to make friends with Clarel. Greek though he is, Glaucon has no knowledge of the past. Like the Lyonese he is not concerned with the past. When Clarel mentions Homer, Glaucon remembers someone by that name who was a fig dealer. He is interested solely in commerce and the hedonistic life and is somewhat similar to Eliot's Phlebas, the Phoenician sailor in "The Waste Land." His name is probably an ironic allusion to Glaucon in the Symposium because the Glaucon there wants to hear about the famous dialogue on love and thus learn about the true nature of love as presented by Socrates.[1]

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[1]But see Bezanson's character sketch of Glaucon in Clarel, p. 539.

This Glaucon is soon to be married and his song treats contemptuously not only the arch and rainbow images but the general descriptive imagery used to describe Ruth and, later, Vine. The flower girl in his song is another ironic Beatrice. Significantly she is from Florence.

'She's handsome as a jewled priest
    In ephod on the festa,
And each poor blade like me must needs
    Idolize and detest her.

'With rain-beads on her odorous hair
    From gardens after showers,
All bloom and dew she trips along,
    Intent on selling flowers.

'She beams--they rainbow of the bridge;
    But, ah, my blank abhorrence
She button holes me with a rose,
    This flower-girl of Florence.

'My friends standby'; and, 'There!' she says--
    An angel arch, a sinner:
I grudge to pay, but pay I must,
    Then--dine on half a dinner!'-- (II,v,160)

The next two cantos, develop, among other things, a contrast between Nehemiah and the pearl gray ass he rides and Djalea, the mysterious druze, who is the native guide for the pilgrims, and his mare. Nehemiah, along with the other pilgrims, is going in the opposite direction on the route Jesus took when he entered Jerusalem on the day celebrated as Palm Sunday. The relation between Nehemiah and his mount is a forced unatural affair.

In absent-mindedness afloat,
And dreaming of his fairy-land
Nehemiah smooths the ass's coat. (II,vi,162)

Later, the ass will stamp its feet on the river palm that Nehemiah has tried to fasten to the animal's ear, imprinting

the palm in the dust. In the initial description of the druze's mare the imagery bears a close relation to the imagery used to describe Ruth in Part I and Vine as Vine appears to Clarel in the temptation scene in Part II.

> But nature made her rich amends
> For art's default: full eye of flame
> Tempered in softness, which became
> Womanly sometimes, in desire
> To be caressed; ears fine to know
> Least intimation, catch a hint
> As tinder takes the spark from flint
> And steel. Veil-like her clear attire
> Of silvery hair, with speckled show
> Of grayish spots, and ample flow
> Of milky mane. (II,vii,163)

Djalea enjoys a harmonious relation with his mount that Nehemiah does not and the implication is that Nehemiah is willfully out of touch with nature.

As the pilgrims go through Adommin, associated with the parable of the Good Samaritan, there is the threat of robbers. The contrasting of Nehemiah and the druze is further pointed up when as Djalea prepares for danger, Nehemiah goes to him and reminds him that heaven will take care of the innocent.

> "He," said the meek one going on,
> Naught heeding but the tale he spun,
> He, when he saw him in the snare
> He had compassion;..." (II,ix,168)

The druze does not understand the reference but bows as an oriental would bow to one judged insane. Vine reminds Nehemiah that in addition to the good Samaritan there was also a Levite and a priest who offered no aid to the robbed and beaten man, but Nehemiah replies,

> "Whom God forgive," he mild replied
> "As I forget"; (II,ix,169)

To point up Nehemiah's lack of caution there immediately follows one of Melville's favorite images. Some prowlers are sighted just over a ridge. They cannot be seen but their spear points are compared to the dorsal fins of sharks, tell-tale signs of the ravenous monsters of the deep. Clarel gets a sharp sense of danger and this is given extensional meaning to apply to the whole journey.

> Like dorsal fins of sharks they show
> When upright these divide the wave
> And peer above, while down in grave
> Of waters, slide the body lean
> And charnel mouth.
> With thoughtful mien
> The student fared, nor might withstand
> The something dubious in the Holy Land. (II,ix,169)

When the group arrive at Achor, Vine's description of the Mount of Temptation is an ironic commentary on the Devil's temptation of Christ. The imagery here parallels the imagery in Melville's poem, "The Berg," and once again we get the ice imagery earlier used to describe Jerusalem. Vine points out that while it may have once been the home of robbers now it shows no "claw of hostile purpose." They arrive at a fountain beneath the mountain and Mortmain, for some undisclosed purpose, decides to spend the night on the mountain and join the group later at the Dead Sea. Presumably he wishes to be on the exact spot where Christ was tempted, and his turning from the regular route to this peak foreshadows his death on a crag at Mar Saba. When he first sees the mountain he says,

> "Ah, from your deep
> Turn ye, appeal ye to the steep?
> But that looks off, and everywhere
> Describes but worlds more waste, more bare,"
> (II,xiv,187)

Mortmain's level of aspiration, his desire to scale the heights from which he will measure the extent of the depth insofar as he can, makes him a contrasting figure to Nehemiah. Derwent, the liberal churchman, pities him as a "poor realist," and this designation helps define the powerful stature he has in the value framework of the poem.

During the next several cantos, the pilgrims stop over night in Jericho where they meet a Syrian monk who has at some time past dwelt in solitude on the Mount of Temptation. Allusions proliferate but the most easily discernible pattern is a reference to the Ancient Mariner of Coleridge merged with the pattern of The Temptation. This is most clearly seen in the lines,

> First fell; there first I saw this world;
> And scarce man's place it seemed to be;
> (II,xviii,199)

And,

> Then came and stood
> The Saviour there--the Imp and He;
> Fair showed the Fiend--found enemy
> But, ah, the Other pale and dim:
> I saw but as the shade of Him.
> That passed. Again I saw alone--
> Alone--ah, no--not long alone:
> As glides into dead grass the snake
> Lean rustling from the bedded brake,
> A spirit entered me. (II,xviii,199)

The monk, we learn, was able to resist the tempter but received no assurance as to the nature of God's relation to man. When Rolfe asks the monk if he was able to experience any peace of mind through this solitude in the desert, the monk, unlike the Ancient Mariner, has no message and departs. Later, looking

back, we can see that though we have not been privy to Mortmain's experience on the Mount of Temptation, the revelation of the monk is a kind of symbolic analogue to what Mortmain has supposedly experienced, and this experience stands as a kind of summation of Mortmain's vision.

As the monk disappears, Rolfe and Vine see Margoth, an atheistic Jewish geologist, who joins them for the trip to the Dead Sea and then remains there, presumably for further geological exploration when the pilgrims depart. Margoth exists as a character and takes part in the intellectual debate, particularly the one concerning the efficacy of Rome as a spiritual power, and his joining the group at this point is symbolically fitting. Earlier he appears at the Dung Gate when Clarel and Nehemiah make their trip to see the lepers. There, he cries out, "What city is this," and Nehemiah, who is at the place where the Biblical Nehemiah went out to inspect the city walls to see about restoring them, thinks that this is a fulfillment of a passage from Lamentations,

> All that pass by clap their hands
> At thee: they hiss, and wag the head,
> Saying, Is this the city? (I,xxiv,81)

Nehemiah fails to see the irony in his own observation. Margoth's appearance near the Dead Sea signals the destruction of Nehemiah and the kind of blind acceptance of scripture that he represents.

After several cantos largely given over to theological debate the pilgrims pause to rest at the Jordan river where presumably Christ was baptized by John. The "Vine and

Clarel" canto that follows is one of the most mysterious and yet crucial in the entire poem. Throughout the poem Clarel is largely a passive figure, the observer, the absorber of events. Here, he takes one of his two decisive actions. From his first meeting with Vine he feels strongly attracted to him, and here at the Jordan, forgetting momentarily about Ruth, he tries to unite with Vine.

This canto has been carefully prepared for by the theological debate that has just preceded this. Canto xxvi, "Of Rome" debates the strengths and weaknesses of Rome as an "oceanic" power and also discusses the strengths and weaknesses of monasticism. Derwent condemns monasticism and says that Rome is not the true Vine.

> "Tis scarce <u>that</u> vine which doth unlock
> The fragrance that you hint of. No,
> The Latin plant don't flourish so;
> Of sad distemper 'tis the seat;
> Pry close, and startled you shall meet
> Parasite bugs--black swarming ones."
> "The monks?"--
>
> (II,xxvi,235)

Later, in Part III, when Clarel feels the attraction of celibacy, his experience with Vine will come back to him. At the end of this theological debate the pilgrims stop for a noon siesta at the Jordan river and the Vine-Clarel canto comes immediately after.

The whole canto suggests the evocation of a magic hypnotic spell. Tone and imagery are very similar to a poem from Melville's later volume, <u>Timoleon</u>, "In a Bye-Canal," where the speaker of the poem encounters, unexpectedly, a den of prostitutes. They are called sirens and are described

with unmistakable ophidiaphobic imagery; they are serpents of evil. The following quotation from the above mentioned poem will help to establish to what extent Clarel is acting out the role of Devil's agent.

> A swoon of noon, a trance of tide,
> The hushed siesta brooding wide
> Like calms far off Peru:
> No floating wayfarer in sight,
> Dumb noon, and haunted like the night
> When Jael the wiled one slew.
> A languid impulse from the oar
> Plied by my indolent gondolier
> Tinkles against a palace hoar,
> And, hark, response I hear!
> A lattice clicks' and lo, I see
> Between the slats, mute summoning me,
> What loveliest eyes of scintillation,
> What basilisk glance of conjuration!
> Fronted I have, part taken the span
> Of portents in nature and peril in man.
> I have swum--I have been
> Twixt the whale's black flukes
> and the white shark's fin!
> The enemy's deserts have wandered in,
> And there have turned, have turned and scanned,
> Following me how noiselessly,
> Envy and Slander, lepers hand in hand.
> All this. But at the latticed eye--...[2]

This serpent imagery occurs in several key places in the Vine-Clarel canto.

In the following passage from Clarel, the willow, traditionally associated with unrequited love, is substituted for the palm. This image and the reference to Greek wine are used to introduce the theme of sybaritic hedonisn and merge it with the religious.

> While now, to serve the pilgrim train,
> The Arabs willow branches hew
> (For palms they serve in dearth of true),

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[2]Melville, Collected Poems, p. 239.

Or, kneeling by the margin, stoop
To brim memorial bottles up;
And the Greek's wine entices two:
Apart see Clarel here incline,
Perplexed by that Dominican,
Nor less by Rolfe--capricious man:
"I cannot penetrate him.--Vine?" (II,xxvii,235)

Notice, also, how in the following the sea-desert imagery is associated with the willow image as the willows overhang the waters of the Jordan just before they flow into the Dead Sea. The use of "madcaps," most likely derived from Shakespeare's history plays where it is used to describe Falstaff and Prince Hal (see Melville's short poems, "Madcaps" and "Prince Hal"), gives a tone strangely incongruous with the "Venetian slats" imagery.[3]

As were Venetian slats between,
He espied him through a leafty screen,
Luxurious there in umbrage thrown,
Light sprays above his temples blown--
The river through the green retreat
Hurrying, reveling by his feet.
Vine looked an overture, but said
Nothing, till Clarel leaned--half laid--
Beside him: then, "We dream, or be
In sylvan John's baptistery:
May Pisa's equal beauty keep?--
But how bad habits persevere!
I have been moralizing here
Like any imbecile: as thus:
Look how there willows over-weep
The waves, and plain: "Fleet so from us?
And wherefore? whitherward away?
Your best is here where wildings sway
And the light shadow's blown about;
Ah, tarry, for at hand's a sea
Whence ye shall never issue out
Once in.' They sing back 'So let be!
We mad-caps hymn it as we flow
Short life and merry! be it so!'" (II,xxvii,235,236)

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[3] Ibid., pp. 263 and 382.

Vine is, at least in some respects, an alternate figure for Ruth. Just as she is a black raven, Vine is a white swan. Knowing Melville's attitude toward Shakespeare as expressed in his essay on Hawthorne where he compares Hawthorne to Shakespeare, and his poem in Battle Pieces where in the final stanza he expresses the idea that to penetrate Shakespeare is to penetrate the secret of man, helps us to see that he means to connect Vine with Shakespeare at this point. As in the descriptions of Ruth, Vine is here presented as virginal.

> Pure as the rain
> Which diamondeth with lucid grain,
> The white swan in the April hours
> Floating between two sunny showers
> Upon the lake, while buds unroll;
> So pure, so virginal in shrine
> Of true unworldliness looked Vine.
> (Mused Clarel), holding him in view.
> Prior advances unreturned
> Not here he recked of, while he yearned--
> O, now but for communion true
> And close; let go each alien theme;
> Give me thyself! (II,xxvii,237)

Here, Clarel plays the role of the tempter and his asking for the self of Vine is analogous to the Devil's temptation of Christ. Throughout this passage Vine has not been paying attention to Clarel's overtures but has been directing Clarel's attention to the druze, Djalea, head guard of the pilgrimage. Djalea, sometimes called Lord Djalea, is developed throughout Clarel as a mysterious figure, having many of the traits of Vine himself. He is withdrawn, taciturn, gives the feeling of being self-sustained; however, unlike Vine, he is a prince, the son of an Emir. Later in the poem, when he emerges as one of the ideals,

he is ironically likened to Christ as he is called "the Prince of pith." In this passage he is called a son of Hagar and is thus singled out as an Ishmael, noble exile who knows how to conduct himself in a royal manner even though he has been cast into the desert and in a non-royal role. Vine says to Clarel,

> "Look; in yon leafy dark,
> At deep end lit by gemmy spark
> Of melowed sunbean in a snare;
> Over the stream--ay, just though there--
> The sheik on that celestial mare
> Shot, fading.--Clan of outcast Hagar,
> Well do ye come by spear and dagger!
> Yet in your bearing ye outvie
> Our western Red Men, chief that stalk
> In mud paint--whirl the tomahawk.--
> But in the Nimrods noted you
> The natural language of the eye,
> Burning or liquid, flame or dew,
> As still the changeable quick mood
> Made transit in the wayward blood?
> Methought therein one might espy,
> For all the wildness, thought refined
> By the old Asia's dreamful mind;
> But hark--a bird? (II,xxvii,236)

Clarel, intent on capturing Vine, continues his overtures, while Vine continues to praise the druze and his like as fighters against crude nature. Crude nature in the following passage is the crude nature of The Encantadas, and the failure of the New World to escape the errors of the old in the combating of crude nature is developed later at length in Part IV. Here Vine says,

> But, as men stray
> Further from Ararat away
> Pity it were did they recede
> In carriage, manner, and the rest;
> But no, for ours the palm indeed
> In bland amenities far West!
> Come now, for pastime let's complain;
> Grudged thanks, Columbus, for thy main!

Put back, as 'twere--assigned by fate
To fight crude Nature o'er again,
By slow degrees we re-create. (II,xxvii,237,238)

Clarel, at this point, makes his overtures more overt.

Divided mind knew Clarel here;
The heart's desire did interfere.
Thought he, How pleasant in another
Such sallies, or in thee, if said
After confiding that should wed
Our soul in one:--Ah, call me brother!
So feminine his passionate mood
Which, long as hungering unfed,
All else rejected or withstood.
Some inklings he let fall. But no:
Here over Vine there slid a change--
A shadow, such as thin may show
Gliding along the mountain-range
And deepening in the gorge below. (II,xxvii,238)

The narrator takes over at this point and interprets Vine's rebuke as,

Why, on this vernal bank to-day
Why bring oblations of thy pain
To one who hath his share? here fain
Would lap him in a chance reprieve?
Lives none can help ye; that believe.
Art thou the first soul tried by doubt?
Shalt prove the last? Go, live it out.
But for thy fonder dream of love
In man toward man--the soul's caress--
The negatives of flesh should prove
Analogies of non-cordialness
In spirit. (II,xxvii,238)

Clarel, looking up suddenly at Vine, thinks that Vine may be the tempter, indulging in the pastime of Pride. The conjuration imagery recurs.

But glancing up, unwarned he saw
What serious softness in those eyes
Bent on him. Shyly they withdraw.
Enslaver, wouldst thou but fool me
With bitter-sweet, sly sorcery,
Pride's pastime? or wouldst thou indeed,
Since things unspoken may impede,
Let flow thy nature but for bar?

The imagery anticipates a passage in Billy Budd where the narrator describes the nature of Claggart's contemplation of Billy.

> Then would Claggart look like the man of sorrows. Yes, and sometimes the melancholy expression would have in it a touch of soft yearning, as if Claggart could even have loved Billy but for fate and ban. But this was an evanescence, and quickly repented of, as it were, by an immitigable look, pinching and shrivelling the visage into the momentary semblance of a wrinkled walnut. But sometimes catching sight in advance of the foretopman coming in his direction, he would, upon their nearing, step aside a little to let him pass, dwelling upon Billy for the moment with the glittering dental satire of a Guise.[4]

There is here then, a blurring of Christ and Devil imagery. There are temptations and snares in this desert but exactly where they are is not easily determined. Catching himself, Clarel recoils, realizing, at least momentarily, that the temptation has been within himself.

> Nay, dizzard, sick these feelings are;
> How findest place within thy heart
> For such solicitudes apart
> From Ruth?--Self taxings. (II,xxvii,239)

"Self-taxings" is meant here as self depletion, loss of self, and it is just this that Clarel will find attractive in the Celibate canto in Part III.

In imagery that parallels the passage which describes the druze, just discussed, Vine now indicates and describes the praying figure of Nehemiah. Where the druze was lit by a "gemmy spark of mellowed sunbeam in a snare" Nehemiah is lit by a "golden shaft of mellow light" which is likened to the Holy Ghost's descending on Christ at the river Jordan. It

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[4]Melville, Selected Writings of Herman Melville, pp. 855-856.

is described, however, as a "transient ray," and though Nehemiah seems to take comfort from it we are given a clue that all may not be well. All the pilgrims except Margoth bear the river palms but when Nehemiah tries to festoon the ass with his palm the ass shakes it off and stamps it in the dust. Margoth, noting that Vine has a look of compassion for the old man, asks Vine how he can have regard for the "chief of sinners" since that is what Nehemiah calls himself, and this question goes unanswered as the pilgrims wind their way through fog to the edge of the Dead Sea which the narrator calls "Pluto's Park."

As the pilgrims approach the Dead Sea the imagery becomes even more demonic and pestilential, and as they argue about various interpretations of Biblical texts concerning the surrounding terrain they suddenly see a beautiful rainbow caused by the fog. This is a development of the image that Derwent has used earlier. Derwent is cheered and says that a rose lies on the coffin, but Vine's remark to Clarel is ambiguous and seems to contain a warning.

> For Vine, over him suffusive stole
> An efflorescence; all the soul
> Flowering in flush upon the brow.
> But 'twas ambiguously replaced
> In words addressed to Clarel now--
> "Yonder the arch dips in the waste;
> Thiter! and win the pouch of gold."
> (II,xxix,246)

Clarel tries to think of Ruth but can only think of death. By this time the rainbow or fogbow has faded.

Margoth gives a scientific geological account of the

formation of the sea to counter the association of the sea with the fate of the Cities of the Plain, but his explanations are interrupted by the he-hawing of Nehemiah's ass, as though God were speaking through a counterpart of Balaam's ass, mocking man's scientific explanation of the past. Mortmain appears and he is described with imagery similar to that used in the opening of "The Tartarus of Maids."

> Like Hecla ice inveined with marl
> And frozen cinders showed his face
> Rigid and darkened. (II,xxxiv,259)

He comes as a kind of prophet crying for sinners to repent, and Rolfe calls him a mad John the Baptist crying in the Wilderness.

Part II comes to a close after the pilgrims discover that Nehemiah, walking in his sleep, has drowned in the Dead Sea. Before this, however, several important images are given prominence. In the dark night the pilgrims see a red star and it is labeled the Star of Wormwood from Revelations and there is also an oblique reference to the Scorpion, also a symbol of evil in Revelations.

Nehemiah walks into the Dead Sea thinking he has arrived at the New Jerusalem. Images traditionally associated with evil occur and are now directly associated with evil. The pilgrims find him and bury him with his Bible in a shallow grave. After a short ceremony, similar to the kind performed at sea to bury a sailor, they close the grave. Suddenly there is an avalanche suggesting the falling of rocks as in Revelations and then the fogbow is seen once again but

only in part, a segment of a rainbow. It is pale and colorless and fades away.

Looking back over Part II we see that while the images associated with evil pile up and become more intense, the rainbow, God's covenant, is at first pure and brilliant, associated with the dolphin, a friendly creature; still brilliant when the pilgrims see it where it is engendered by fog; and pale, colorless and broken after Nehemiah's death.

CHAPTER IV

THE HIGH DESERT AND THE PALM OF HEAVEN

After burying Nehemiah, the pilgrims journey to the monastery at Mar Saba. In one sense this may be thought of as the Purgatorio section of Clarel, but the treatment is ironic and this is a purgatorio manqué. Instead of a sure stage on the way to purification, "Mar Saba" continues the aura of ambiguity and sense of doom found in "The Wilderness." Just as the preceding section is the low desert and is to a large extent associated with the low passions of hedonism, particularly as they are held out as a lure to Clarel, this part, the high desert, is the desert of asceticism, or as the poem expresses it, "the pure desert of the will," and there is no sure, guaranteed salvation through this route even though for some it seems to offer a kind of inner peace.

In the basic sea-desert imagery of the poem, the monastery is both an island and an oasis and as such is at least a temporary haven from the desert, but the exact nature of this island-oasis is ambiguous and through a concatenation of imagery Melville creates the feeling that this haven may be merely a mirage. Just as the island refuge for the sailor is most likely to be a palm tree island in the ocean and the oasis a grove of palm trees surrounding a source of water, just so the central symbol of the towering monastery is a date palm

growing on a ledge at the monastery. Although the key association of the Mar Saba palm is with the palms seen in St. John's vision of heaven in Revelations, this palm merges with all the palm imagery so that its symbolic content may be only approached and never completely gotten at. The tropical island palm, associated specifically with Rolfe, because of the image-complex sketched above, is never totally absent from the symbolic meaning of the Saba palm.

Yet the palm in Part III is treated quite differently from the rainbow in Part II. Unlike the rainbow, which is allowed to move from a brilliant colored image in the opening to a pale evanescence in the closing canto, the palm, brilliantly green and watered by monks, remains green, and beautiful, suspended between heaven and earth. Thus the decayed calcined palm, which the pilgrims find in the Dead Sea, has now become transfigured. However, the burning bush, from which God spoke to Moses, receives a treatment somewhat similar to that given the rainbow.

Images of light, rays of light from the sun, and images of fire dominate a great part of the imagery in Part III. Images of light and fire are so designed as to bring the burning bush with its associations into an ironic relation to the sun. In an early canto the narrator tells of a convent in the Holy Land which contains a chapel built in such a way that once a year a ray of light can pass through a cleft in Mount Horeb. Melville makes this ray an analogous symbol to the rainbow, another covenant, and connects this to the burning bush.

Where silence and the legend dwell,
A cleft in Horeb is, they tell,
Through which upon one happy day
(The sun on his heraldic track
Due sign having gained in Zodiac)
A sunbeam darts, which slants away
Through ancient carven oriel
Or window in the Convent there,
Illuming so with annual flush
The someber vaulted chamber spare
Of Catherine's Chapel of the Bush--
The Burning Bush, Brief visitant,
It makes no lasting covenant;
It brings, but cannot leave, the ray.
(III,v,299,291)

This transient ray, obviously a development of the transient ray which illuminated the praying Nehemiah at the Jordan river, has at least two important key analogues in Part III, the fake Easter Fire, supposedly from God but actually kindled by man, the source of candle-light used in religious ceremonies at Mar Saba, and the transient sun ray which momentarily gives Clarel a glimpse into the death crypt of the monks at the monastery.

An initial canto which introduces the palm image and associates it with Leopardi and Obermann as well as St. Teresa and further associates it with the Cross and the olive tree, gets the pilgrims out of the fog surrounding the Dead Sea and sets them once more on a desert journey in the glare of the sun. The emphasis that Mortmain places on man's evil struggle with man is symbolized when the pilgrims see in a cleft two human skeletons interlocked as though they had died struggling with each other in a combat fatal to both. A heavy pall hangs over the caravan because of Nehemiah and the second canto puts forth a revaluation of the old fundamentalist. The

narrator says that the story presented earlier to get at the history of Nehemiah will not serve to tell everything about him, and Clarel remembers that the old man once told a story of a carpenter who, because he was lonely, made a friend who turned against him for no apparent reason, and thereafter, the carpenter lived the life of a hermit and would no longer associate with man. Though obviously not an exact history of Nehemiah this serves to connect Nehmiah to Mortmain, who is also disillusioned with man, and also with Christ who was betrayed by Judas. Though an ambiguity surrounds Nehemiah, looking back, we can see that in a surprising number of ways he can be identified with Christ. He epitomizes the Christian virtues. Yet there is an irony in the way Nehemiah meets his death: he is not betrayed by man but by himself and he meets death not by the hand of man but by the natural world with which he cannot cope.

In canto iii, "Of the Many Mansions," Rolfe cites the various heavens that religions have posited over the centuries and states that none of them promises quite so much as Christianity, and that in light of experience man may be asking too much. No sooner is this idea seized upon and developed by Mortmain than the pilgrims hear a song. This is the song of the Cypriote, a young Greek from Cyprus who is returning to his island having accomplished the filial journey of delivering three flagons of wine to Mar Saba. He is on his way to Jordan where he will dip a linen shroud for his mother as preparation for her death. He is a parallel yet contrastive figure to

Glaucon, the carefree hedonist in Part II. The song he sings before the pilgrims see him is, in a sense, an answer to the question that Rolfe has just posed. He sings a hedonistic song about the Greek gods relaxing and taking their leisure. The lines most ironic in the light of the young man's mission and the ones most applicable to Rolfe's "rhetorical" question are:

> "Ever blandly adore them;
> But spare to implore them:
> They rest, they discharge them from time;
> Yet believe, light believe
> They would succor, reprieve--
> Nay, retrieve--
> Might but revelers pause in the prime."
> (III,iv,286)

The Cypriote is a development in that his hedonistic attitude, as expressed in his song, differs from Glaucon. He sings a song of morning, a song of light (the word appears several times and Rolfe calls him a "light musician"), but there is also an awareness of death. The two parting verses which the Cypriote sings as he disappears invest the rose with a significance not found in the crude hedonistic song of Glaucon.

> "With a rose in the thy mouth
> Through the world lightly veer:
> Rose in the mouth
> Makes a rose of the year!"
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "With the Prince of the South
> O'er the Styx bravely steer:
> Rose in the mouth
> And a wreath on the bier!"

The rose as used here is the rose of Persian poetry, of Hafiz

of Shiraz and Omar Khayyam. The easy-going Derwent is profoundly shocked when he hears about dipping the shroud and refers to it as "Azrael's scroll." Derwent is more astute than he realizes as Azrael is an angel common to both Jewish and Mohamedan angelogy. It is no accident that later in the revelries at Mar Saba Derwent will refer to Hafiz and be one of the freest of the revellers. Azreal is the angel that separates the soul from the body and Derwent is slowly being defined as a character who puts more emphasis on body than soul.

Throughout these cantos there is growing emphasis on light and dark images and the separating of light and dark with the coming of death. The Cypriote sings of the gods in terms of light images and stresses light but only the gods can be solely associated with light and the Cypriote, unlike the gods, is on an errand concerned with death and is bound for death himself. Canto v, "The High Desert" not only introduces the reference to the burning bush and the transient ray of the sun but gives a specific reference to gnosticism. In this particular version Jehovah is the god of evil and Christ is his polar opposite. The tendency of modern religion to dismiss Jehovah, the god of vengeance and emphasize Christ, the god of goodness and mercy, is seen as a dangerous indication that the whole religious structure is passing into eclipse. With this overbalance, unlike the Gnostics, the modern Christian, in denying evil, or rather, deemphasizing it to the point of ignoring it, will, concurrent with a loss of faith, degenerate

into a kind of easy-going pagan hedonism.

> But in her Protestant repose
> Snores faith toward her mortal close?
> Nay, like a sachem petrified,
> Encaved found in the mountain-side,
> Perfect in feature, true in limb,
> Life's full similitude in him,
> Yet all mere stone--is faith dead <u>now</u>,
> A petrification? Grant it so,
> Then what's in store? what shapeless birth?
> Reveal the doom reserved for earth?
> How far may seas retiring go?
> (III,v,292)

There is the suggestion that there will be a new dispensation but the nature of it is egnimatic and it is further suggested that Christ the King will give way to Mammon and Democracy. The canto closes first with a focus on the druze and then on Vine who gathers stones to build a cairn and finally on the Arab Bethelamites who are described with an allusion to the Witch of Endor.

As the pilgrims approach Mar Saba there are many references to monasteries as places of refuge, and yet the monastery as refuge is always treated in the usual ambiguous manner. Rolfe, when he hears the bells of Saba, cries out to the pilgrims,

> "'Tis Saba calling, yea," Rolfe cried,
> Saba, Mar Saba summons us:
> O, hither, pilgrims, turn to me,
> Escape the desert, perilous;
> Here's a refuge, hither unto me.
> (III,vii,303)

The perilous nature of the desert is emphasized. A sinister imagery drawn in part from the imagery previously used in "The Paradise of Bachelors and The Tartarus of Maids" constantly undercuts any hopeful ideas put forth in the religious debate.

In a canto devoted to the easy-going, comfortable religion that Derwent espouses, the hump image, formerly associated with Celio and finally to be associated with Clarel, is used to describe Mortmain.

> The Swede here of a sudden dropped,
> A hump dropped on him, one would say;
> He reached and some burnt gravel scooped
> Then stared down on the plain away.
> (III,vi,297)

And at the end of canto vii, when the pilgrims hear the bells of Saba, Clarel discovers that Vine has built a stone cairn which stands in ironic contrast to the welcoming bells.

As the caravan approaches the monastery the hopper image formerly used to describe the valley in "The Tartarus of Maids" now joins an allusion to Ezekiel's valley of dry bones, prominent in the opening imagery of "Benito Cereno," to describe the approach. A caravan of black wool tents reminds Derwent that this scene is desolate and unlike the tents of Kedar in "The Songs of Solomon." The carcass of a camel, which with its great power of survival has not survived the desert and whose bones are being picked by a kite referred to as Apollyon, gives evidence of the great destroying power of the desert.

Canto ix, "Of Monasteries," is a short essay on the nature of monasteries as gateways to Paradise. Though several monasteries are mentioned, the most important is a reference to the Grand Chartreuse and the citing is really an indirect allusion to Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse." Though Arnold's famous lines,

> Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born,
> With nowhere yet to rest my head,
> Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.[1]

sound the basic theme in the whole poem, they have a special relevance for Part III and the destiny of Mortmain. The Grande Chartreuse is called "a wintry Paradise," and the imagery used to describe all the monasteries stresses ice, cold, solitary loneliness and death. Even the monastery of St. Bernard, traditionally hospitable to travellers, is described as,

> The lake ink-black mid slopes of snow--
> The dead-house for the frozen, barred--
> And the stone hospice; chill they show
> Monastic in thy pass, Bernard.
> (III,ix,308)

And Mar Saba is a stone structure over a "darkling gulf." The drowned star image, the most important of the star images in Part IV, is foreshadowed in a passage that describes the burning tapers of the monks.

> With mystic silvery brede divine,
> St. Basil's banner of Our Lord
> (In lieu of crucifix adored
> By Greeks which images decline)
> Stained with the five small wounds and red,
> Down through the darkling gulf is led--
> By night ofttimes, while tapers glow
> Small in the depths, as stars may show
> Reflected far in well profound.
> (III,ix,310)

When the pilgrims reach Mar Saba they have to wait for admittance, and the ambiguous nature of their refuge is stressed.

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[1]Matthew Arnold, The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold, ed. C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 302.

The final approach is through a "profound ravine" which is compared to a passage leading to Tartarus. As they mount from darkness into light to reach the monastery gate allusion is made to "Uriel, warder of the sun." As often happens in Melville the allusion is complex. It includes Uriel, the angel in Revelations and Uriel, as presented in Milton's Paradise Lost. Also, if we examine the song that begins Canto xi, the canto following the canto in which the Uriel allusion is placed,

> "Life is not by square and line:
> Wisdom's stupid without folly:
> Sherbet to-day, tomorrow wine--
> Feather in cap and the world is jolly!"
> (III,xi,313)

and compare this with the following lines from Emerson's "Uriel,"

> Line in nature is not found
> Unit and universe are round
> In vain produced, all rays return
> Evil will bless and ice will burn.[2]

it becomes clear that the Uriel of Emerson's poem was probably very much in Melville's mind and that the import of the argument developed in Canto v, the weakening of Christianity through too much emphasis on the goodness in man and nature, is very much the theme in the Uriel allusion. The pilgrims in going to Mar Saba are mounting through an arch from darkness into light, but the nature of that light is ambiguous and it may be merely the enlightened hedonism of the bachelors as

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[2]Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (12 vols., Riverside ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin), Vol. IX, p. 14.

described in "The Paradise of Bachelors."

At first there is no answer when the pilgrims knock at the gate, and it is only when the druze sends up a message that they gain admittance. As they go through the gate they are said to be passing through a needle's eye. The horses carrying people have to duck to get through but the riderless ass slips through easily.

Though there is even more than the usual interlocking complexity of attitudes and associated images displayed during the pilgrims' stay at Mar Saba, the general progression is from hedonistic revelry to despair and death. This progression parallels a similar development in Part II, the scenes by the Jordan followed by the scenes at the Dead Sea. The song referred to earlier sets the opening tone. It suggests an antinomian disregard of rigid moral law. After the pilgrims arrive they feel the need for refreshment, and their siesta becomes a genial revelry reminiscent of the convivial bachelors in the "Paradise of Bachelors." Various characters either sing songs celebrating pagan deities or make allusions to pagan philosophies. Derwent sings a song about Hafiz, most likely the Persian poet who espoused a hedonistic philosophy. A Lesbian from Mytelene dances and sings a song and recitative celebrating Cybele, the dread mother goddess of Asia Minor, who was worshipped in the Greek world with orgiastic rites. But the revelry is, in a sense, a maimed rite, for not all take part. Clarel does not participate, Rolfe remains aloof, and Mortmain openly disdains the revelry. Vine takes part in the

wine drinking but remains reflective, likening the whole scene to the court of the Biblical Ahab and Mortmain to Elijah the Tishbite. Though reference is made to the tales told as an "Orient Decameron," the one story presented in the text, the timoneer's story, parallels somewhat the action of Moby-Dick in that there is a doomed ship and a sole survivor. This tale is an analogue to the tale that Rolfe has told to explain Nehemiah and it serves to connect the timoneer, an old seafarer, with Nehemiah. He is a replacement for the dead fundamentalist and when the pilgrims leave Mar Saba for Bethlehem he rides Nehemiah's mount. The timoneer's story is about a ship named the Peace of God that is thrown off course by a chest of swords in the cabin underneath the compass. Later, the surviving timoneer learns that the Moor to whom these swords belonged was a dealer in smuggled arms, particularly poisoned swords. This story with its symbolic implications of evil lurking beneath apparent good fails to daunt the revellers and the revels continue. It is at this point that the song to Cybele is sung followed by Derwent's song invoking Hafiz. Vine, called upon to tell a tale or sing a song, sings a plaintive song where the rose, so far in Part III linked to the hedonistic life, gives way to an imaginary flower, the undying purple amaranth. Suddenly, just as cups are raised for a toast, a wail comes from the depths of the Kedron river, which flows at the base of the monastery and empties into the Dead Sea (this parallels the Jordan emptying into the Dead Sea in the siesta scene in Part II), and the frozen attitudes of

the transfixed revelers are compared to images engraved on Greek sarcophagi.

Immediately the poem returns to the basic wave image from "Dover Beach" and echoes the image that Arnold used to concretize the "ebb and flow of human misery,"

> The roller upon Borneo's strand
> Halts not, but in recoiling throe
> Drags back the shells involved with sand
> And hollow of the wallowing undertow.

and with this return of the wave image the poem embarks on the most complicated section in Clarel. Cantos xv through xxxiii display such a density of image, symbol and allusion it seems impossible to present them in any schematized way which does not seem terribly reductive.

The Mar Saba palm, growing on a ledge, over-hanging the Kedron river, in a sense, suspended between heaven and the abyss, is the central symbol but it stands in an ambiguous relationship to a number of symbolic images drawn from Christian tradition. Such traditional images as the dove and the color blue, associated with the Virgin Mary, tend to merge with the images of light and fire mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Five of the pilgrims face the palm in the following order: Derwent, Vine, Mortmain, Rolfe, and finally Clarel. The positions are symbolic but the complexity of the central symbol and the symbolic nature of the imagery which has been piling up associations since the beginning of the poem prevent any neat allegorical interpretation. The technique is somewhat similar to Chapter XCIX in Moby-Dick where a set of

symbolic and quasi allegorical figures face the gold doubloon that Ahab nails to the mast.

Just after the receding wave image is again introduced the poem moves by a series of conversations and meditations, during which time the above mentioned characters face the palm, to where Clarel sees Mortmain, Vine and Rolfe on three different ledges. Derwent is not in view. These characters cannot see each other or Clarel but he can see them.

> It was the Swede,
> Over the Swede, upon the stair--
> Long Bethel-stair of ledges brown
> Sloping as from the heaven let down--
> Apart lay Vine; lowermost there,
> Rolfe he discerned, nor less the three
> While of each other unaware,
> In one consent of frame might be.
>
> (III,xxx,395)

The first stage in the section that progresses to this point is a long colloquy between Clarel and Rolfe. The first part of the conversation tends to parallel the conversation by the Jordan between Clarel and Vine. The scene is late at night. The revellers presumably have retired, and both Rolfe and Clarel, feeling restless, awake and join for company. As they look out over the gulf below the high monastery, Rolfe points out the white turban of Djalea, the druze, and says that since the druze is an initiate of occult mysteries, he may know something of the nature of the ultimate mystery.

> Yon turban with the snowy folds
> Announces that my lord there holds
> The rank of Druze initiate--
> Not versed in partion mere, but total--
> Advanced in secrets sacerdotal.
>
> (III,xv,336)

In Part II Vine has pointed out the druze to Clarel in such a way as to suggest that he could teach Clarel something. Now they approach Djales and Rolfe questions him as to his knowledge of inner mysteries. The druze replies egnimatically,

> "No God there is but God" . . .
> (III,xv,337)

and the author comments that this is the kind of "passive self-control that marked the statue of Pallas Athena in Rome before she was knocked off her pedestal by the barbarians. Clarel can expect nothing here except a kind of intellectual skepticism accompanied by a trusting faith in Allah. We can now understand the druze's relation to Nehemiah and know why they are put into a contrasting relationship in the scene by the Jordan. Rolfe calls him "this Prince of Pith," an obvious word play on Prince of Peace, and though he is like Vine in that he is mysterious, self-contained, stoical and intellectually inaccesible, and differs from Nehemiah in the way that Vine differs from the old man; yet he also has traits in common with Rolfe in that he is not passive; he is a soldier and essentially a man of action. He thus combines traits displayed by both Vine and Rolfe. He is an Ishmael, an exile who can survive. In Part II he is contrasted to Nehemiah, who cannot survive the low desert, and in Part III he offers contrast to Mortmain, who cannot survive the high desert.

After the interview with Djalea, Rolfe, seeing that Clarel is depressed, asks him if the interview has disillusioned

him (the question is broken off but this seems the implication), and Clarel answers that he is disturbed by the irreverence of Belex, the leader of the Moslem guard, who during the recent drinking session linked his own fasting time, his Ramadan, with the Christian Lent. Telling the history of Belex as an apology for the Moslem's attitude, Rolfe introduces a discussion of the Easter Fire referred to earlier.

At Jerusalem, the Greeks celebrate Easter with a ritual that includes a ritual dance, a mock recapturing of the Holy Sepulcher from the Turkish guards, and the rekindling of the fire in the Holy Sepulcher, supposedly by the descent of God but actually by the Greek bishop inside the tomb. The pilgrims rush so wildly into the tomb to light their candles and return home that many are trampled and crushed. Rolfe compares this ritual to the ritualistic death of Atys, the shepherd who castrated himself at the foot of a pine tree in worship of the goddess Cybele. This comparison tends to implicate Derwent, for a little earlier, during the revelery, Derwent has sung a song to Hafiz and countenanced the Lesbian's blasphemous song to Cybele which linked that goddess to Christian ceremony. Thus Derwent is associated with forces which weaken Christianity and reduce it to merely another ritual.

In the long colloquy between Rolfe and Clarel, Rolfe says that the fakery in Jerusalem has its effect on the intellectual discipline at Mar Saba which tolerates the superstition and creates an "orthodoxy petrified." Clarel suggests that

Derwent has found a way to harmonize the effects of the higher criticism and science in general with a literal reading of the Bible, in effect, "harmonize for all/Moses and Comte, Renan and Paul," as Rolfe puts it (III,xvi,343). Since Rolfe throughout the poem has been tracing similar patterns in religion we might expect him to be sympathetic, but he sums up his attitude toward Derwent with the following key image,

> ". . . Nay;
> And since I think it, why not say--
> Things all diverse he would unite:
> His idol's an hermaphrodite."
> (III,xvi,342)

Later, after the Prodigal canto in Part IV, this image is developed dramatically when Derwent admires the hermaphroditic nature of the Lyonese and praises his feminine beauty. At this moment in Part III Clarel is shocked at Rolfe's assesment of Derwent, but Rolfe immediately takes a more tolerant tone.

The next day is given over to ceremonies and a chant which has as its theme the Babylonian Captivity and the eventual rebuilding of Jerusalem (shades of Nehemiah), but this is followed by a masque which presents the story of the Wandering Jew. Here the theme of alienation, voiced over and over throughout the poem, comes to a new plateau of sustained emotional intensity, and the Wandering Jew comes to symbolize a new kind of Everyman. At the end of this episode the masquers, their torches going out, see Mortmain in his skull cap on a crag high above them, briefly illumined, but he fades into darkness as their torches go out one by one.

Thus in waves light is followed by dark, optimism by pessimism. The following morning finds Clarel and Derwent watching the coming of dawn from one of the tallest of the two towers that crown Mar Saba, and the coming dawn is described with images of fire. Both are cheered by the dawn but with the coming of full daylight Clarel feels once more the depressing nature of his increasing intellecutal questionings. Derwent feeling a kind of fraternal sympathy tries to win Clarel over to his liberal view. Working by analogy he argues that gods may still be useful even when no longer believed in, and, significantly, in terms of the sun, light, fire imagery, chooses Apollo as his example of a god who was still useful to the priests who no longer believed in him literally.

Clarel rejects Derwent's initial overtures, and Derwent warns him in lines which contain the by now familiar combination of snow, ice, cold and loneliness associated with religious disillusionment.

> For lamp you yearn--
> A lantern to benighted thought,
> Obtain it--whither will you turn?
> Still lost you'd be in blanks of snow.
> (III,xxi,362)

As the conversation proceeds, Derwent's intellectual and emotional shallowness becomes apparent to Clarel when Derwent asks him to forget the sorrows of such figures as Byron, Werther, and Hamlet,

> Perverse were now e'en Hamlet's sigh:
> Perverse--indecorous indeed!
> (III,xxi,364)

Clarel replies that all these characters, real or fictional, point to the figure of Job, and Derwent, sensing an alien temperment, averts his face and says,

> "Alas, too deep you dive.
> But hear me yet for little space:
> This shaft you sink shall strike no bloom:
> The surface, ah, heaven keeps <u>that</u> green;
> Green, sunny: nature's active scene,
> For man appointed, man's true home."
>
> (III,xxi,364)

In a passage that seems to echo faintly Browning's "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed" and "My Last Duchess" Derwent tells Clarel that a young monk has come to spy on them (he mockingly calls him Anselm) and invites him to descend the tower. Completing the endangered and sinking ship imagery that has been intrusive in this section, Clarel's heart is described as freighted and sinking with every step that the mounting monk takes toward him.

This is a crucial scene and the imagery is important because the prodigal Lyonese offers essentially the same argument in Part IV. Here, Clarel rejects what Derwent has to offer; later, after the Lyonese has contrasted Damascus with Jerusalem and after Clarel discovers that the Lyonese is Jewish, a fact that upsets the Hellenic-Hebraic division which constitutes one aspect of the poem's dialectic, Clarel undergoes an important change, and as a result of forces that have been gathering throughout the poem accepts Nature and rejects Manicheism. In so doing he accepts Derwent's hermaphroditic union of the many contradictory and unstable forces that compose Nature as presented straight or implied by the image-symbol

structure of the poem. An obvious but important thing to notice is the similarity between this scene and Ahab's rejection of Starbuck's common sense arguments during the last day of the chase in Moby-Dick. Mortmain is the character most like Ahab in Clarel but here Clarel has something in common with Ahab and perhaps more in common with Taji who refuses to go back with Babbalanja and his other companions to Serenia, the island of Christain brotherhood, and sails on after the ever-elusive Arcturus.

Though the death of Mortmain is the surface climax of Part III just as the death of Nehemiah is the climax of Part II, it is what happens to Clarel in relation to these events that provides the Ariadne thread that takes the reader from canto to canto through the poem. Throughout the closing cantos of Part III Clarel wanders about Mar Saba thinking of Ruth, along with his other preoccupations; yet his feelings about Ruth seem to be undergoing a strange sea change, so that by the time we reach the canto where Clarel has his view of Mortmain, Vine and Rolfe, the narrator can express this change as,

> But Ruth--still Ruth, yet strange involved
> With every mystery unresolved
> In time and fate. In cloud thus caught,
> Her image labored like a star
> Fitful revealed in midnight heaven
> When inland from the sea-coast far
> The storm-rack and dark scud are driven.
> Words scarce might tell his frame, in sooth:
> 'Twas Ruth, and oh, much more than Ruth.
> (III,xxx,392)

This change of attitude takes place in a context that involves the other characters.

All the key characters are drawn to Mar Saba but their responses to the monastery are different. In canto xxiii Derwent visits the Abbot but his interest is chiefly in the artistic and historical treasures which the Abbot can show him. He is thus not like Clarel who is interested in a "grace beyond medallions" (III,xxx,393). The old men sensing Derwent's state of mind, reminds him that, "These dry bones cannot live: what then?" (III,xxiii,370).

In cantos xxiv and xxv Clarel and Derwent make separate trips down to the Kedron at the bottom of the gorge. Clarel's adventure takes him to the bottom of the gorge but on his way he passes Djalea, the druze, who gives a glance that has deep meaning for Clarel though its exact nature is not disclosed.

> 'Twas a glance
> Clarel did many a time recall,
> Though its unmeant significance--
> That was the last thing learned of all.
> (III,xxiv,372)

Continuing on down he passes a vault where the slab has been pushed aside. Thinking this might be where the monks keep their buried treasure (this seems to pick up the buried treasure imagery from Part I) he tries to look within. In a passage that repeats the symbolic pattern mentioned earlier he tries to look into the vault and while he lingers,

> . . .lo, down slipped
> Through cleft of crags, the sun did win
> Aloft in Kedron's citadel,
> A fiery shaft into that crypt
> (Like well-pole slant in farm-house well)
> On stony benches, head by head,

> In court where no recorders be,
> Preserved by nature's chemistry
> Sat the dim conclave of the dead, . . .
> (III,xxiv,372)

Across the Kedron river a mad monk, Cyril, asks him for the countersign (the word suggests the gnostic emphasis on special knowledge), and one of the attendant monks tells him to say, "Death." From here to the end of the canto Clarel muses on death and turns to a contemplation of Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy. He calls upon Ruth to drive away these thoughts, only to find there has been a subtle change in his relationship to her. This is most signified by the word "glazing" in the following:

> Ruth's glance of love is glazing met
> Reproaching him: Dost tarry, tarry yet.
> (III,xxiv,p.374)

Derwent makes a similar descent with the Lesbian in order to drink from a supposedly miraculous spring. They pass the ass's stable, which the Lesbian calls a nunnery, and on the way down the Lesbian sings a song which picks up and develops the earlier songs of Glaucon and the Cypriote by adding the honey image associated with John the Baptist in Part II. Reaching the fountain, Derwent, partial to wine, refuses a cup of the water, saying that though it is a "respectable" water it will not agree with his sensitive constitution. The Lesbian points out the palm, growing on a ledge high above them. They are at the bottom of the gorge at the river level, and from here to the end of the canto description, action, image and allusion suggest the Divine Comedy. As they climb up

from ledge to ledge Derwent refers to the Lesbian in a light mocking tone as his Virgil and the Lesbian sings him a song which again corrupts the theme of Dante's search for Beatrice,

'My love but she has little feet
And slippers of the rose,
From under--Oh, the lavender sweet--
Just peeping out, demurely neat;
But she, she never knows--
No, no, she never knows!

'A dimpled hand is hers, and e'en
As dainty as her toes;
In mine confiding it she'll lean
Till heaven knows what my tinglings mean;
But she, she never knows--
Oh no, she never knows!'

(III,xxiv,376,377)

As they come back up they encounter mad Cyril who tells them they do not need a countersign as they have "Lachryma Christi" to sustain them. The monk's "mad" babble and the ensuing conversation between Derwent and the Lesbian as to its import, contain the by now familiar images: sun, spider's web, snare and sting. At the end of the canto they look up and see a great bird sail across the gulf carrying Mortmain's skull cap. It drops the cap into the Kedron. After they see the cap drop they look down and see the timooneer Agath, symbolic replacement for Nehemiah, and shout to him but he does not hear them and goes on his way.

This scene sets forth the difference between the easy-going hedonism of Derwent and the intellectual strainings of Mortmain, who has now been robbed of his reason (the robbing of the cap recalls a similar episode in Moby-Dick). Mortmain through his raging will, his particular form of monomania, has

been defeated in his effort to "strike through the mask." Derwent, marveling at the strange happening, connects the skull cap of Mortmain with Golgotha, which in Hebrew means skull, but is unaware of the skulls in the vault that the transient ray of sunlight has revealed to Clarel.

The scene shifts and in the next canto we see Vine, higher up on one of the ledges. He addresses an invocation to the Saba Palm; praises its beauty but compares it to Apollo's tree once worshipped on the island of Delos.[3] There is a tone of sadness and resignation throughout these musings that is in keeping with Vine's character.

The scene shifts back to Derwent and the Lesbian, who tells Derwent about an episode similar to the one they have just witnessed--a fight between a sailor and a large bird who caused the sailor to fall from a yardarm into the sea and stole his cap just before he plunged into the water. The sailor thought that he had lost his soul. This tale is felt by both Derwent and the Lesbian to have some strange hidden meaning, but they cannot make it out. The talk shifts to Mortmain, and the Lesbian asks if Mortmain has not been driven mad through study. Derwent answers that some do regard Mortmain as philosophically wise. The Lesbian then observes

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[3]See Book VI of Homer's Odyssey, where Odysseus compares Nausicaa to a palm tree at the shrine of Apollo on the island of Delos. The beseaching prayer of the tempest-tossed and sea-weary Odysseus suggests a prayer to the Virgin Mary.

that some at Mar Saba regard the mad monk Cyril as wise and that in the East, generally, the one who has lost his wits is thought to be a sage or a saint. Madness thus serves to link Mortmain and Nehemiah as similar and yet contrastive figures.

Derwent suggests that they return to the others but the Lesbian insists they visit the den of another crazed monk, Habbibi, now dead. Derwent reads the inscriptions on Habbibi's cell and to the liberal clergyman they are occult and obscure. To the reader who has been following the imagery-symbolism of the poem the meaning is clearly gnostic even though one couplet of the passage is derived from Paradise Lost. The lines,

> 'I, Self, am the enemy
> Of all. From me deliver me,
> O Lord.'
> (III,xxvii,384)

are clear enough, and the lines which echo a similar passage in Book I of Paradise Lost,

> 'There is a hell over which mere hell
> Serves --for--a--heaven.'
> (III,xxxii,384)

suggests the various degrees of dark in gnostic belief. But the partially blurred lines,

> Half faded: '. . . teen..six,
> The hundred summers run,
> Except it be in cicatrix
> The aloe--flowers--none.'

and,

> '. . .testimony,
> . . . .grown fat and gray,
> The lion down, and--full of honey,
> The bears shall rummage him in May.---
> (III,xxvii,384)

are somewhat more difficult. The first of these states that the aloe or century plant (the African variety generates a powerfuld drug), popularly believed to flower once every hundred years, can flower only in the healing flesh that grows over a scar (cicatrix). In terms of the flower imagery of the poem, poppy (rose of Sharon), amaranth, eternal but fictitious flower, and aloe as opposed to the rose, probably suggest that the aloe can bloom only when the physical world is regenerated, thus prolonging the mixed up world of black and white. The second is, as Walter Bezanson suggests, undoubtedly an allusion to the story of Samson and the lion. Samson is a Christ-like figure, "a saviour of his people," but a saviour who is betrayed through his fleshly appetites. However, it also seems to suggest in an ironic manner the oft quoted passage in Revelations that prophesies that the Lion will lie down with the Lamb. "Fat" and "gray" suggest respectively, eating, deemphasized by the Gnostics, and the dreadful mixture of black and white, which must be separated for salvation. "May" probably suggests the maypole or orgiastic fertility ceremonies and the honey, of course, is used as an ironic contrast to the honey of John the Baptist.[4] The lines that follow the inscription,

> Yon gap there
> Well lights the grotto; and this air
> Is dry and sweet; nice citadel
> For study."
> Or dessert room. (III,xxvii,384,385)

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[4]See Bezanson's note in the explanatory notes to Clarel, p. 629.

picks up and developed the transient ray which has provided Clarel's epiphany and "dessert-room" echoes desert. Derwent has a strong steady light (he is a light figure and light is used often to describe him and his fellow hedonists); yet he cannot get any meaning from Habbibi's inscription. Derwent and the Lesbian leave the monk's cell and in a marvelous twist, Melville, in a sense, inverts Dante's inscription for the third circle of the Inferno,

> "' Yet here who enter Habbi's den
> Beware what hence ye take!'"
> (III,xxvii,385)

The song that the Lesbian sings as they leave brings together the notion of a fire-proof man (one immune to the fire of hell) King Cole, a hedonist, counterpart of Christ, the King, and the sun and the mill wheel from the story of Samson (evoking all the light and dark imagery of Milton's Samson Agonistes). The devil as the only "true-blue" (opposite of Mary's color) harkens back to the hermit scene at the Mount of Temptation where in his tale only the Devil presented himself. The song goes,

> "King Cole sang as he clinked the can,
> Sol goes round, and the mill-horse too:
> A thousand pound for a fire-proof man!
> The devil vows he's the sole true-blue;
> And the prick-louse sings,
> See the humbug of kings--
> 'Tis I take their measure, ninth part of a man!"

Derwent is disturbed by what he cannot understand, for though not blind like Samson he is "eyeless in Gaza." He says that the way the Lesbian can "lightly" shed off the mystery makes him a man for Daniel's den, and this returns us to the lion

image of the inscription. He and the Lesbian join two more of the former revellers and though Derwent is disturbed enough to move slightly in Clarel's direction,

> (Thought he) could we but find our mates
> Ever! but no; before the gates
> Of joy, like some who carp and tease:
> Collisions of men's destinies!--
> (III,xxvii,386)

He soon shifts his attention to the Lesbian who is telling the revellers about the dancing dervishes in Cairo and how these same dancing dervishes are supposedly related to King David.

With the next canto the scene shifts to Mortmain, who is facing the Palm at another level. He is musing on the importance of knowledge,

> Knowledge is power: tell that to knaves;
> 'Tis knavish knowledge: the true lore
> Is impotent for earth: . . .
> (III,xxviii,386)

Since gnostic means to know, this is a logical development from the preceding canto. Like Bartleby, Mortmain can say of man, "I know you," but he cannot use this knowledge to change the world. He hears Cyril cry from above (he is across from the Lesbian who is illustrating the dance of the dervishes) asking for the password. In derision Mortmain says, "Hope," and is told that that was yesterday's password; Mortmain then says, "Despair," and is told to advance. The rest of the canto recalls the canto where Nehemiah sleep-walks into the Dead Sea seeing the new Jerusalem. Mortmain falls asleep while he is watching the Saba Palm and feels that he is being borne Heaven-ward, but, unlike Nehemiah, he awakes to find himself still

watching the Palm which seems to beckon to him. He falls asleep, thinking of the meaning of the Palm.

Mortmain is situated on a ledge below Vine and in the next canto we see Rolfe on a ledge still farther down, near the bottom of the gorge. He is just high enough so that he can see the Palm which seems to wave in salutation. Seeing the Palm reminds him of how once he visited the Marquesas in his youth and was taken for a god (the memory goes back to a similar episode in Typee). A reference to Puck as the trickster god presents the idea that mortal man ("What fools these mortals be") is foolish and often tricked. Just as the natives were tricked into believing that he was a god, so he may have tricked himself when he left such a garden of Eden. The imagery strongly recalls Milton's "Lycidas" and Paradise Lost, and a reference to Iris presents the rainbow in a new mythical frame. The whole scene is a delicious yet slightly melancholic remembrance of things past.

The scene shifts once more to Clarel, who has been thinking of Ruth and wandering about the monastery. In canto xxx, at the climax of this progression he comes out on a ledge where the Palm is planted, midway between the top towers of Mar Saba and the gorge below. Here he meets a monk dressed in blue who is feeding the doves that flock about the monastery. They wheel about the man's head and create a kind of halo effect, cluster about his feet and eat from his hand. The whole scene suggests the picture of a saint, one who has attained a high degree of purity. The narrator says he is not

a darling of fortune but one of heaven's elect.

> The robe of blue
> So sorted with the doves in hue
> Prevailing, and clear skies serene
> Without a cloud; so pure he showed--
> Of stature tall, in aspect bright--
> He looked an almoner of God,
> Dispenser of the bread of light.
>
> (III,xxx,392,393)

This canto is packed with symbols associated with Christianity, and there is a general contrast between Mary and Venus with the myrtle used to symbolize the pagan goddess. The scene is likened to a mellow star above autumn hills and is said to be a "grace/Beyond medallions ye recall" and thus suggests something beyond the material world.

Clarel, struck by the serenity of the scene, admits that here is peace, but says to the monk that he misses the presence of woman. The celibate presents him with a page from a third century religious book whose import is that woman is the cause of man's trouble.

> 'Twas David's son, and he of Dan,
> With him misloved that fled the bride,
> And Job whose wife but mocked his ban;
> Then rose, or in redemption ran--
> The rib restored to Adam's side,
> And man made whole, as man began.
>
> (III,xxx,395)

The ideas here and in the next canto are basically gnostic: a rejection of woman is a rejection of creation and the material world. The last two lines of the above quote put in Biblical imagery the splitting of the sexes in Plato's Symposium which Melville also uses in "After the Pleasure Party." As the narrator puts it, man is urged to live "In the pure desert of

the will . . ." (III,xxx,395).

The celibate leaves, and Clarel is left looking out over the gulf. From his position he is able to see Mortmain, Vine and Rolfe. Taking them all in, in a kind of unstated assessment, his mind returns to the scene by the bank of the Jordan where Vine repulsed him, and he asks if there can really be a bond between man and man.

> Recalling that repulsed advance
> He knew by Jordan in the wood,
> And the enigma unsubdued--
> Possessing Ruth, nor less his heart
> Aye hungering still, in deeper part
> Unsatisfied. Can be a bond
> (Thought he) as David sings in strain
> That dirges beausteous Jonathan,
> Passing the love of woman fond?
> And may experience but dull
> The longing for it?
> (III,xxx,395)

The question is left unanswered, but the closing lines place emphasis on his loneliness and the fact that no doves come to feed from his fingers.

In the next canto he recoils from his attraction to the arguments presented by the celibate and argues to himself that the immaculate Mary was, after all, related to Ruth. He relapses, however, and it is apparent that there is a widening rift appearing between Clarel and Ruth. Clarel, at this stage, wants to reject the impure self. He seeks an eternal love; yet if love with a woman is merely a temporal earthbound thing and there are no marriages in heaven, then to seek an eternal love through woman is sheer folly. I suspect that Melville had in mind Milton's famous lines from "Lycidas,"

> Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth:
> And, O ye Dolphins, waft the haples youth.[5]

because in this canto Clarel recalls that all the angels are masculine. He expresses it.

> But if Eve's charm be not supernal,
> Enduring not divine transplanting--
> Love kindles thence, is that eternal?
> Here, here's the hollow--here's the haunting!
> Ah, love, ah wherefore thus unsure?
> Linked are thou--locked with Self impure?
> Yearnings benign the angels know, . . .
> (III,xxxi,397)

It should be noted also that these lines are related to Arnold's "Dover Beach" since in that poem the line, "Ah, love let us be true to one another," is a substitute for heavenly bliss. These questionings, running through Clarel's mind are, of course, left unanswered for the time being but get a temporary resolution at the crisis point in the poem.

We are now brought to the closing canto of Part III. It is dawn and the pilgrims are ready to leave Mar Saba when they discover that Mortmain is missing. There is a recurrence of the Dead Sea imagery and, suddenly, Clarel, looking again at the tier of ledges alluded to here an elsewhere as Bethel's stair, the place where Jacob saw the ladder leading into Heaven, sees Mortmain. He is dead, presumably from a brain injury, and he is found with an eagle's feather on his lips, a slight echo of the eagle feather on the mast of the foundering Pequod in Moby-Dick. Mortmain is buried in unsanctified ground, outside the walls of Mar Saba. As the sun rises Rolfe makes an invocation to the sun that goes back to all the ray and light images in Part III,

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[5]Milton, op.cit., p. 169.

"Oh tell me, do thy bright beams strike
The healing hills of Gilead now?"
(III,xxxii,400)

CHAPTER V

THE FOUNDERED STAR

Just as images of sun and fire and the special image, the Saba Palm, dominate Part III, the star is the dominate image in "Bethlehem," Part IV. This final section presents a recapitulation of most of the imagery found in the rest of the poem along with additional images such as the giant tortoise found in the earlier sketches, The Encantadas. Since the pilgrims go from Mar Saba to Jerusalem by way of Bethlehem, the star is associated with the star of Bethlehem, the star of the Nativity. However, like the other key images, it is not allowed one simple set of associations. The red star that Margoth sees earlier at the Dead Sea and which is identified as the Star of Wormwood, the evil star of Revelations, has an unstated presence throughout Part IV. The star that Clarel sees at the place where the three kings saw the star which signaled the birth of Christ is not identified as the star of Wormwood but is seen as a double image, a star in the sky and its reflected image. A few lines later all the stars over Jerusalem are described as the nails on a giant coffin.

The opening sets forth quite clearly the analogy that runs through most of Part IV. The trip of the pilgrims to Bethlehem is an ironic parallel to the trip that the three oriental kings made following the star.

They failed not, for a light was given--
The light and pilotage of heaven:
A light, a lead, no longer won
By any, now who seekers are:
Or fable is it? but if none,
Let man lament the foundered Star.
(IV,i,403)

When the pilgrims leave Mar Saba for Bethlehem three new characters join the caravan. Agath, the old seafarer introduced in Part III, is not only a symbolic replacement but an actual replacement for Nehemiah since he rides the ass which since Nehemiah's death has been riderless. Ungar, who is not immediately identified, is in some ways a symbolic replacement for Mortmain. A splendid warrior figure, the Arnaut, who is dressed in a white kilt and rides with effortless ease a dappled horse, also joins the group as guard. When he salutes Djalea, the narrator refers to him as Chiron. Thus he guards the pilgrims on their way to death, not life.

As the travellers move into the desert, the wasteland imagery recurs, and here, the symbolic word play on the central symbol of Part IV, the palm, accompanies the analogy that the pilgrims taking leave of the monastery are like a ship leaving the haven of a harbor which has been only a temporary port, a port of call, or perhaps an encounter with a friendly ship, a gam.

As on they ride
And o'er the ridge begin to go,
The parting glance they turn; and lo!
The convent's twin towers disappear--
Engulfed like a brig's masts below
Submerging waters. Then they steer
Upward anew, in lane of steep--
Ravine hewn-out, as t'were by sledges'
In-walled, from ledges unto ledges,

> And stepwise still, each rider creeps,
> Until, at top, their eyes behold
> Judea in highlands far unrolled.
>
> (IV,i,407)

Climbing upward they reach a ledge from where they can see the plain that stretches northward toward Jerusalem.

> All now alight
> Upon the Promethean ledge
> The Druze stands by the imminent edge
> Peering, and rein in hand. With head
> Over her master's shoulder laid,
> The mare too, gazed, nor feared a check,
> Though leaning half her lovesome neck,
> Yet lightly, as a swan might do.
> An arm Djalea enfolding stretched,
> While sighs the sensitive creature fetched,
> As e'en that waste to sorrow moved
> Instinctive. So, to take the view
> See man and mare, lover and loved.
> Slant palm to brow against the haze,
> Meantime the salt one sent his gaze
> As from the mast-head o'er the pale
> Expanse. But what may eyes avail?
> Land lone as seas without a sail.
> "Wreck ho--the wreck!" Not unamazed
> They hear this sudden outcry. Crazed?
> Or subject yet by starts dismayed
> To flightly turns, for friars said
> Much wandered he in mind when low.
> But never Agath heeded them:
> Forth did his leveled finger go
> And, fixing, pointed: "See ye, see?
> "Way over where the gray hill be
> Yonder--no, there--that upland dim:
> Wreck, ho! the wreck--Jerusalem!"
>
> (IV,i,407,408)

Here, a whole series of images coming from earlier parts of the poem are developed along with and related to the basic sea-desert analogy. The palm undergoes a striking transformation. Through a play on words it becomes the hands of the pilgrims as they peer out over the wasteland. The scene recalls the scene in Part I where Clarel, Rolfe and Vine are able, from their vantage point on top of the tower marking

Christ's Ascension, to see the Dead Sea. There, Nehemiah stays below and does not share the vision; here, Agath, as replacement for Nehemiah, is likened to the sailor in the crow's nest who sees a wreck and points it out to the captain, in this case Djalea, who replies,

> "Keen-sighted art thou! said Djalea
> Confirming him; "Ay, it is there,"
> (IV,i,408)

Djalea, an experienced traveller in these regions, knows the position of Jerusalem. The swan image, formerly used to describe Vine, now describes Djalea's mare to point up the ideal harmonious relation between the two, "lover and loved," and the ledge from which the pilgrims gaze is referred to as Promethean which carries the conotations of both a rebellion and a punishment.

Cantos ii, iii and iv are devoted to Agath, the old seadog, who with his keen vision has just seen Jerusalem as a wreck. In the first of these Derwent notices that Agath has a red and blue tattoo. This 'ensign' is presumed a copy of the original emblem of the Knight Templars who conquered Jerusalem. Consisting of palm branches, cross and five marks to symbolize the wounds of Christ, three diadems for the three wise kings, and a star above, the emblem brings together on the flesh of Agath the key symbols associated with the birth, triumph and cruxifixion of Christ. Derwent assumes that the tattoo was made by the monks at Mar Saba, but Agath explains that as a youth he was tattooed on Christmas day off the coast of Java and thus at the time had no knowledge of the ensign's

significance. The import is that he has received the meaning of the sign through the brutal battering of the sea life he has led. Derwent half-humorously suggests they make Agath their leader and follow his star to Bethlehem.

> "While now for Bethlehem we aim,
> Our stellar friend the post should claim
> Of guide. We'll put him in the van--
> Follow the star on the tattooed man,
> We wise men here . . . ."
> (IV,ii,412)

The cruel irony implicit in having Agath as a replacement for Nehemiah is now clear. Vine asks him if he has experienced any region with which he can compare the Holy Land, and he recalls an uncharted island he sailed to in his younger years. The pictures he presents is a compression of the imagery in Melville's earlier The Encantadas. This island stands in opposition to the oasis islands suggested in Part III. This is the depraved, entrapped world held in thrall by an evil enchanter in which the central symbol for man is the giant tortoise. Here, the hump image associated with many figures throughout the poem and the arch image with all its metamorphosed images are joined as the shell of the imprisoned creature.

> But list--a sound! Dull it booms--
> Dull as the jar in vaulted tombs
> When urns are shifted. With amaze
> Into the dim retreats ye gaze.
> Lo, 'tis the monstrous tortoise drear!
> Of huge humped arch, the ancient shell
> Is trenched with seams where lichens dwell,
> Or some adhesive growth and sere:
> A lumpish languor marks the pace--
> A hideous, harmless look, with trace
> Of hopelessness; the eyes are dull

As in the bog the dead black pool
Penal his aspect; all is dragged,
As he for more than years had lagged--
A convict doomed to bide the place.
(IV,iii,417)

And, in a passage that strikingly foreshadows the last section of Eliot's "The Waste Land" and the cactus and dry bone imagery of that poem and "The Hollow Men," we get,

Searching, he creeps with laboring neck,
Each crevice tries, and long may seek:
Water he craves, where rain is none--
Water within the parching zone,
Where only dews at midnight fall
And dribbling lodge in chinks of stone.
For meat the bitter tree is all--
The cactus, whose nipped fruit is shed
On those bleached skull-like hulks below,
Which, when life inhabited,
Crept hither in last journey slow
After a hundred years of pain
And pilgrimage here to and fro,
For other hundred years to reign
In hollow of white armor so--
Then perish piecemeal.
(IV,iii,417)

This vision is of man doomed to Ezekiel's valley of dry bones and doomed to die slowly with a great deal of patience. This is the counter vision to Nehemiah's City of God, and the "dead black pool" is the Dead Sea which coalesces with Jerusalem and is the dead center of the Holy Land. This is the New Jerusalem, the new dispensation, the islands of the Galapagos, which Darwin wrote of in his The Voyage of the Beagle and where he garnered observations for The Origin of Species.

In the next canto, "An Intruder," Agath is startled by a scorpion which is immediately identified with evil. Derwent wonders that Agath, who has been through so many terrifying experiences, should be frightened by a mere scorpion, but Rolfe

states that he has seen soldiers going bravely into battle who were frightened by the sight of a spider. Though the scorpion episode indicates that Agath unlike Nehemiah is capable of recognizing evil when he sees it, it has, I think, a further implication. Scorpion imagery pervades Chapter IX of Revelations but the evil power of the locusts who have the power of scorpions is a limited power, not a lasting evil.

> 3. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth; and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.
>
> 4. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.
>
> 5. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.[1]

When Role notes the disporportionate nature of evil and further says that one cannot speak of evil without speaking of the ambiguous relation of evil and good,

> Cried Rolfe, while thus they stood enchained:
> "O small epitome of devil,
> Wert thou an ox couldst thou thus sway?
> No, disproportionate is evil
> In influence. Evil do I say?
> But speak not evil of the evil:
> Evil and good they braided play
> Into one cord."
> (IV,iv,419)

he, to a certain extent, joins Derwent who is deemphasizing evil. Yet it is important to note that when the scorpion is alluded to earlier in the Sodom canto of Part II, it is linked to those unspeakable non-carnal sins that overthrew the Cities

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[1]Rev. 9:3,4,5.

of the Plain. Agath, who is so clear sighted that he can see the wrecked city of Jerusalem, can also be frightened by the scorpion because like Mortmain he senses the implication of this disporportionate evil. In order to get the full effect of this one must recall Mortmain's speech by the Dead Sea in the Sodom canto. After seeing the star of Wormwood Mortmain alludes to the scorpion as follows:

> 'Twas not all carnal harlotry,
> But sins refined, crimes of the spirit,
> Helped earn that doom ye here inherit: . . .
>
> Wert thou that venomous small thing
> Which tickled with the poisoned straw?
> (II,xxxiv,263)

The nature of this evil is set forth as:

> Fie, fie, that didst in formal will
> Plot piously the posthumous snare.
> (II,xxxiv,263)
>
> Not ever on the tavern bench
> Ye lolled. Few dicers here, few sots,
> Few sluggards, and no idiots.
> 'Tis thou who servedst Mammon's hate
> Or greed through forms which holy are--
> Black slaver steering by a star,
> 'Tis thou--and all like thee in state.
> Who knew the world yet varnished it;
> Who traded on the coast of crime
> Though landing not; who did outwit
> Justice, his brother, and the time--
> These, chiefly these, to doom submit.
> But who the manifold may tell?
> And sins there be inscrutable,
> Unutterable."
> (II,xxxiv,263,264)

And this evil is given a Manichean twist with:

> "Be these the beads on the wives'-wine,
> Tofana-brew?--O fair Medea--
> O soft man-eater, furry fine:
> Oh, be thou Jael, be thou Leah--
> Unfathomably shallow!--No!
> Nearer the core than man go
> Or Science get--nearer the slime

> Of nature's rudiments and lime
> In chyle before the bone. Thee, thee,
> In thee the filmy clell is spun--
> The mould thou are of what men be:
> Events are all in thee begun--
> (II,xxxiv,264)

Agath is no Mortmain; though to some extent he is a monomaniac. However, he displays some of Mortmain's insight into the nature of this world.

As the pilgrims journey on to Bethlehem, attention turns to the stranger who is revealed as Ungar, a disillusioned survivor of the Confederate Army in the recent Civil War. He comes originally from the Southwestern Part of the United States, but Rolfe remembers seeing him in Egypt; training conscripts for a foreign power, and later at Jaffa he saw him examining cannon for some Turkish officers. He is now a mercenary and provides a symbolic link between the wars of the Old and New Worlds.

> Our New World bold
> Had fain improved upon the Old;
> But the hemisphere are counterparts.
> (IV,v,422)

Ungar may be related to Agath but he is best seen as a development of Mortmain. Though his blue powder burn links him to Agath, and also to the blue of the Virgin Mary, the saber cut scar on his cheek testifies to his having been through the fires of battle. Thus he is a kind of physical counterpart of Mortmain's intellectual struggle, and yet he provides a new development. Like Mortmain he believes that democracy is bringing a new meaning to the fall of man in that the fall of the New World is in a sense a greater fall

than the Old World since the New World has higher aspirations. Yet unlike Mortmain he fought his lost cause to maintain slavery, and he continues to hire himself out as a mercenary. The fact that he is part American Indian makes him genetically an amalgam of the Old World and the New. Though he comes from a family of Catholic settlers who settled Maryland, he keeps only his tribal name. An exile who fought in a lost cause, he nevertheless, is not given over to despair. However, though he is said to murmur a song which offers hope,

> "Elating and elate,
> Do they mount them in their pride?
> Let them wait a little, wait,
> For the brimming of the flood
> Brings the turning of the tide."
> (IV,v,425)

Yet the narrator comments,

> His lyric. Yet in heart of hearts
> Perchance its vanity he knew,
> At least suspected.
> (IV,v,425)

Both Agath and Ungar are complex transmutations of Nehemiah and Mortmain.

The pilgrims arrive at Bethlehem and though they feel a temporary uplift in spirits through the beauty of the verdant hills, remembrance of Nehemiah's declined invitation to visit Bethany suddenly interposes and they near the town with heavy hearts. As they approach, Melville reverses the metaphoric structure of the imagery used at the beginning of "Benito Cereno" and the narrator describes the monastery at Bethlehem as an old battleship which has seen many wars. When they arrive, though they enjoy their repast, their meal is in sharp

contrast to the merry making that went on at their arrival in Mar Saba.

After the compline service, all of the pilgrims retire except Ungar, who climbs a terrace stair to gaze in adoration at the Eastern skies. As he looks at the constellations he seems determined to voice some form of guarded optimism in a passage that slightly echoes Arnold's "Self Dependence,"

> "Now night enthrones
> Arcturus and his shining sons;
> And lo, Job's chambers of the South:
> How might his hand not go to mouth
> In kiss adoring ye, bright zones?
> Look up: the age, the age forget--
> There's something to look up to yet!"
>
> (IV,vii,430)

From here to the point where Clarel learns of the death of Ruth, star imagery is very much a part of almost every canto, and the admonition to "look up" occurs more than once.

Canto vii, "The Pillow" has a line, "Pan, Pan is dead!" which recalls Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" and the canto substitutes the death of Christianity for the death of the ancient religions. This little "night" passage given by the narrator is followed the next morning by Derwent's getting everyone up to watch the sunrise. This is carried out as a mock pagan worship, with Derwent making an allusion to Apollo. A visit to a place referred to as the Shepherd's Dale and the sight of a shepherd boy elicits a controversy, primarily between Ungar and Derwent, on the theme of humanitariansim and the humane treatment of children, with Derwent, as usual, holding out for progress, and Ungar stressing the capitalistic

exploitation of child labor. The exploitation of child labor is compared to the supposed killing of a boy, Hugh of Lincoln, by Jews in the Middle Ages,

> How many Hughs of Lincoln, say,
> Does Mammon in his mills, to-day,
> Crook, if he do not crucify?"
> (IV,ix,435)

In the next canto the pilgrims see a monument which shows, among other things, an emblem crossed by a pastoral crook and a tablet displaying a lamb being sheared so that the fleece comes off like a garment with spots that suggest blood. The theme that runs throughout these cantos is the slaughter of the innocents, and throughout these episodes that emphasize the greed and corruption of Mammon, silver imagery gradually becomes a gathering metaphor. This connects in a fairly subtle manner with the rest of the silver imagery that occurs throughout Part IV. Money is mentioned when the pilgrims first arrive at Bethlehem and find they have to pay rather heavily for their board and keep, and though the thirty pieces of silver for which Judas betrayed Christ are never mentioned in connection with this shifting use of silver imagery, their presence seems always hovering in the background. In Canto x, "A Monument," in which the dialectic theme is the relative mammonism of the Middle Ages and the Modern World, the mercantile term "manifest" and a reference to silver plate joins with the silver imagery to undercut Ungar's meaning when he declares in favor of the Middle Ages,

> Religion was then the good guest,
> First served, and last, in every gate:

What mottoes upon wall and plate!
She every human venture shared:
The ship in manifest declared
That not-disclaiming heaven she thrust
Her bowsprit into fog and storm:
Some current silver bore the palm
Of Christ, . . .
(IV,x,438)

This argument between Derwent and Ungar reaches a high intensity over the relative merits of past and present in which Ungar defends both the Pope and the Turks, when suddenly the argument is interrupted by the announcement of Agath's departure. Significantly, Agath leaves just before they visit the Church of the Star, presumably the site of the Manger, and though the pilgrims wave goodbye to the old man, he does not express his farewell in any overt manner,

They rise, and or a little space
In farewell Agath they detain,
Transferred here to a timelier train
Than theirs. A work-day, passive face
He turns to Derwent's luck to thee!
No slight he means--'tis far from that;
But schooled by the inhuman sea,
He feels 'tis vain to wave the hat
In God-speed on this mortal strand;
Recalling all the sailing crews
Destined to sleep in ocean sand,
Cheered from the warf with blithe adieus.
Nor less the heart's farewell they say,
And bless the old man on his way.
(IV,xiii,445,446)

Agath, like the patient tortoise he tells of in his sketch, is ready to go on battling the elements. The phrase, "timelier train" suggests that he is more in keeping with the times than the other pilgrims, and when the narrator notes that he is "schooled by the inhuman sea," the suggestion is that he has come to some such attitude as that expressed by Melville

in his line in "Pebbles," one of the poems in John Marr and Other Sailors, "Healed of my hurt/I laud the inhuman sea--"[2]

Led by a slender young monk whose ringed curls suggest the rich colored hair of the prodigal Lyonese, and whose monk's habit and simple manners cover "The slumbering of a vivid spark--" the pilgrims come to a silver star which marks the place of the Manger, and Derwent restrains an impluse to make some humorous comment. Going down into a crypt they are told this is the exact place of the Nativity. Rare objects of antiquity surround them but instead of these being the presents brought by the Magi, they are identified with products of the mines of King Solomon and the Mexican Aztecs,

> Dim pendent lamps, in cluster small
> Were Pleiads of the mystic hall:
> Fair lamps of silver, lamps of gold--
> Rich gifts devout of monarchs old,
> Kings catholic. Rare objects beamed
> All round, recalling things but dreamed:
> Solomon's talismans garnered up,
> His sword, his signet-right and cup.
> In further caverns, part revealed,
> What silent shapes like statues kneeled;
> What brown monks moved by twinkling shrines
> Like Aztecs down in silver mines.
> (IV,xiii,448,449)

This imagery suggests Old and New World treasure and the articles are those of war and government, not the gifts of the Magi.

They draw nearer into the grotto and encounter, in a semi-circular space, a silver sun set in the marble floor with jasper sparks which radiate out to a silver Latin in-

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[2]Melville, Collected Poems, p. 206.

scription which reads, "THE VIRGIN HERE BROUGHT FORTH THE SON" with the obvious pun on sun. This is an underground silver sun hidden from the light, lit only by the lamps of the monks. The monk who is conducting them through the cave notes a masked levity in Derwent and declares fervently that this is the place where Christ was born. They are then led further into the cave where they see, among some worshipping shepherds, others who have sought refuge here. The monk tells them that these are refugees from over the Jordan who have been mutilated with the loss of a hand, an eye or an ear. Derwent averts his eyes but Ungar is put into a rage by this manifestation of man's inhumanity toward man. They are then brought to a crib which is covered with white and gold cloth and embroidered with pinks, and this flower, though it symbolically stands for excellence and exquisite perfection, is not the rose one would ordinarily expect to find. Though there is an artificial dream-like quality about this scene, the pilgrims are visibly touched and this pleases the monk.

> It touched the pilgrims, as might seem;
> Which pleased the monk; but in disguise
> Modest he dropped his damsel-eyes.
> (IV,xiii,452)

We are presented with Derwent's inner thoughts about the monk, and the description recalls an earlier description of Ruth,

> Thought Derwent then: Demure in sooth!
> 'Tis like a maid in lily of youth
> Who grieves not in her core of glee,
> By spells of grave virginity
> To cozen men to foolish looks:
> While she--who reads such hearts' hid nooks?--
> (IV,xiii,452)

In the next canto, Ungar, unlike Derwent, is visibly sympathetic to what the monk is saying, and the monk, noticing this, tells him that the sword he bears is a true cross. Ungar holds it up so that blade and hilt form a cross. This makes Ungar a kind of surrogate knight templar. Ungar's sympathetic attention prompts the monk to tell him of how St. Francis once met a knight, Angelo Tancredi, and convinced him to become a monk. Now, though the reference is to the Tancredi that wrote a life of St. Francis, the passage is probably also meant to recall Tancred in Tasso's Gerusaleme Liberata, who though in that poem is the next greatest fighter to Rinaldo, has one flaw, his fatal desire for women. His special love is Clorinda, a pagan whom he unwittingly kills at night when she is disguised as a boy. This confusion of the sexes is played on further in this passage when Rolfe begins to speak of St. Francis whom he likens to Christ. He further says,

> He instituted a reform
> (Not in surrection) which restored
> For time the spirit of his Lord
> On earth. If sad perversion came
> Unto his order--what of that?
> All Christianity shares the same:
> Pure things men need adlterate
> And so adapt them to the kind.
> (IV,xiv,454,455)

Derwent counters this with,

> "Oh, oh! But I have grown resigned
> To these vagaries.--And for him,
> Assisi's saint--a good young man,
> No doubt, and beautiful to limn;
> Yes, something soft, Elysian;
> Nay, rather, the transparent hue
> Unearthly of a maiden tranced

> In sleep somnambulic; no true
> Color of health; beauty enhanced
> To enervation. In a word,
> For all his charity divine,
> Love, self-devotion, ardor fine--
> Unmanly seems he!"
> (IV,xiv,455)

And, when Rolfe says that Machiavelli hinted the same thing about Christ, and asks what is meant to be manly, Derwent says that it means to be man-like. Rolfe rebuffs him, saying that one should not put too much stress on carnal manliness but should emphasize the Christliness of St. Francis in man. In what seems a clear case of psychological projection Derwent changes the subject,

> "See, see,"
> Said Derwent, with kind air of one
> Who would a brother's weak spot shun:
> 'Mark this most delicate drapery;
> If woven by some royal dame--
> God bless her and her tambour frame!"
> (IV,xiv,455)

and in the next canto, Vine, to the intense interest of Clarel, gives one of his few long speeches. His reference to the silver cord of Ecclesiastes,

> "'Tis very much
> The cold fastidious heart to touch
> This way; nor is it mere address
> That so could move one's silver cord.
> How he transfigured Ungar's sword!
> (IV,xv,456)

seems the old medical reference which calls the meddulla oblongata of the spinal cord, the silver cord, because of its silver gray color.[3] Vine points out the delusive nature of

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[3]Adam Clarke, The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes (New York and Nashville: Abbington-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), p. 838.

the monk's earnestness, but, suddenly, his talk is interrupted by an organ concert that seems to the pilgrims a mirror of the complexity of human experience. The concert rises to a climax in tumultuous passages that are likened to a shipwreck and then subsides to a peaceful conclusion. This is followed by the sound of wings and harps and finally a carol of children's voices. The concert ends with,

> It dies; and, half around the heavenly sphere,
> Like silvery lances lightly touched aloft--
> Like Northern Lights appealing to the ear,
> An elfin melody chimes low and soft.
> That also dies, that last strange fairy-thrill:
> Slowly it dies away, and all is sweetly still.
> (IV,xv,458)

From this grotto they move on to other caves and finally out into the open, passing by a stoup of Holy Water just in time to see the unattended ass drinking out of it. After this comic touch which dispels the solemnity of what has gone before, the monk, now identified as Brother Salvaterra, leaves them just as they are about to ascend to the roof of the convent. Derwent says,

> "'Tis a fair name. And, brother, we
> Are not insensible, conceive,
> To thy most Christian courtesy.--
> He goes. Sweet echo does he leave
> In Salvaterra: may it swell!
> Silver in every syllable."
> (IV,xiv,460)

Upon ascending to the flat roof of the convent, they encounter an old monk who, though he is at the site of Christ's birth, is described as gazing toward the sea in the direction of Rome.

"Seaward he gazed," said Rolfe, "toward home:
An empty longing!"
(IV,xvi,461)

Derwent calls Rome cruel and then, lightly, likens Bethlehem to the pastoral vale in the eclogues, and then, pointing to a young girl in the distance, says that perhaps she is Ruth. Though he is referring to the Ruth of the Old Testament, Clarel starts, thinking for a moment of Ruth back in Jerusalem. He has a presentiment of death and almost decides to shorten his stay and return alone, but decides not to. This whole episode on the roof serves to counteract the spell of the Cave of the Manger. Here, they are not under the silver star and the silver sun but under the natural sky, and this dissipates the earlier spell. Derwent tells Rolfe that the spell is now as a dream in which phantoms beckoned and then faded with the awakening. Rolfe says that in part he agrees and compares the recent experiences to the masque enacted earlier by the monks at Mar Saba, but mistakenly confuses the night of the masque with the night of the revels, thus illustrating, even while he is talking about the power of tradition to retain the past, the tendency of the present to distort that past. He compares their viewing the stars at this time to the Magi of Chaldea viewing Riegel and Betalguese, and this star imagery is obviously in opposition to the star of Bethlehem. The canto closes with a reminiscence about a time in Constantinople when an Asian pointed out to Rolfe that,

'The rule, the Magian rule is run,
And Mythra abdicates the sun!'
(IV,xvi,464)

In the next canto some Arab children are sighted and when Derwent asks who they are he is told they are Arab Catholics, the children whom they saw a short time ago, worshipping in the Cave of the Manger. Rolfe calls them "children of the sun" and Derwent intimates that in their form of worship they are merely subjecting themselves to a Prospero, a magician. After extending this theme of the triumph of the Magi over the unenlightened, Clarel is left on the roof with Rolfe and Ungar, who is gazing down at the monk, Salvaterra. Rolfe inquires of Clarel what he thinks of Ungar. Since he does not specify Ungar but says only "him" Clarel thinks Rolfe is referring to the monk and says that if he could only have the faith of the monk he would put up with such obvious fakes as the Cave and the Manger. Rolfe quickly says that he means Ungar, and Clarel replies that he finds the man strange and cannot quite make him out. Rolfe agrees and says that, unlike the Arnaut, who has all the glory of the warrior before battle, Ungar is the aftermath of war, but adds that Ungar is a "Brave soldier" and "stout thinker." (IV,xvii,466).

After a canto of additional argument in which Ungar espouses the heart over the head and says that little can be gained by intellectual debate,

> Though much we knew in desert late,
> Beneath no kind auspicious star,
> Of lifted minds in poised debate--
> 'Twas of the brain. Consult the heart!
> Spouse to the brain--can coax or thwart:
> Does <u>she</u> renounce the trust divine?

> Hide it she may, but scarce resign;
> Like to a casket buried deep
> Which, in a fine and fibrous throng,
> The rootlets of the forest keep--
> 'Tis tangled in her meshes strong."
>
> (IV,xviii,468,469)

and which again uses the imagery of buried treasure, recalled from the canto describing Vine in Part I, a newcomer arrives. This is a friend of Derwent, Don Hannibal Rohon Del Aquaviva, whose name seems to allegorically mean: a reddening of the living water, and who hails fairly recently from Mexico where he fought for Mexican independence. Unlike Ungar, who fought to maintain slavery, he fought for freedom; yet he too is disillusioned; in fact, it is Ungar's statement that only penalty makes sinner repent that announces his arrival. A cripple, he shares Ungar's distrust of progress and democracy, he briefly takes the soldier's side in an argument against Derwent. Though he shares Ungar's fear of democracy and is pessimistic about the future of the Americas, he is not at all like him in temperament. He is jolly though there is a caustic irony in his jollity. Don Hannibal refers to himself as a "reformado reformed." (IV,xix,473).

The Mexican leaves, but speculation on the word reform leads to an argument over the nature of the Reformation and the relation between the Reformation and humanitarian reform. Ungar argues that there can be no earthly perfection and that man will be forever corrupt,

> Your methods? These are of the world:
> Now the world cannot save the world;
> And Christ renounces it. His faith,
> Aims straight at heaven.
>
> (IV,xx,477)

And, later, in the next canto when Rolfe takes up the argument, this time as a kind of mediator between Derwent and Ungar, he says,

> "Arts are tools;
> But tools, they say are to the strong:
> Is Satan weak? weak is the Wrong?
> No blessed augury overrules:
> Your arts advance in faith's decay:
> You are but drilling the new Hun. . .
> (IV,xxi,480)

It is indeed curious that Ungar should use the word Hun, since his name in German means a Hungarian. It is as though Ungar is qualified to speak of man's depravity because he has been and is a participant in it. He admits his monomania and goes on to predict bluntly,

> "Know,
> Whatever happens in the end,
> Be sure 'twill yield to one and all
> New confirmation of the fall
> Of Adam. Sequel may ensure,
> Indeed, whose germs one now may view:
> Myriads playing pygmy parts--
> Debased into equality:
> In glut of all material arts
> A civic barbarism may be:
> Man disennobled--brutalized
> By popular science--Atheized
> Into a smatterer----"
> (IV,xxi,483)

And though they are shocked somewhat by Ungar, Rolfe, Vine and Clarel have to own that they have their own misgivings about the role that America is to play,

> They felt how far beyond the scope
> Of elder Europe's saddest thought
> Might be the New World's sudden brought
> In youth to share old age's pains--
> To feel the arrest of hope's advance,
> And squandered last inheritance;
> And cry--"To Terminus build fanes!

Columbus ended earth's romance:
No New World to mankind remains!
(IV,xxi,484)

Throughout this dialectic, which stretches over several cantos, sun imagery dominates. This is given an ironic twist when Derwent says to Rolfe,

"The icicle,
The dagger-icicle draws blood;
But give it sun!" "You mean his mood
Is accident--would melt away
In fortune's favorable ray.
But if 'tis happiness he lacks,
Why let the gods warm all cold backs
With that good sun.
(IV,xxii,484)

Forces that throughout the poem have long been having a tug of war in Clarel's mind are now beginning to fight their decisive battle. Clarel is profoundly affected by Ungar's pessisim concerning man's fate and his response is to lean in the direction of hedonism,

If man in truth be what you say,
And such the prospects for the clay,
And outlook of the future--cease!
What's left us but the senses' sway?
(IV,xxii,486)

Yet he remembers the star,

Yet, yet there gleams one beckoning star--
So near the horizon, judge I right
That 'tis of heaven?
But wanes the light--
The evening Angelus is rolled:
They rise, and seek the convent fold.
(IV,xxii,486)

Shortly after Clarel reaches this new insight, the pilgrims hear a song in the twilight. This, the song of the prodigal Lyonese, is on the surface a simple love song that possibly recalls "Fair Ines" of Thomas Hood, but which has

traditional Christian symbolism.

"Over the river
In gloaming, ah, still do ye plain?
Dove-dove in the mangroves,
How dear is thy pain!

"Sorrow--but fondled;
Reproaches that never upbraid
Spite the passion, the yearning
Of love unrepaid.

"Teach me, oh! teach me
Thy cadence, that Inez may thrill
With the bliss of the sadness,
And love have his will!
(IV,xxiv, 488,489)

At the end of the next canto, after Derwent has sought out his friend Don Hannibal, the narrator warns that in what follows, "a satyr's chord is strung."

In Canto xxvi, "the Prodigal," all the pilgrims go to sleep but Clarel and the Lyonese who is said to repel the poppy. In context this merely means sleep but probably the image is also meant to recall the poppy or rose of Sharon that occurs at the beginning of the poem. The Lyonese, a young man travelling for a merchant house in Lyon, is the last of the hedonists to appear. The narrator later refers to him as toy of Mammon, and Clarel says at one point that he has a silvery voice, thus he is obviously a counterpart of Brother Salvaterra. Looked at in terms of analogues he fulfills the same function as the Serpent in the Garden of Eden. He misrepresents himself in that he doesn't reveal his true identity and as a result of listening to him, Clarel is said to reach for the Fruit of the Tree of Life.

In this canto Clarel engages him in conversation about the Holy Land and finds that the young man is interested only in the delights of the country which he compares to the delights of Damascus. He tells Clarel that Jewish women are famous for their beauty and he identifies the Songs of Solomon with the poetry of Hafiz. Both, he says have suffered at the hands of later commentators who have tried to gloss over the frank sensuality of each with spiritual interpretations.

They go to sleep and Clarel dreams of the Lyonese and the monk Salvaterra,

> No more: they slept. A spell came down;
> And Clarel dreamed, and seemed to stand
> Betwixt a Shushan and a sand;
> The Lyonese was lord of one,
> The desert did the Tuscan own,
> The pale pure monk. A zephyr fanned;
> It vanished, and he felt the stain
> Of clasping arms which would detain
> His heart from each ascetic range,
> He woke; 'twas day; he was alone,
> The Lyonese being up and gone:
> Vital he knew organic change,
> Or felt, at least that change was working--
> A subtle innovator lurking.
> (IV,xxvi,500)

After Clarel wakes he goes up on the roof just in time to see the prodigal riding off, and as the young man rides he sings a song to "Signora Nature" who rules everything. This canto and the three cantos that follow provide the crisis of the poem, and the six cantos that follow these give the resolution.

On the roof Clarel encounters Derwent, that early sun-worshipper, and the priest tells him that he was very much struck by the almost feminine beauty of the Lyonese. He compares him to Bacchus,

My thoughts were wandering away,
Though never once mine eyes did stray,
He did so pleasingly beguile
To keep them fixed upon his form:
Such harmony pervades his warm
Soft outline.--Who now, what a scare
Of incredulity you speak
From eyes! But it was some such fair
Young sinner in the time antique
Suggested to the happy Greek
His form of Bacchus--the sweet shape!
(IV,xxviii,501)

The rapid appearance and disappearance of the Lyonese, his physical appearance and his effect on Derwent, Clarel and others, clearly marks him out as something special and makes his coming suggest the mysterious appearance of the Greek god himself. Derwent is as attracted to him as he is repelled by Salvaterra and the androgynous nature of both Christ and Bacchus makes him a counterpart of Christ. Clarel has encountered a series of hedonists throughout the poem but none of them affects him like the prodigal. They are Greek and he is not.

In Canto xxvii, "David's Well" we learn that Ungar has left in the same caravan as the Lyonese. There is much coming and going and Don Hannibal leaves, saying goodbye to Derwent. More important, Clarel learns from a Russian friend of the Lyonese, newly arrived, that the prodigal is Jewish. The effect of the Lyonese on Clarel has already been evidenced by Clarel's dream, and now this revelation, which he has already anticipated vaguely because of the Lyonese's knowledge of the Old Testament, affects Clarel strongly,

> And amain
> Confirmed the student felt the reign
> Of reveries vague, which yet could mar,
> Crossed by a surging element--
> Surging while aiming at content:
> So combs the billow ere it breaks upon the bar.
> (IV,xxxvii,506)

At the beginning of Clarel, the divinity student has set out to learn something of the real nature of the Jewish heritage. Clarel encounters the prodigal just when he is questioning man's right to anything but a life of the senses, and the fact that the prodigal is a Jew upsets the Hellenic-Hebraic balance in the poem. Though not exactly Arnoldian, Melville's brand of Hellenism-Hebraism owes much to Arnold, and the Lyonese is perhaps best seen as an ironic treatment of the closing lines of Arnold's preface to Culture and Anarchy,

> For this word, reiterated with a power now sublime, now affecting, but always admirable, our race will, as long as the world lasts, return to Hebraism; and the Bible, which preaches this word, will forever remain, as Goethe called it, not only a national book, but the Book of the Nations. Again, and again, after what seemed breaches and separations, the prophetic promise to Jerusalem will still be true:-- Lo, thy sons come, whom thou sentest away; they come gathered from the west unto the east by the word of the Holy One, rejoicing in the remembrance of God.[4]

It is important to see the way in which the Lyonese differs from Vine. Earlier, Vine is said to be a combination of Hellenic cheer and Hebraic grief and though everything about his physical appearance makes him appear an older version of the Lyonese, we are told that he knows that there can be no final happiness through the flesh. The Lyonese with his hedonistic emphasis denies Hebraism altogether, and Clarel

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[4]Matthew Arnold, The Works of Matthew Arnold, 15 vols. Vol. VI (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, Simith Elder and Co., 1903), p. xlvii.

finding that he cannot, like Ungar, lean in the direction of Salvaterra because of this lost faith, embraces the world as a result of his experience with the young hedonist.

Canto xxix, "The Night Ride" presents the turning point in Clarel. The day is Shrove Tuesday and those pilgrims who have not already gone prepare to ride to Jerusalem. Ordinarily a time of carnival they are sad as they remember the deaths of Nehemiah and Mortmain. However, Clarel feels fairly lighthearted and sees a ray of hope in all this gloom. The imagery that describes this picks up the sun-ray-through-cleft imagery of Part III,

> But one there was (and Clarel he)
> Who, in his aspect free from cloud,
> Here caught a gleam from source unspied,
> As cliff may take on mountain-side,
> When there one small brown cirque ye see,
> Lit up in mole, how mellowly,
> Day going down in somber shroud--
> October pall.
> (IV,xxix,507)

The sudden inspiration he has received is presented with an imagery that recalls Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden,

> Yea, now his hand would boldly reach
> And pluck the nodding fruit to him,
> Fruit of the tree of life.
> (IV,xxix,507)

He will return to Jerusalem, take Ruth and her mother and flee Palestine as a bad place. He now feels a great sense of bouyancy,

> The Lyonese, to sense so dear,
> Nor less from faith a fugitive--
> Had he infected Clarel here?
> (IV,xxix,508)

A last faint doubt comes upon him but he dispels it and his rejection of ascetisism is given as a rejection of Manicheism.

> Nay, nay: Ah! God, keep far from me
> Cursed Manes and the Manichee!
> At large here life proclaims the law:
> Unto embraces myriads draw
> Through sacred impulse. Take thy wife;
> Venture, and prove the soul of life,
> And let fate drive.
> (IV,xxix,509)

At this point the pilgrims reach the Cistern of the Kings where the Magi were supposed to have seen the Star. Clarel sees it buried down in the water as a reflection, and then looking up sees the star itself. They journey on and as they near Jerusalem the final silver image occurs as the sky is described as the lid of a giant coffin,

> Whose stars like silver nail-heads gleam
> Which stud some lid over lifeless eyes.
> (IV,xxix,510)

Reaching the outskirts of the city they encounter a group of grave diggers and discover that two graves have been dug and that a group of mourning Jews are preparing to bury two bodies. Clarel, who all along has had vague intimation that something was happening to Ruth, asks who is being buried. Curiously, he uses the word, enchanted,

> But speech he won:
> "No--yes: enchanted here!--her name?"

On learning that they are Ruth and Agar, he, fittingly enough, sees only blackness as he is about to faint. The death of Ruth is the death of God's mercy, the powers of blackness have triumphed. His cry is a variation on Samson's cry in Milton's Samson Agonistes,

O blind, blind, barren universe!
(IV,xxx,513)

He is told that the two died either of grief or fever and that no message was left; Ruth died suddenly, and Agar died,

Babbling of gulls and ocean wide--
(IV,xxx,513)

Clarel is told to leave and that he is desecrating a sacred service, but before he leaves he shouts his defiance at the universe,

> "Spurn--I'll endure; all spirit's fled
> When one fears nothing.--Bear with me
> Yet bear!--Conviction is not gone
> Though faith's gone: that which shall not be
> It ought to be!
> (IV,xxx,513)

He is now forced to leave, and in a sense the poem has come full circle. Not only has Clarel made a circular journey but he is at the gate of Stephen the Martyr where Celio was locked out after his raging cry at the universe. Yet, though Clarel has reached a somewhat similar lack of belief, he is no monomaniac; he has received the education by which he can endure as Vine and Rolfe endure. Symbolically, the doors of the gate are opened and he enters Jerusalem just as the dawn of Ash Wednesday is breaking.

Four cantos close the poem: a dirge for the dead, a canto devoted to Passion week during which Clarel takes leave of Vine, Rolfe and Derwent, a canto devoted to a discussion of Easter, and a final canto. In this last, Easter is over, the worshippers have all departed, and Jerusalem is described as a city that has taken on the colors of November. We get a

final glimpse of Clarel in the passage already quoted in Chapter II, walking down the Via Crucis, then taking a side route and disappearing in the obscure city, for him a New Jerusalem. A short epilogue echoes the faint ray of hope that has appeared over and over throughout the poem.

CHAPTER VI

THE OCEANIC SENSE

There has been much argument as to the value of Clarel as a work of art. The general tendency has been to dismiss the poem as an interesting failure. Bezanson in his introduction, attempting to revaluate the poem, argues as follows:

> It is confusing indeed to encounter, as we have at times, the notion that Clarel is full of 'bad poetry' but somehow is a 'good poem.' Of course one section can be good, another bad. But I take it that something else is meant--that somehow Clarel is an effective revelation of Melville's spiritual and psychological history, and of the contemporary crisis in general, though unfortunately the 'poetry' is bad. The questions raised are complex. In what follows I shall assume that it is not possible for bad poetry to communicate a significant, ordered world for imaginative values. Whatever limitations the poem has are inherent in the poetry; what is not well said never gets into the poem. Whatever is genuinely there is there because of, indeed through, the verse, however often it may be endangered by inepitudes. The question, then is what the poem is about.[1]

That Clarel is a fascinating poem to those who have taken the trouble to probe the poem's surface is generally admitted; that the poem is filled with more than just occassional ineptitudes, I think most readers, particularly sensitive readers of poetry, would agree. Clarel fairly bristles with lines that are awkward in the manner of much

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[1]Bezanson, Introduction to Clarel, p. 1.

of the forgotten poetry of the nineteenth century. Melville as poet has much in common with such figures as George Henry Boker, Bayard Taylor and other relatively minor and almost forgotten poets whose poems once littered the pages of nineteenth century periodicals and whose volumes stood, presumably, firmly on the shelves of an appreciative public. Yet much of Melville's short poetry and Clarel, in particular, is different from that poetry even when in certain aspects it is also quite like it. Bezanson is right in saying that any evaluation of Melville's long poem is a complex matter, but I think he is wrong in his general approach for a valid evaluation of the poem's felicities. Instead of asking what the poem is about, one should ask what the poem is like.

Poetry, like other kinds of literature, exists on many complex interrelated levels. The best theoretical approach I have found for dealing with these levels in a way that will help resolve the dilemma of evaluating Clarel is the discussion of literary art as normative strata in The Theory of Literature of Rene Wellek and Austin Warren. Whether or not one accepts as philosophically valid the phenomenological approach of Husserl on which Roman Ingarden bases his concept of the ontological nature of literature as a series of interrelated normative strata, the restatement of these by Wellek and Warren seems to suggest to me a valid way of getting at much that is confusing in Clarel. These authors present those strata useful for our purposes as follows:

> . . . (1) the sound-stratus, euphony, rhythm and meter; (2) the units of meaning which determine the formal linguistic structure of a work of literature, its style and the discipline of stylistics investigating it systematically; (3) image and metaphor, the most centrally poetic of all styllistic devices which need special discussion also because they almost imperceptibly shade off into (4) the specific 'world' of poetry in symbol and systems of symbols which we call poetic 'myth.'[2]

Though we cannot evaluate each of these levels separately, even if we could determine exactly the boundary lines of any of the levels, for purposes of analysis and evaluation some breakdown is necessary.

Despite its growing reputation, not a great many people have read Clarel and most of these have come to the work with an extra-aesthetic interest. Most have shared the general assumptions about the work and have approached Clarel for the "through a glass darkly" biographical light that the work undoubtedly throws on Melville's complicated personality, or approached it as the final large canvas of Melville's intellectual development. Thus, they have tended to find what they were looking for and to be content with either dismissing the poem or resting content with an easy evaluation arrived at through a relatively superficial reading. Those who have read the poem all the way through more than once tend to find the poem fascinating in its own right, and yet most of these readers continue to have the reservations about the poem's artistic merits that Bezanson refers to in the

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[2]Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1942), p. 145.

passage from his introduction already quoted. Now what they are failing to do, I think, is to properly evaluate the various levels which exist in the poem.

Like many another literary work, Clarel is one of those grand failures. These failures are usually the products of great artistic personalities who have produced other works judged great, and the question of whether they are failures or not is usually hotly debated, with the works' critical reputations yoyoing in varying positions of ascendancy and descendancy in ways that are relatively independent of their popularity or unpopularity with the general reading public. Hamlet is a good example of the popular work that undergoes critical yoyoing in a way that is not likely to affect its general popularity, and Melville's Pierre is a good example of the unpopular "failure" which has it coterie of defenders.

Clarel differs from these works in the sheer forbidding nature of its surface. If we look at the poem in terms of the strata listed above, I think that most readers who have read the poem at least twice would agree that its infelicities reside pretty much in the first two strata. The sound-stratus, euphony, rhythm and meter, with the exception of many occasional brilliant touches, gives at least an initial impression of dull, routine, ordinary and sometimes very clumsy verse. While it is true that when we get engaged in the interconnections between the various structures of the poem we find rationalization for some of these crudities, no amount of attention to Melville's intention and

achievement wholly alleviates this block. For example,

> "Not thou com'st in the still small voice,"
> Said Derwent, "thou queer Mexican!"
> (IV,xx,476)

One has only to try to pronounce this out loud to get a notion of this clumsiness in which the level of sound strata plays a significant part, and one can find many examples of this in the numerous quotations in earlier chapters of this dissertation. And when we consider the second of the strata, the literal level of meaning in the romantic story and the interspersed dialectics on religious and philosophic positions, and compare this with the sound-strata, the poem is apt to appear as a somewhat confused tale, vaguely identifiable with the manner of some of the poetic narratives of Byron, such as The Giaour, but differing from such poetry in the way the main lines of action are excruciatingly interwoven with the seemingly interminably repetitious dialectics. However, with a close consideration of the third stratus with its huge image-symbol complexes that shade off into the fourth stratus, the particular mythic world that Clarel presents, the work suddenly comes alive as if by magic and the earlier rash judgments of the poem are apt to be changed.

This should not surprise us. It is true, in varying degrees, of much of the work that Melville wrote after Moby-Dick. It is certainly true of Melville's shorter fiction, and, as I have tried to show earlier, particularly true of "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids." Though it is not as true of Melville's Battle Pieces as

some critics have tried to make out, it is partially true of that work, and this kind of structure certainly very largely describes Melville's later poetry, especially the poems in John Marr and Other Sailors and such individual poems as "After the Pleasure Party" in Timoleon.

However, none of these works has the length and complication of Clarel. And this is the heart of the trouble with Melville's long poem. If we ignore the last two strata and compare Clarel with Moby-Dick, we can see that even on the level of the first strata, the various interwoven sound patterns, the euphony, rhythm and meter of that work, the long periods, so at times like the long rolling waves that envelop the Pequod, are better suited to the subject matter than the iambic tetrameter of Clarel. Perhaps even more important, on the level of the second strata, the romantic plot and the pilgrimage never sustain the other structures of the poem in the way that the hunt for the great white whale can manage to hold together all the divergent elements in Moby-Dick. Melville may not have mastered all the niceties of narrative techniques of a Henry James or a James Joyce; there are problems in point of view in both Moby-Dick and Clarel; but we feel the essential unity of Moby-Dick in a way that we can never experience it in Melville's long poem. And we experience this terrific impact on first reading in much the same way that a play-goer can receive the terrific impact of Hamlet though later he may or may not come to view it as a flawed play.

But to say that Clarel fails on some levels is not to say that it fails on all, and for the reader who is willing to tolerate the poem's infelicities, there is much of worth in this poem, for like Moby-Dick it is unique. To assess something of this uniqueness let us go back and consider some of the questions raised at the end of Chapter I. Central to the poem is the sea-desert analogy. More than any of the works covered by Auden in The Enchafed Flood, Clarel expresses the poetic-mythic world of the nineteenth century. Just as the Book of Revelations tends to gather up, present again, and open to new and richer interpretations the key images of the Old Testament, rainbow, fire, pillar of fire, vine etc., Clarel takes the central archetypal images of much of the fiction and poetry of the nineteenth century, those found in the excerpt from Wordsworth's The Prelude referred to in Chapter II, and treats these in connection with images drawn primarily from the Bible but also from the rest of Western literary culture and that part of Eastern culture that suits the author's purpose. And with this vast web Melville expresses not only a major concern of his century but perhaps the major concern of ours, for Clarel is more than just an expression of the loss of the Christian religious faith in the limited sense that it was felt during the ape and angel debates that followed the Origin of Species. As announced over and over again, the larger subject is the after effects of the Age of Reason which not only destroy the apocalyptic aspects of the Christian faith but at least temporarily dry up what is the

poem is referred to as the "oceanic sense."

The phrase, "Sands immense suggest the oceanic sense" in Canto xi, "Of Deserts" in Part II sets forth in a poetic way, and justifies, the sea-desert analogy in Clarel. Thus Arnold's "long withdrawing roar," as it is presented to us in all the various manifestations of the sea-desert ascending symbolism, carries more than the meanings of "Dover Beach," in that Melville's poem does more than take us back to the ancient pain that Sophocles felt on the Agean at the prospect of human misery; it presents us with the world that inherits the bleakness inherent in the Age of Reason. Back of the desert imagery, back of the frozen whiteness, the blankness, are the implications of the tabula rasa of John Locke, and it is not the scientific validity of the tabula rasa but the concept as symbol, as it is rather nakedly expressed in "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" that underlies Clarel, and gives force to the neo-gnosticism that permeates the poem. But let us take another look at this fading "oceanic sense" implicit in the sea-desert analogy.

Many readers of and writers on Melville have noted the way his writings anticipate the assumptions and general aura of modern depth psychology. After Mardi there is almost always an under-the-surface terrain that lures us inward and under to further exploration. Thus Melville seems to foreshadow those twentieth century writers who were influenced by Freud and his disciples, notably Jung, and who used this influence in a fairly subtle manner as, for example,

Faulkner in The Sound and the Fury, with its repeated tree, fire, and shadow images. What is true of Melville's fiction is even more true of Clarel, as Bezanson has taken pains to note and document in his introduction; yet, like the best of the writers who were influenced by the new depth analysis, Clarel and the rest of Melville's works transcend the limitations of any specific set of scientific or theoretical assumptions.

Had Melville lived at a slightly later time, as a man of voracious reading habits he would most likely have read Freud. Reading Beyond the Pleasure Principle, The Future of an Illusion and Civilization and Its Discontents, he probably would have admired Freud's daring treks into the dark continents of the psyche, but at the same time he probably would have been shocked at Freud's simple faith in the ability of science to work out satisfying answers to important questions concerning the ultimate truths about life, love and death. Melville's treatment of the Atlantic Cable image at the close of Clarel and the statement in the epilogue concerning the science of his day,

> Yea, ape and angel, strife and old debate--
> The harps of heaven and the dreary gongs of hell;
> Science the feud can only aggravate--
> No umpire she betwixt the chimes and knell:
> ("Epilogue," 523)

gives us the attitude of Melville toward easy answers offered by nineteenth century science. And what applies here to the nineteenth century doctrine of evolution would probably have been applied to The Future of an Illusion.

Nevertheless, questions posed, themes treated, and the general movement of ideas in Clarel so parallel these works of Freud, particularly Civilization and Its Discontents, that a comparison and contrast will help to illuminate Melville's long poem and give us a better understanding of the sea-desert analogy and the way it functions with the poem's other elements. In the opening part of Civilization and Its Discontents Freud is concerned with the contention that man needs a religious sense even though his religion itself may be an illusion. In order to grapple with this idea, in the second paragraph of his opening chapter he sets up a friend's objection to one aspect of his The Future of an Illusion, his earlier analysis of religion. He begins by giving his friend's objection, and then doubts the validity of that objection,

> . . . I had sent him [Freud's friend] my little book which treats of religion as an illusion, and he answered that he agreed entirely with my views on religion, but that he was sorry, I had not properly appreciated the ultimate source of religious sentiments. This consists in a peculiar feeling, which never leaves him personally, which he finds shared by many others, and which he may suppose millions more also experience. It is a feeling which he would like to call a sensation of 'eternity,' a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded, something'oceanic.' It is, he says, a purely subjective experience, not an article of belief; it implies no assurance of personal immortality, but it is the source of the religious spirit and is taken hold of by the various Churches and religious systems, directed by them into definite channels and also, no doubt, used up in them. One may rightly call oneself religious on the ground of this oceanic feeling alone, even though one rejects all beliefs and all illusions.

So far, this describes something that is very close to the "oceanic sense" presented metaphorically in Clarel, but in what Freud goes on to say in his next paragraph we can

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[3]Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958), pp. 1-2.

discern a sharp difference between the way in which Freud interprets his friend's remarks and the general impetus of Clarel.

> These views, expressed by my friend whom I so greatly honour and who himself once in poetry described the magic of illusion, put me in a difficult position. I cannot discover this 'oceanic' feeling in myself. It is not easy to deal scientifically with feelings. One may attempt to describe their physiological signs. Where that is impossible--I am afraid the oceanic feeling, too, will defy this kind of classification--nothing remains but to turn to the ideational content which most readily associates itself with the feeling. If I have understood my friend alright, he means the same thing as that consolation offered by an original and somewhat unconventional writer to his hero contemplating suicide: 'Out of this world we cannot fall!' So it is a feeling of indissoluble connection, of belonging inseparably to the external world as a whole. To me, personally, I may remark, this seems something more in the nature of an intellectual judgement, not it is true, without any accompanying feeling-tone, but with one of a kind that characterizes other equally far-reaching reflections as well. I could not in my own person convince myself of the primary nature of such a feeling. But I cannot on that account deny that it in fact occurs in other people. One can only wonder whether it is entitled to be acknowledged as the fons et origo of the whole need for religion.[4]

Now, it seems to me that this may do to explain some aspects of the oceanic sense, but it certainly does little to delineate the oceanic sense as used in Clarel, since there the oceanic sense must be adequately related to the gnostic elements of the poem.

The long tradition of gnosticism is intricate,

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[4] Ibid., p. 2.

and generalizations which will apply to the whole development are hard to come at; however, there seem to be two basic ideas common to most forms of gnosticism: (1) the idea that this world is an unstable mixture of spirit and matter from which the spirit part of the individual must try to escape, and (2) there exists a knowledge (gnosis) by means of which the initiate can escape. Gnosticism in Clarel as in other works by Melville is a gnosticism manqué because it manages only the first of the above two central ideas. Clarel, insofar as it is gnostic, like "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," deals with the need to escape this world but presents no gnosis for that escape. To rephrase Freud's poet, out of this world Clarel cannot rise; there are no magic talismans which will allow him to escape the demons which have imprisoned his soul in the enchanted islands. Neither the routes of Nehemiah nor Mortmain offer any escape from either the low desert or the high desert; and though he can learn from those tortoise characters, Vine and Rolfe, he must work out his own destiny. Like Vine and Rolfe, he is a Rama figure. Clarity means light, but the word also carries the old obsolescent meaning, Glory. In trying to follow the Lyonese and become a man of the senses he has lost Ruth, but he is like a general who has lost one battle but still has a war to fight, and his education throughout the long poem is such that he is still in touch with the oceanic sense, the "grace beyond medallions," the sense that there is something beyond the materialistic world

of the senses, and though he has no vision of the intermingling rainbows such as Dante has at the end of the Paradiso, he has some vague intimation of its existence. Thus, though the desert is drying up the oceanic sense, has dried it up in this particular case, the desert itself implies the ocean.

The sea-desert analogy is thus intimately related to the gnostic elements in Clarel, but this relation tends to exist only on the levels of the poem where image, symbol and metaphor merge with the larger mythos of what might be called the Manichean syndrome of the nineteenth century; that is, those works which present the first of the gnostic ideas referred to earlier but which are incapable of presenting the necessary gnosis.

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