

**“A Cosy, loving pair”? – The Elusion of Definitions of Queequeg and
Ishmael’s Relationship in Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick***

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In this thesis I investigate Herman Melville's sea novel *Moby-Dick* (1851), its depiction of the first same-sex marriage in American literature, and the way scholars have been unable to define the relationship of Queequeg and Ishmael as romantic, sexual or queer. Even though Melville writes that Ishmael and Queequeg, a white man from New England and a prince from an imaginary Polynesian island, get "married," the relationship is often regarded as a buddy narrative. Queequeg, regardless of the ways in which he avoids the stereotypical noble savage characteristics and remains his own man, is seen as inferior to Ishmael, which seems to suggest that the relationship cannot be equal enough to be romantic. Although defining the relationship is seemingly difficult, the imbalance of power has led to scholars to define it as unromantic.

The analysis of my thesis focuses on *Moby-Dick* and how the novel makes the omission of definition possible. In addition to that, I investigate the context of *Moby-Dick* closely. I look into the description of Ishmael's whiteness as well as the tradition of depicting the Stranger in the Western literature of the nineteenth century. I examine the birth of modern homosexual identity and the lack of it at the time of writing *Moby-Dick*. I look into the reputation of Herman Melville as the Great American writer and consider the ways in which this has affected the understanding of *Moby-Dick* over the years, especially the reading of the novel as a love story. I study the historical connection between homosexuality and cannibalism and look into Melville's way of using cannibalism as a symbol of homosexuality. I investigate how queerness and non-white identity are nowadays considered as mutually exclusive: how queerness is seen as a dominantly white identity, and how this makes recognizing Queequeg as a queer character more difficult. I discuss the similarities between queer and non-white identities of today and examine how that in turn has affected queer readings of *Moby-Dick*.

I argue that Queequeg and Ishmael's different ethnicities make it possible for scholars to deny their queerness. Because of the status of both homosexuality and people of colour in the 19th century as well as in the 20th and 21st century, these identities are seen as demeaning and therefore applying them for 19th century characters is regarded as anachronistic and even offensive. The intersection of race and queerness creates a sort of paradox. Without Queequeg being the other, Ishmael could not fall in love and escape the boundaries of society with him. However, at the same time, the fact that Queequeg is the Other makes it possible to always dodge the label of queer; he marries Ishmael because he is the racial Other, not because he is queer. In my thesis, I aspire to break that paradox and make further queer readings possible.

Keywords: homosexuality, queer, race, ethnicity, identity, cannibalism, 19th century

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1 Introduction

In summer 2016, literature magazines were filled with reviews of two vastly different books on the same subject; the life of the American author Herman Melville. *The Whale: A Love Story* by Mark Beauregard and *Melville in Love* by Michael Shelden, both released in June 2016, speculated the reasons behind Herman Melville moving his whole family to the Berkshires, highlands in western Massachusetts, despite the unsuccessfulness of his latest novels and the resultant money problems. Both Beauregard and Shelden aim at clarifying Melville's writing process and his motivation for creating his posthumously acclaimed masterpiece, *Moby-Dick* (1851; abbreviated as MD).

The Whale: A Love Story, although based on Melville's real correspondence with Nathaniel Hawthorne, is a piece of fiction, a novel. Inventing Hawthorne's replies to Melville's letters, it tells a story of the relationship of the two American writers; how Melville found an equal and an inspiration in Hawthorne, fell in love with him and ended up inscribing his epic sea novel to him "in token of my admiration for his genius" (Melville [1851] 2012, xiii). *Melville in Love* is a biography which draws conclusions from "previously unexplored documents," and suggests that what inspired Melville to write *Moby-Dick* was his passionate extramarital affair with a Berkshire neighbour Sarah Morewood (HarperCollins 2016). These two contrasting books are good examples of the mystery of Herman Melville and the creation of *Moby-Dick*; both the author and the novel continue to captivate their audience to such an extent that two very distinct books about them can be released within days from each other.

Moby-Dick is a novel defined and characterized by contrasts. The novel's dichotomies – the land and the sea, the known and the unknown, nature and culture, the hunter and the hunted, human and animal, and the Stranger and 'I' – create its uncanny atmosphere and moral dilemmas. Yet the contrasts do not end alongside with the final pages of the novel; since the posthumous success of *Moby-Dick* from the 1920s onwards, readers and researches alike have been interested in not only the novel but in Herman Melville (Galo 2014), the man behind *Moby-Dick*, who, after years of commercial failure, ended up working as a customs clerk, and died with

little money and even less glory (Robertson–Lorant 1998, 504). Although the whaler Pequod sinks with its captain and crew, the novel’s legacy lives on.

In this thesis I study the intersection of race and queerness – the dichotomy of the Stranger and I – as my starting point. I examine the relationship between the white protagonist and the othered Stranger, and how the racial difference affects the queer readings of the novel. When I first read the novel, I was drawn to *Moby-Dick* and the world of Herman Melville thanks to what I read as the novel’s radical queerness. *Moby-Dick*, released in 1851, surprised me by introducing an intimate interracial relationship between two men, a white Presbyterian from New England called Ishmael, and a Polynesian prince and cannibal called Queequeg. Melville, unlike his contemporaries and himself in his earlier writing, presents this relationship as loving, nurturing and equal, without Colonial power imbalance or coercion.

I have previously studied *Moby-Dick*’s portrayal of homosexual identity and relations, especially the relationship between Ishmael and Queequeg. However, during my research, I was continuously astonished by the academics’ resistance to putting any labels on the relationship of Ishmael and Queequeg – or, at the very least, to labeling it as queer and/or romantic. This resistance is, in my opinion, summed up in George Sanborn’s article “Whence come you, Queequeg” (2005). Sanborn (2005, 231; emphasis original) writes:

The relationship between Ishmael and Queequeg is not purely and stiffly abstract: *something* passes between them. But it is indeed a something; it is easier to say what it is not – a romantic or a sentimental feeling of love – than to say what it is.

It seems that the relationship can be defined only by exclusion. Evidently some academics, even though they have not been able to define what the relationship is, exactly, seem to have been able to define what it is not: it is not queer. What to me, a queer reader, was without any questions or doubts a romantic relationship, was to someone else something decidedly non-queer, non-romantic. In addition to this, even writers who have studied queerness in Melville’s work and suggest that a queer reading of *Moby-Dick* is not only possible but likely (Martin (1986, 1991 [1995] 2013), Herrmann (2013)), have used Fiedler as one of their sources on reading *Moby-Dick* as a love story, although Fiedler himself, in the revised edition of his book *Love*

and Death in the American Novel, and addresses his earlier writing about Ishmael and Queequeg:

“Homoerotic” is a word of which I was never very fond of, and which I like even less now. But I wanted to be quite clear that I was not attributing sodomy to certain literary characters and their authors, and so avoided when I could the more disturbing word “homosexual”.

(Fiedler [1960] 1970, 325)

The message is clear: Ishmael and Queequeg cannot be queer and/or in love. Characters created in the 1850s, long before the birth of the modern minority identity called “homosexuality” or “gayness”, cannot be adopted by the queer community of today, no matter how many queer readers have been allured by their relationship. Something in the novel seems to make it impossible.

I will study the reasoning behind this line of thought – *why and how does Ishmael and Queequeg’s relationship evade definitions?* Why can it be labeled as “not queer” and “not romantic”; as “something”, but not anything more precise or explicit? What in the novel itself and in its context, the tradition of adventure stories of the nineteenth century and Melville’s reputation as ‘the Great American novelist’, make the denying of queerness the norm? However, even though I will briefly discuss the life of Melville, I am not examining the author’s persona or asking whether Melville’s homosexual symbolism was based on the author’s homosexual experience in real life. Instead, when I examine the reasoning behind the avoidance of definition, I am interested in Melville’s life only in the sense of context, and I am more intrigued by the novel itself. How has *Moby-Dick* made it possible to evade any and all precise definitions?

My hypothesis is that this is due to Ishmael and Queequeg’s racial difference: Ishmael and Queequeg, being an interracial couple in New England in the 19th century, can never operate in harmony and must always remain deeply unequal and undemocratic. Yet I suggest further that interraciality is the definite thing that made the relationship possible in the first place; Ishmael can marry “a cannibal” because a cannibal is able to elude the social boundaries of mid-nineteenth century United States. A cannibal does not live according to New England standards but to cannibal standards, and when it comes to the ‘weird’ inhabitants of Polynesia, everything, even a same-sex marriage, is possible and even acceptable. I suggest that race in

Moby-Dick is a paradox that both allows homosexuality and at the same time makes it impossible.

I will begin by discussing postcolonial theory and race in *Moby-Dick*. I will study the characters of Ishmael and Queequeg, the ways their race is portrayed and how it influences their identity. My main sources are Dyer's ([1997] 2006) account of the studies on whiteness and white identity, Ahmed's (2000) understanding of Otherness personified by a Stranger, and the studies on the trope of Noble Savage. I will then move on to examine queer, homosexuality and pre-homosexuality; first from the current queer studies' point of view, then from a more historical perspective. I will explain why the status of homosexuality is connected to the difficulties of defining Queequeg and Ishmael's relationship. I will introduce the existing queer readings of *Moby-Dick*, and end my section on queer by discussing the Melville myth, Melville's reputation as the Great American novelist and the portrayal of ideal masculinity. Finally, I will study the intersection of race and queerness, the ways the intersection is seen in *Moby-Dick* and in Queequeg and Ishmael's relationship. I will examine the ways the intersection manifested in the 19th century America and the ways it influences our queer readings today. Finally, I will explain why the intersection of race and queerness seems to make a queer understanding of Queequeg and Ishmael's relationship impossible.

2 Postcolonial theory and race in *Moby-Dick*

Postcolonial literary criticism became its own distinct category in the 1990s, and it reveals the prolonged history of Eurocentric universalism. Postcolonialism aspires to show that instead of being universal, the Western literary canon enforces Eurocentric practices and norms while marginalizing and devaluing other works and authors. The white Euro-American superiority is taken for granted, and the works created elsewhere are labelled as an inferior ‘Other’. Barry ([1994] 2009, 186) writes:

“For centuries the European colonising power will have devalued the nation’s past, seeing its precolonial era as a pre-civilised limbo, or even as a historical void. Children, both black and white, have been taught to see history, culture and progress as beginning with the arrival of the Europeans.”

Therefore the starting point of postcolonialism and the deconstruction of colonizing power, the marginalized people have to find their identity by reclaiming their own past (Barry [1994] 2009, 185–86).

According to postcolonial studies, the tradition of othering non-white people and cultures consists of a paradox: on one hand, Others, the non-white, non-European subjects are seen a set of unattractive, displeasing characteristics including decadence, stupidity, laziness and cruelty. On the other hand, the Other is viewed as an alluring ‘realm of the exotic’, a land of wonders, seduction and mysticism. In either case, the Others are considered an undistinguishable mass, anonymous and remote. The Others are not ruled by reasons but rather by impulses and spontaneous, strong emotions like terror, lust and fury. They are unable to rationale or make conscious decisions, and their impulses are not controlled by their own persona, status or situation; they act the way they act because they are of certain race (Barry [1994] 2009, 186–87).

Race in *Moby-Dick* has been studied since the early 1960s, starting from Charles Foster’s reinterpretation of the novel as the 1850s indictment of the Fugitive Act and Compromise (Andriano 1996, 143). From then onwards, the academics studying *Moby-Dick* as well as the Melville’s other novels have generally agreed that, despite his occasional wandering into racist stereotypes typical to the Western literature of the 19th century, in *Moby-Dick* Melville attempted to create a radically anti-racist text (Andriano 1996, 143). In his article on race and evolution in *Moby-*

Dick, Andriano (1996, 143) writes: “Ishmael’s discourse is often calculated to undercut the myth of white supremacy, asserting that society’s survival may ultimately depend on the acceptance of Ishmael’s democratic vision (seeing equality in diversity) and a rejection of Ahab’s tyrannical one (seeing only white).” Ishmael, the experiencing self of the novel, becomes, as the narrative proceeds, a loving, learning antithesis to Ahab’s hatred, obsession and vengeance.

In this chapter I will discuss postcolonial theory and race with reference to *Moby-Dick*. I will begin by discussing Ishmael’s character, and doing so, study the representation of whiteness. When examining Ishmael, my main sources are Dyer’s ([1997] 2006) studies on whiteness and white identity. From Ishmael I will move on to study his “bosom-friend,” Queequeg, and look into the ways he’s represented as the Stranger, something completely different from the white American norm.

2.1. Whiteness

The protagonist of *Moby-Dick* addresses the reader before beginning his tale by saying: “Call me Ishmael” (*MD*, 3), but who is Ishmael? Along with his preferred name, our introduction to the novel’s hero are his motives for becoming a sailor. Ishmael recounts:

Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen and regulating the circulation. *Whenever* I find myself growing grim about the mouth; *whenever* it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; *whenever* I find myself involuntarily *pausing before coffin warehouses*, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially *whenever* my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately *stepping into the street*, and methodically knocking people’s hats off—then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for *pistol and ball*. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship.

(*MD*, 3; emphases added)

Ishmael is lonely, bored and depressed. Life on shore has proved to be a disappointment, one to which he is willing to wave goodbye. His depression is not a novelty; the repeated word “whenever” suggests he has found himself “growing grim about the mouth before”, that this is not the first “drizzly November” in his soul. For

him, depression is recurrent and even perpetual. The passage suggests that not only is Ishmael's depression frequent, it is also severe. He uses multiple euphemism to describe his periodical contemplation of suicide – *pausing before coffin warehouses, stepping into the street* – , and his contemplation reaches such depths that he has to fight the will to attempt taking his own life. He has to come up with creative, unusual solutions to keep it at bay, to remove himself from his usual surroundings. Only changing his environment entirely calms him down and reminds him of the things that he still holds dear.

In addition to Ishmael's vocation, the details given about him in the first chapters suggest that he is a standard citizen of New England, "born and bred in the bosom of the infallible Presbyterian Church" (*MD*, 61), a descendant of old European families (*MD*, 6), white. Because of Ishmael's assumed whiteness, his race and ethnicity have not been much examined. As Dyer argues in his study *White* ([1997] 2006, 1), race and ethnicity are something that only apply to non-white peoples. Whiteness does not need specifying; whiteness is the norm, and therefore self-explanatory. The history of Western academia suggests that only ethnicities differing from the assumedly self-evident whiteness need studying. As Katz ([1995] 2007, 15) writes: "We name and speak of 'race' and most often specify African Americans or 'black people,' not 'white people.' We name a 'black American history,' but rarely a 'white American history.'" Because whiteness is the norm, 'white American history' is considered to be simply 'American history'. Because of the colonial past, non-white identities are not allowed the same luxury; their identities seem to need endless explaining and specifying, it can never be 'simply history'. Subsequently, what is usually thought of as 'true history' has long been history written by white people, and most often than not, has ignored the white oppression and abuse of power.

This means that while people of colour are continuously under the magnifying glass of postcolonial studies, white people are not, because white people (myself included) are just people, not a race. As I mentioned earlier, one ambition of postcolonial critique has been for people of colour to reclaim their own history, but while they have been doing so, white people have been able to continue writing their own history as they always have, imperceptive and uncritical of their own white biases. Case in point: when examining Ishmael, it has been possible for white academics to focus on his loneliness, depression, his strange motivation to go to sea

(Dumm 2005, 399–402) without mentioning his race even once. Ishmael is allowed to be diverse and in constant change, a whole person, not just the colour of his skin. Ishmael's whiteness can be taken for granted, and has seemingly no effect on his character. He is the picture of the author and of the implied reader.

Following this tradition, one of the few studies to pay close attention to Ishmael's racial identity is Bernard's article "The questions of race in *Moby-Dick*" (2002) but like many articles before it, Bernard does not concentrate on whiteness and white identity. On the contrary, Bernard suggests that Ishmael is not white but biracial, and as a whole, the article is a study in Ishmael's (and some other characters') blackness. This supports Dyer's ([1997] 2006, 1-2) description of white academia and the rules it has created: race can be studied only if one studies the race of people of colour. It has been made to look like white people are not a race; they are just 'human', the norm and the standard. Following this logic, if Ishmael is white, his race does not merit looking into, because he is a complete person, not just the colour of his skin.

According to Bernard (2002, 384), the readers only assume that Ishmael is white because they think that a white novelist like Melville would intend his narrator to share his own racial background. Bernard (2002, 384) writes: "When we address his race, we discover that because Melville nowhere says he is white we have supposed him to be so, since we also assume that Melville will do our work for us and tell us what he is." Bernard backs up this theory about Ishmael's biracial identity by offering four examples: first, that Ishmael is critical of whiteness and white people in general, and presents a very radical, almost modern concept of beauty, praising black creativity (2002, 384): "There is an aesthetics in all things", Ishmael says ([1851] 2012, 325), virtually predicting the modern slogan 'black is beautiful'. Second, there are records of the name Ishmael used as a slave name, and it is a name that freed slaves could have chosen for themselves considering that the story takes place a year after the Fugitive Slave Law. Moreover, in the Bible, which is the name's origin, Ishmael's mother was a bondservant (Bernard 2002, 384). Third, in the chapter "Loomings" Ishmael tells about his history of odd jobs, and later on (*MD*, 92) is offered a minimal salary when hired on Pequod, which would have been unlikely for a white person (Bernard 2002, 386).

The fourth, and for the argument of my thesis, the most important point Bernard makes, is that Ishmael cannot be white because of all the various,

multicultural members of the crew, his closest companions are Queequeg, his bosom-friend the cannibal, and Pip, a young black American who works at the galley. Bernard characterises the relations between Ishmael and Queequeg as well as Ishmael and Pip by writing that Ishmael's "love and concern for them is as undying as the novel itself" (2002, 384). I will study this claim more closely when I discuss the intersection of race and homosexuality in Chapter four.

Although I welcome Bernard's analysis on Ishmael's ethnic background, I disagree with him. I argue that there are a number of things that do make it more likely that Ishmael is, like his creator, a white man. I do not claim Ishmael would need to be white in order to, for example, function as the individual, complex and changing protagonist that he is, nor that it would be necessary or desirable, in my analysis, to determine what Ishmael's actual ethnicity is; *what matters is that he does not share it with Queequeg*. For this, it would make little difference whether or not Ishmael has biracial parents; Ishmael, as an American, has a very different cultural background compared to Queequeg, a Kokovokian prince, making them an interracial couple in either case.

There is, however, a major rationale why Ishmael's whiteness would matter. In a white supremacist society, his whiteness puts him in a position of power. I do not wish to take Ishmael's whiteness for granted, or suggest it would not be worth looking into, because by doing so I would be enforcing the already too dominant idea that, as Dyer ([1997] 2000, 2) writes, white people are "just" human. To dismiss Ishmael's whiteness would mean to dismiss his evident privilege and his position of power, and as I argue, Ishmael's position of power is a key feature. Therefore I suggest that in opposition to Bernard's (2002) analysis, Melville does indeed depict Ishmael as a white person.

Firstly, Ishmael's critique of whiteness is not evident from the start. "Who ain't a slave? Tell me that" (*MD*, 6), he says, with a casualness that seems unlikely, had his not-so-distant ancestors been slaves to and tortured by white Americans. Ishmael's suggestion that everyone is a slave to, if not a plantation owner, at the very least the God Almighty, is comically fallacious writes McGuire (2003, 289):

In the context of the America of the 1840s and 50s, the question "Who ain't a slave?" is anything but innocent. It provokes, most obviously, because of the heightening – and by the time Melville published *Moby Dick* in the wake of

the Compromise of 1850s quite fervid – sectional conflict which was manifesting itself through the vexed question of the status of new territories.

In the United States of 1851 – merely ten years before the start of the Civil War – the slavery was a heated issue. Ishmael’s interest in free labour is not of the kind that suggests he is familiar with it in practice. This is made clear as he talks about his reasons for joining the crew of a ship. He is willing to work as a sailor precisely because it is not free labour: “Again, I always go to sea as a sailor, because they make a point of paying me for my trouble, whereas they never pay passengers a single penny that I ever heard of” (*MD*, 7). The point of being a sailor is that a sailor gets paid. For Ishmael, the only two options are to be paid for his work, or to go as a passenger, that is, not work at all, which suggests that the possibility of working without pay does not even occur to him. The reality of slavery is not something he has experienced; to him, slavery is merely a concept of which he can make fun.

Secondly, when talking about aesthetics, which, according to Bernard (2002, 386), “undergirds the basic tenet of black aesthetics, that black is beautiful and creative”, Ishmael does not refer to his fellow humans or crew members. He describes the usage of Manilla rope as whaling equipment. In his opinion the Manilla rope is better than hemp when it comes to whale-line material: “Hemp is a *dusky*, *dark* fellow, a sort of *Indian*; but Manilla is as a golden-haired Circassian to behold” (2012, 625; emphases added). Even if interpreted as a metaphor the quote does not criticise whiteness or praise black excellence: on one hand we have hemp, “dusky” and “dark”, likened to Indians, and on the other hand we have the Manilla rope, “golden” and “Circassian,” and, to Ishmael, far superior. Instead of being one of Ishmael’s more modern, radically anti-racist moments, it is a moment of enforcing white supremacy.

Secondly, Ishmael’s name is not a reference to his mother being a body servant in the Book of Genesis, but instead a reference to him being abandoned by his father. In Genesis, Ishmael is the result of Abraham’s extramarital affair with his wife Sarah’s bondservant Hagar. When Abraham and Sarah are granted a long-wished-for legitimate son, Isaac, Ishmael is rejected and cast out (Genesis 12:1–21:14). As Peretz (in Dumm 2005, 400) writes about the meaning of the novel’s opening line: “[S]ince I am an abandoned human, and feel like a disowned son, I call upon you, the readers, to adopt me and call me by this name so that I won’t be alone any more.” A similar comment is made at the end of the novel; the epilogue begins

with a quote from the Book of Job (1:17), “And I only am escaped alone to tell thee” (*MD*, 663), and ends with Ishmael calling himself an orphan, the lone survivor of the shipwreck.

As it happens, Ishmael is not even the only name Melville has borrowed from the Bible, and therefore its reference to Ishmael’s ethnicity seems unlikely. The characters also include Elijah, who, like in the Bible, is a prophet and warns Ishmael about the upcoming shipwreck, and Ahab, in the Bible a wicked king, in *Moby-Dick* a “monomaniacal” captain (Herrmann, 66-68). Making references to old texts, to the Bible as well as to Milton and Shakespeare, is typical to Melville (Bercaw 1987, 10, Martin [1995] 2013, 442), his early novels having become increasingly baroque in style, and *Moby-Dick* reaching high exuberance (Bezanson 1986, 203). In Melville’s writing referring to Bible is more of a stylistic than a historical feature; Biblical references tell little about the characters origin and race.

My fourth point addresses Ishmael’s odd jobs. Ishmael himself regards his career path as unusual and inconvenient: “The transition is a keen one, I assure you, from a schoolmaster to a sailor” (*MD*, 6). In actuality Ishmael’s career path does not differ very greatly from that of Melville. Being a sailor was a job which, as is made evident in Melville’s own early novels, was, at the time, possibly the closest a white American could come to the experience of actual free labour, the experience of working as a chattel slave (McGuire 2003, 288-289). Not only does Ishmael find the job physically trying, he thinks it is humiliating: “It touches one’s sense of honour, particularly if you come of an old established family in the land, the Van Rensselaers, or Randolphs, or Hardicanutes” (*Moby-Dick* [1851] 2012, 6). All said names are distinguished, extremely white family names; Hardinacute was a Swedish king, Van Rensselaers a prominent Dutch family, and Randolphs one of the oldest Virginia names, the family of Thomas Jefferson (Dumm 2005, 401).

Hinting at this kind of genealogy, Ishmael suggests he comes from a well-known, well-respected, old family, a family that has likely made its fortune through slave labour, but that he, for some reason, had chosen a more unconventional path, left his home and become a sailor. Dyer ([1997] 2006, 4) writes that such description of white identity is typical to studies of whiteness. Instead of studying whiteness in itself, the studies pay attention to something called ‘white ethnicity’; an identity based on religions or cultural origins, such as Italian, Polish, British, Catholic, and so on (Dyer [1997] 2006, 4). By mentioning Randolphs and Van Rensselaers Ishmael

distances the question from his race and his white privilege, the ways in which he benefits from being white, and makes the reader think about his suggested genealogy instead – and the reasons why a member of such an established family would become a sailor.

Lastly, in the first chapters of *Moby-Dick* Ishmael is explicitly alarmed every time he encounters a person of colour. Looking for a place to spend the night in on his way to Nantucket and in search of a whaler, he accidentally steps into a place called “The Trap,” which turns out to be a black church. Ishmael describes the experience:

It seemed the great Black Parliament sitting in Tophet. A hundred black faces turned round in their rows to peer; and beyond, a black Angel of Doom was beating a book in a pulpit. [...] [T]he preacher’s text was about the blackness of darkness, and the weeping and wailing and teeth-gnashing there. Ha, Ishmael, muttered I, backing out, Wretched entertainment at the sign of ‘The Trap!’

(MD, 12)

Upon this sight he makes no comments on “aesthetics” nor any anti-racist statements. He calls the church “wretched” and the preacher “a black Angel of Doom,” neither of which would suggest he felt welcome or comfortable. His discomfort is also shown when he describes the preacher’s way of delivering the sermon as “beating the book.” “Beating” the book, as opposed to reading it, sounds violent and aggressive, even hostile. Nothing about “The Trap” makes Ishmael feel calm or at home. He leaves quickly, and continues his search, not wanting to spend another second in a place that has caused him much discomfort. Were he biracial, it is likely he would have seen a black church before, the sworn protestant that he is, and not found The Trap as strange and distressing. As it is he finds African Americans, at the time a minority deprived of human or civil rights, a threat.

Not soon after Ishmael’s visit to “The Trap,” he and Queequeg meet for the first time. The meeting takes place when Ishmael decides to spend the night in the affordable Spouter-Inn but having arrived there, is disappointed to find that every single bed is already occupied. The landlord suggests Ishmael share a bed with a harpooner, but even when he is still unaware of Queequeg’s ethnicity, Ishmael finds the idea of sharing a bed with someone else distasteful:

No man prefers to sleep two in bed. You would a good deal rather not sleep with your own brother. I don't know how it is, but people like to be private when they are sleeping. And when it comes to sleeping with an unknown stranger, in a strange inn, in a strange town, and that stranger a harpooner, then your objections indefinitely multiply.

(*MD*, 19)

Ishmael does not care for strangers. The thought of sharing his bed with anyone makes him apprehensive, and the thought of sharing his bed with an Other makes him twice as uncomfortable. However, when sleeping on a hard wooden bench in the adjoining room proves impossible, his only option is to say yes to sharing a harpooner's blanket. His fears concerning sharing a bed with a stranger are not subdued when he, upon arriving to his room, finds various outlandish items, and deduces they belong to his bed-fellow (*MD*, 24). Ishmael is so anxious about the possibility of getting physically close to an Other that even the presence of foreign items makes him vary of the person they belong to.

When Ishmael sees Queequeg for the first time his fears are multiplied. Earlier he was wary and anxious, but after seeing the harpooner in person, Ishmael is positively repulsed. He recounts the first time he sees Queequeg: "He turned around – when, *good heavens!* What a sight! *Such* a face!" (*MD*, 25; emphasis added) Ishmael is clearly shocked: the description of his first impression requires multiple exclamation marks and bemoaning. Queequeg's face is, according to Ishmael, so strange that it needs a preface; he cannot describe what Queequeg's face looks like at once. By exclaiming "good heavens," "what a sight" and "such a face" Ishmael makes the reader anticipate something truly uncommon. After this overture, he proceeds to describe the harpooner's face: "It was of a dark, purplish, yellow colour, here and there stuck over with a large blackish looking squares" (*MD*, 25) The thought of sleeping in the same bed with a cannibal is so distasteful that Ishmael does not even want to think about it at first, but mistakes Queequeg for a white man wounded in a fight, and proclaims him "a terrible bedfellow" (*MD*, 25). Then he notices Queequeg's tattoos and remembers a story he's heard about a white whaleman falling among the cannibals and getting tattooed by them, after which he pays closer attention to Queequeg's skin:

But then, what to make of his unearthly complexion, that part of it, I mean, lying round about, and completely independent of the squares of *tattooing*. To

be sure, it might be nothing but a good coat of tropical tanning; but I never heard of a hot sun's tanning a white man into a *purplish yellow* one.

(*MD*, 25; emphasis added)

He finally deduces that Queequeg is not a white man, and having realised this, he pronounces Queequeg “the devil himself,” a heathen and an idolator, and scorns him:

I am no coward, but what to make of this head-peddling *purple rascal* altogether passed my *comprehension*. [...] In fact, I was so afraid of him that I was not game enough just then to address him, and demand a satisfactory answer concerning what seemed *inexplicable* in him.

(*MD*, 26; emphases added)

Even though Ishmael and Queequeg have not exchanged a single word, Ishmael has already labelled Queequeg as a rascal and finds his way of earning money objectionable. He describes Queequeg's darker skin tone as “purple” – or “purplish yellow” –, which is not only something he has not encountered before but also something ill and inhuman, out of his realm of possibility. Queequeg's whole being passes his “comprehension”; to Ishmael Queequeg seems so strange, “inexplicable,” that Ishmael is not able to think of him as a person. Before Queequeg has said anything, Ishmael has decided that he does not want to make his acquaintance; that he is dangerous, foul and has to be avoided at all costs. Not once does he stop to consider Queequeg's feelings – even though the landlord has promised Queequeg a bed, and Queequeg has paid for it in advance, Ishmael takes it for granted that Queequeg is the stranger and intruder, not he, and that he, as a white Christian, has inherently more rights than a strange harpooner. This is an example of Ishmael and Queequeg's power imbalance based on Ishmael's whiteness and his feeling of superiority in a white supremacist society of the nineteenth century America.

The first meeting of Ishmael and Queequeg confirms Ahmed's theories about the nature of Otherness. In her book, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, Ahmed discusses the relationship between the monolith and the marginalized Stranger, and suggests that a person is Othered through encounters. A Stranger is not a stable identity, and being, or, more accurately, seeming like a Stranger is not an ontological condition (Ahmed 2000, 7). A person becomes a Stranger when they are perceived to be so by the people around them, the people they interact with (Ahmed 2000, 55). This is caused by the fact that face-to-face

encounters with two or more individuals are often unequal. Internalised, unconscious power structures and forms of social oppression result in asymmetry of power, and make the encounter. The individual with less power is regarded as a Stranger (Ahmed 2000, 8–9). Instead of being “*any-body*” that the monolith does not recognise, a Stranger is “*some-body*” the monolith has immediately recognised as a Stranger, as “a body out of place” (Ahmed 2000, 8, 9, 55). Following this theory, Ishmael does not perceive Queequeg as his equal or even a fellow human being.

It is only after the landlord arrives and starts reasoning with him that Ishmael calms down and agrees that the situation is not an utter disaster. When Queequeg offers, even after all the tumult, to share his lodgings with Ishmael, Ishmael starts to reconsider the fairness of his first impression.

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

(*MD*, 29)

Instead of describing Queequeg as nightmarish character, Ishmael starts complimenting his actions; his invitation for Ishmael is not “only civil” but “really kind and charitable.” Where he earlier saw the “devil himself,” he now sees someone who takes care of his personal hygiene and looks “comely,” pleasing or even handsome. He stops panicking and starts paying attention to Queequeg as a person, not just as a living, breathing version of the tales he has been told of the cannibals of the southern seas.

Ishmael realises he has been prejudiced and judgemental, and decides he is not proud of these characteristics. In opposition to his earlier assessment, he begins to see Queequeg as a human being. For the first time, Ishmael makes an effort to deconstruct his racist mindset and acknowledges that Queequeg, too, has thoughts and emotions, just like him. Instead of considering Queequeg as a lower life form, a creature rather than a human, he even exalts Queequeg above some human beings with whom he is supposedly well-acquainted: drunken Christians. Queequeg goes from being a detestable beast to a pleasant bedmate. After this realisation Ishmael

feels cleansed and peaceful: “I turned in, and never slept better in my life” (*MD*, 29). From here on, he becomes better at acknowledging his white privilege, and starts expressing the kind of criticism of whiteness that Bernard (2002, 384) mentions.

To fully accept Queequeg as his equal, Ishmael needs to perceive a sense of familiarity in his constitution. The day after they have first slept in the same bed, Ishmael observes Queequeg from afar and notes that Queequeg’s head is phrenologically excellent (*MD*, 59), and makes a connection between the features of Queequeg and someone he already knows and respects.

It may seem ridiculous, but it reminded me of General Washington's head, as seen in the popular busts of him. It had the same long regularly graded retreating slope from above the brows, which were likewise very projecting, like two long promontories thickly wooded on top.

(*MD*, 59)

Likening Queequeg’s face to George Washington gives makes it possible for Ishmael to stop perceiving him as the Stranger and a body out of place. Queequeg has become somebody Ishmael recognises as his kind, and because of this Ishmael allows himself to be open to further develop their budding friendship. Acknowledging Queequeg’s origin and their cultural difference, he concludes: “Queequeg was George Washington cannibalistically developed” (*MD*, 59). At the same time, however, he describes him as someone familiar, thus granting himself a right to feel close to him.

After accepting Queequeg as his fellow human being, Ishmael begins to experience “strange feelings”:

I felt a melting in me. No more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world. [...] Wild he was; a very sight of sights to see; yet I began to feel myself mysteriously drawn towards him. And those same things that would have repelled most others, they were the very magnets that thus drew me. I'll try a pagan friend, thought I, since Christian kindness has proved but hollow courtesy.

(*MD*, 60)

Ishmael, who only a few chapters earlier had decided to go to the sea to stop himself from “deliberately stepping into the street” and “methodically knocking people’s hats off” (*MD*, 3) (i.e. committing suicide), runs into someone he cares about, and feels himself starting to heal. The orphan who has been cast away without a home or a

friend had found someone he can turn to, someone he wants to get close to. Queequeg is no longer an inconvenience, a rascal stealing half of his bed or an abhorrent brute but a promise of a better, happier future.

While familiarity is what makes Ishmael recognise Queequeg as his equal, Queequeg's Otherness is also the reason why Ishmael is particularly drawn to him. In 1957 Mailer coined the term "the white negro", by which he referred to a white man who is drawn and sexually attracted to black men. In his eponymous essay he describes the inclinations of these white men by writing that "the only life-giving answer is to accept the terms of death, to live with death as immediate danger" ([1957] 2007). These white men are, as Stockton (2006) almost fifty years later paraphrased, in need of "a mental jailbreak." According to Mailer ([1957] 2007, para 5) the white negro experiences being "jailed in the prison air of other people's habits, other people's defeats, boredom, quiet desperation, and muted icy self-destroying rage." To get away from this prison air, one needs to "divorce oneself from society, to exist without roots, to set out on that uncharted journey into the rebellious imperatives of the self" (Mailer [1957] 2007, para 5). In short, the white supremacist society makes the white man feel trapped, and to feel free again, he needs to wave goodbye to his old habits and all the expectations society has laid on him. Existing only without roots would allow them to dismantle the toxic ideas they have lived by, and according to Mailer [1957] 2007, para 5) existing without roots means being drawn to a black man.

Mailer's description of a white negro is eerily similar to the way Melville describes Ishmael's vocation to go to the sea as a sailor. The two texts share rhetoric features: Ishmael has "nothing particular to interest him on shore" and tries to "prevent [himself] from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off" (*MD*, 3), which fit the catalysts Mailer ([1957] 2007) mentions, "boredom, quiet desperation, and icy self-destroying rage." Ishmael is not in contact with his family, and only talks about them when he refers to his childhood (*MD*, 30–31), and denying his family is also one his ways of existing without roots. Lastly, when it is a drizzly November in his soul, namely, when simply existing in the Western society feels impossible, it is "high time to get to sea" (*Moby-Dick* [1851] 2012, 3) as soon as possible. Getting to the sea has been Ishmael's way to escape the bonds of society. Everything we know about Ishmael imitates Mailer's description.

When Ishmael's desire for a non-white man becomes evident, the connection between Mailer's essay and Melville's novel becomes even more evident. In *Soul of Ice Cleaver* (in Stockton 2006, 154) analyses the incentives of the White Negro:

“People are feverishly, and at a great psychic and social expense, seeking fundamental and irrevocable liberation – and, what is more important, are succeeding in escaping – from the big white lies that compose the monolithic myth of White Supremacy/Black Inferiority.”

Mirroring Cleaver's analysis, meeting Queequeg makes Ishmael realise that there are other forms of rebellion. First befriending and then falling in love with Queequeg gives Ishmael the opportunity to achieve such crucial liberation and defy white supremacy. After meeting Queequeg, the drizzly November in Ishmael's soul comes to an end even without having to go to the sea, because becoming his bosom-friend equals removing oneself from the society. Being with Queequeg allows Ishmael to feel free.

It is not a surprise, then, that in his essay Mailer does not study texts written by authors of colour but focuses on white male authors like D. H. Lawrence and Henry Miller. Melville, who owns his current reputation as the great American novelist partly to D. H. Lawrence (Marovitz 2007, 520), would thus fit in the company of authors whose work Mailer ([1957] 2007) writes about. Stockton (2006, 155) suggests that the authors Mailer discusses emphasise both “courage, of course through adventure” and “something that links the problem of (white) men to sexual solutions.” These themes are not strangers to Melville, who became a household name thanks to his adventure stories about the weird, racy habits of so-called cannibals of the southern seas. Correspondingly, it is no wonder that both Mailer and Melville have been criticised for their othering, fetishizing discussion of people of colour (Stockton 2006, 155, 157, Gunn 2005, McBride 2004). In the next subsection I will discuss Queequeg, his origins, and the depiction of Queequeg as a Stranger. Following this, I will look into the ways in which his Otherness allows Ishmael to succeed in his mental jailbreak.

2.2 The Stranger

Queequeg, a strange harpooner from the Southern seas, seems to be, in many ways, Ishmael's complete opposite. He is far from home, instantly recognised as

someone who does not belong to the status quo of the New England. What were Melville's motives for pairing Ishmael up with such a strange person, a man so unlike his protagonist and narrator? In his article *Whence come you, Queequeg*, Sanborn (2005, 228) writes how some time before starting to write *Moby-Dick*, Melville came across a book about a curious friendship between a Maori chief and a captain of a British merchant ship. According to this book, *The New Zealanders* (1830), which was based on real experiences of Te Pehi Kupe and Richard Reynolds, an unlikely friendship is forged when a Maori chief refuses to leave a British merchant ship because he wants to "Go Europe" and "see King Georgy" (Sanborn 2005, 227). Later, having shared lodgings both on shore and offshore and become inseparable, Te Pehi Kupe saves Reynolds from drowning, and Reynolds nurses Te Pehi Kupe back to health after he has caught measles (Sanborn 2005, 227–228). Impressed by this true story of an interracial friendship, Melville used it as a source for his depiction of the relationship between Ishmael and Queequeg (Sanborn 2005, 228).

Yet *The New Zealanders* is not a harmless story about a friendship that flourishes despite cultural differences and the boundaries of society; according to Sanborn (2005, 229) it is unquestionably a piece of imperialist propaganda. Published anonymously by the Library of Entertaining Knowledge, the citizens of multiple cities including London, Liverpool, New York, Glasgow and Dublin were able to read it right when the British empire was getting interested in expanding their range to New Zealand and aspiring to make the island "a rich new resource frontier and an enthusiastic new market for English goods" (Sanborn 2005, 229–30, 240). As a whole, the message of the book is that unlike the earlier accounts have claimed, the New Zealanders are the opposite of feral cannibals; they look up to and admire England and its citizens and monarch. They long to imitate the English way of life and their wish is to be taken care of by the British empire (Sanborn 2005, 230). It is a typical narrative about the white colonialists saving indigenous people from the burden of freedom, its intention to show the readers that their feeling of white superiority is justified.

As Sanborn (2005, 235) argues, the character of Queequeg is notably based on the Pacific Islanders, and on Maori culture in particular. When it comes to his physical appearance, his Maori heritage is suggested by the manner other characters talk about the style of his tattoos. In his novel *Israel Potter* ([1855] 1957, 87)

Melville writes about the tattoos of sailors, and differentiates between types of traditional tattooings of the peoples in the Pacific Islands, and describes Maori tattoos as “deep blue, elaborate, labyrinthine, cabalistic.” Correspondingly, in *Moby-Dick* Queequeg’s tattoos are described as “large, blackish looking squares”, “an interminable Cretan labyrinth of a figure” and “devil’s blue” (*MD*, 25, 30, 104). The similarities of these descriptions are notable: both mention the colour blue and a labyrinthine shape.

Another example of the links between Queequeg and Maori culture is the embalmed “New Zealand head” Queequeg is carrying when he first meets Ishmael in the Spouter-Inn (*MD*, 26). Heads alike the one Queequeg is trying to sell were sacred to the Maori, but after the debarkation of the Europeans the heads had lost their holy status and become an article of trade. A transaction of embalmed head is described in the aforementioned *The New Zealanders* as well, and overall there is no evidence of other Pacific Islanders being playing a part in this business (Sanborn 2005, 235). Lastly, Queequeg follows the Maori tradition of hongi by pressing his forehead against Ishmael’s (*MD*, 61, 68). To sum up, Queequeg looks like a Maori, has items typical to the Maori people, takes a part in a business typical to Maori people at the time, and practices Maori traditions.

In spite of the aforementioned links to Maori heritage, many Melville critics suggest that Queequeg is “a composite racial figure”; a mixture of multiple characteristics of different ethnic backgrounds (Sanborn 2005, 235). Even though his Maori tattoos and the traditions he follows form his cultural starting point, he also smokes a tomahawk, a Native American pipe (*MD*, 26), carries a small, black Congolese idol called Yojo (*MD*, 27, 488), and celebrates Ramadan (*MD*, 97-103). I argue that these various features of different non-white cultures are an essential part of Queequeg’s character as a Stranger. Ever since Ishmael finds the foreign items in Queequeg’s room and meets Queequeg for the first time, it is evident that he and Queequeg are very different. A mixture of various traits makes it impossible to trace Queequeg’s origin to a single non-white culture. Thus, the only thing that Ishmael can determine is that he is someone foreign. Queequeg cannot be pinned down or categorised unambiguously.

The word that is used to describe Queequeg the most often is the derivation of an act neither the reader nor any of the characters see him commit. Queequeg’s nature as the other or, in Ahmed’s (2000) terminology, “The Stranger,” earns him

another label meant for the non-white foreigners: a cannibal. Warner (1995, 86) names cannibalism as "the most laconic sign of the non-human [...] since classical times." According to her, linking "the deep-seated racial myth of cannibalism" to non-white peoples enforces the notion that people of colour, who were much abused by white people, were not human in the first place. The fact that people of colour were not considered human makes it more acceptable for white people to steal their land or sell them as slaves. I argue that instead of talking about the practice of eating humans, Melville uses cannibalism to refer to the discourse of the time. For Melville a cannibal is not a literal man-eater but merely an outsider, a foreigner, a Stranger.

Multiple characters call Queequeg a cannibal (*MD*, 28, 72, 104) but none ever witness him consuming human flesh. He talks about his diet of human flesh only to Ishmael and even to him only on one occasion: "It was after a great feast given by his father the king, on the gaining of a great battle wherein fifty of the enemy had been killed by about two o'clock in the afternoon, and all cooked and eaten that very evening." At this point of the story Ishmael begs Queequeg to say no more because he already knows "the inferences without his further hinting them": he has heard a detailed account of their tradition of post-battle cannibalism by a sailor who has visited "that very island" (*MD*, 102). He does not say that he does not need to hear the rest of Queequeg's story because he has seen something similar happen himself; instead he claims he knows all he needs to know about the subject because someone has told him a story. In other words, Ishmael seems to have gotten all his information about cannibalism second-hand, which is not surprising; I will discuss the way cannibalism was talked about in the media of Melville's time in more detail in subsection 4.1.

Melville makes clear Ishmael himself has never seen any cannibals in the act of eating human flesh, and what is more, all the information he has about cannibals is recounted by rather unreliable narrators. Queequeg's account on cannibalism happens after Ishmael has questioned the sanity of his religion and tried to convince him his Ramadan is useless and even unhealthy (*MD* 101, 102). It is possible that Queequeg, amused or annoyed by Ishmael's preaching, has decided to poke fun at his companion; to further shock Ishmael, who finds his traditions stranger and even foolish. Queequeg's tale seems hyperbolic; the purpose of the story is to emphasise how many bodies his people had eaten in record time: fifty bodies killed before two

o'clock, and eaten the very same day! The sailor Ishmael has met earlier has a similarly excessive, fabricated tone: "one by one," Ishmael recounts,

"they were placed in great wooden trenchers, and garnished round like a pilau, with breadfruit and cocoanuts; and with some parsley in their mouths, were sent round with the victor's compliments to all his friends, just as though these presents were so many Christmas turkeys."

(*MD*, 102).

The bodies are likened to extravagant Christmas turkeys, and the way they are cooked is described in detail, in a manner that is sure to disturb the American audience.

Queequeg certainly jokes about cannibalism on another occasion; the harpooners (not only Queequeg but also an African called Daggoo and a native American called Tashtego) tease the steward Dough-Boy by pretending that they, the fearsome Others and cannibals, are going to eat him.

[Queequeg] had a mortal, barbaric smack of the lip in eating — an ugly sound enough — so much so, that the trembling Dough-Boy almost looked to see whether any marks of teeth lurked in his own lean arms. And when he would hear Tashtego singing out for him to produce himself, that his bones might be picked, the simple-witted steward all but shattered the crockery hanging round him in the pantry [...]. Nor did the whetstone which the harpooners carried in their pockets, for their lances and other weapons; and with which whetstones, at dinner, they would ostentatiously sharpen their knives; that grating sound did not at all tend to tranquillize poor Dough-Boy. How could he forget that in his Island days, Queequeg, for one, must certainly have been guilty of some murderous, convivial indiscretions. Alas! Dough-Boy! hard fares the white waiter who waits upon cannibals.

(*MD* 176-77)

Dough-Boy, like most Americans of mid-nineteenth century, automatically connect Otherness to cannibalism. Dough-Boy is so afraid of the harpooners' assumed cannibalistic tendencies that he does not recognise that they are poking fun at him and his fear of non-white people. Even Tashtego, a Native American harpooner, is presumed to be a man-eating savage, disregarding the fact that he is not from the Pacific Islands nor Africa, the places which typically sparked rumours about cannibalistic natives. To be a Stranger is to be a cannibal. Echoing Dough-Boy, Ishmael, too, assumes non-white people's cannibalism and uses the word "cannibal"

very casually, even before he knows of Queequeg's exact origin (MD, 28) or has heard the story of the ritual of eating their enemies. In Melville's writing, Otherness and cannibalism are the same.

It is interesting that a sailor who tells Ishmael about the man-eating of the Southerners claims he has visited the very island Queequeg is from, because it is an essential part of Queequeg's identity that his home country is not a real but an imagined island. Melville writes: "Queequeg was a native of Kokovoko, an island far away to the West and South. It is not down in any map; true places never are" (MD, 66). Kokovoko is not only an imagined place; it is a place far away from everything, nearly impossible to find. As Sanborn (2005, 238) argues, the evidence supports the suggestion that Queequeg "began his literary life as a Maori and then metamorphosed into the man from Kokovoko." Because of his multi-ethnicity and an imagined home country, his main characteristic is that he is indeterminable, evasive, and completely unknown; someone who is different from anyone Ishmael has ever met before. But why did Melville create a non-white character whose ethnicity is a medley of different cultures? The answer is found in the typical noble savage imagery.

Noble savages are a fictional type of a non-white people who represent the nature and its uncorrupted innocence. In literature they function as an opposite to "civilised" Europeans and symbolise the man's naive, inherent goodness. They are people who are still uncontaminated by the dangers of European education (Encyclopædia Britannica 2018). In her book *Representation of the Savage in James Fenimore Cooper and Herman Melville*, Krauthammer (2008, 39) writes that the purpose of noble savage imagery was to define the stranger in relation to the Euro-American counterpart. Noble savages were used to create a myth of an exclusively unique American past and future, detached from the European legacy (Krauthammer 2008, 39). They helped to create a story of America as its very own continent, distant and unaffected by other imperial nations, different from other colonies.

Typically, the noble savage consisted of two different types named the Romantic and the dialectical noble savage (Krauthammer 2008, 39). The Romantic noble savage was usually depicted as a Native American chief mourning the extinction of his people but coming to the terms with this demise as their destiny. The point was to make the reader understand that the extinction of Native Americans was unavoidable and long overdue. The dialectical savage was a combination of both

“civilized” and “savage” characteristics, which allowed the writer and readers alike to admire the strangers while also hating them for their barbarism (Krauthammer 2008, 39). Thus, the most important role for a typical noble savage character is to be an accessory to the white character. Despite the fact that noble savages are supposed to personify the pureness of nature and the goodness of humanity, in actuality they emphasize the white character’s education and sophistication, and make them seem generous and forgiving as they continue to care for and enlighten their savage companion. However, Queequeg does not fit neatly into either of these noble savage stereotypes.

As stated earlier, Melville had written about interracial friendships and relationships in his previous novels, and the ways he describes the natives of the Pacific Islands in *Typee* (1846) and *Omoo* (1847) follow closely the traditional imagery of the dialectical savage. As Sanboron (2005, 228) writes, the Islanders were alluring but unreachable as “natives to the places where he was a stranger and strangers to the places where he was a native.” However, according to Martin ([1995] 2013: 440), calling *Typee* and *Omoo* simply travel books repeating the noble savage imagery is imperceptive. In these novels, Melville experimented with many of the themes that are pivotal in his later works. By choosing a travel narrative as his style, Melville was able to travel away from his own culture and instead focus on something outside the world already familiar to him. Martin suggests that there is, however, the risk of participating in repeating and enforcing the same colonial approaches that he wanted to dismantle. This is mainly caused by the narrative’s will to tell the culture’s story instead of letting the members of the culture tell their own story if they so desire (Martin [1995] 2013, 440). Same can be said about *Moby-Dick* and Queequeg; his story is told from Ishmael’s point of view, and everything that has happened to him are narrated to the reader by Ishmael, a white man who does not speak his language. Therefore, it is no wonder that Queequeg, too, starts his journey as a close replica of a noble savage stereotype.

Queequeg’s narrative begins by his fascination of Euro American culture, but at the same time his savage ancestry is emphasised:

When a new-hatched savage running wild about his native woodlands in a grass clout, followed by the nibbling goats, as if he were a green sapling; even then, in Queequeg’s ambitious soul, lurked a strong desire to see something more of Christendom than a specimen whaler or two. His father

was a High Chief, a King; his uncle a High Priest; and on the maternal side he boasted aunts who were the wives of unconquerable warriors. There was excellent blood in his veins—royal stuff; though sadly vitiated, I fear, by the cannibal propensity he nourished in his untutored youth.

(*MD*, 66)

Like Ishmael, Queequeg comes from an old, established family – but unlike Ishmael, he has not been cast away and is still a member of the royal family of Kokovoko. His direct royal Kokovokoan lineage makes his blood excellent in Ishmael’s eyes, and raises him above a common savage. However, his presumed cannibalistic “untutored”, non-European youth means he is held in lower esteem than European royal families. Queequeg is of royalty, but his savage upbringing has tainted him. He is at an intersection of civilised and savage, of noble and detestable. On one hand, because of his skin colour, nationality and way of life – his distinct Otherness – Ishmael considers Queequeg his inferior. On the other hand, Kokovoko, characterised as a “true place” (*MD*, 66), is so pure and close to nature that it has not been immortalised by any maps, and Ishmael considers this valuable and worthy of preservation.

Yet staying at his untainted home and becoming an unconquerable warrior or a chief of his people is not enough for Queequeg. Curious of the world outside Kokovoko, he wants to study Christendom closer. Because of Queequeg’s will to see the Western world Ishmael calls him, appreciatively, “ambitious,” for a savage like Queequeg, it is advisable to seek the so-called civilisation. Queequeg, although a strange cannibal, wants to better himself, that is, be more like the Europeans, following closely the typical story arc of a dialectical noble savage.

Queequeg’s life story, as he narrates it to Ishmael, mirrors that of Te Pehi Kupe as described in *The New Zealanders*, up to a certain point. When a “Christian” ship arrives to his island and refuses to take him along, Queequeg canoes close to the vessel and sneaks onboard. Ishmael recounts: “In vain the captain threatened to throw him overboard; suspended a cutlass over his naked wrists; Queequeg was the son of a King, and Queequeg budged not” (*MD*, 66–67). Finally the captain, “struck by [Queequeg’s] desperate dauntlessness” and “his wild desire to visit Christendom”, relents and tells him to “make himself at home” (*MD*, 67). But unlike Te Pehi Kupe who ended up sharing the captain’s lodgings, Queequeg is put among the sailors and soon finds his calling in harpooning (*MD*, 67). This is where Queequeg’s narrative begins to take an alternate route from the typical noble savage imagery.

Queequeg's aspiration for his visit to the Christendom is to learn "the arts whereby to make his people still happier than they were" (*MD*, 67). The reader finds out that even at the beginning, his plan is not to stay with white people for the rest of his life; he wants to study the innovations that are still foreign to his own people and benefit from them. Up to this point, Queequeg seems to believe in the imagery of the Christendom as a superior society; something he can study in order to make himself and his people better. However, after spending a few months with the Christian sailors, he changes his mind: "The practices of whalers soon convinced him that even Christians could be both miserable and wicked" (*Moby-Dick* [1851] 2012, 67). His dreams of the European way of life are crushed: "Thought he, it's a wicked world in all meridians; I'll die a pagan" (*MD*, 67). From this moment on, Queequeg is more critical of European-American culture, and questions its superiority.

Instead of continuing to regard the Euro-Americans as humans of higher rank, he decides to keep true to himself and the traditions of his own people: "I asked him what might be his immediate purpose, touching his future movements", Ishmael reports, "He answered, to go to sea again, in his old *vocation*" (*MD*, 68, emphasis added). The word "vocation" suggests that he has made his own decision; he is not a harpooner because it is the only way he can earn his bread on a whaler, he is a harpooner because that is his will. He travels as he wishes, earning his money in a manner that pleases him. He does not wish to learn how to make his people better anymore, but to be free and someday return to his home island and rule like his ancestors before him. Even though Queequeg lives "among these Christians", wears their clothes and tries to "talk their gibberish" (*MD*, 67), for him his own nation comes first. He makes a clear distinction between his people and the Christians and goes as far as to refer to the English language as gibberish. This almost derogatory manner in which he talks about the Christians suggests that he no longer considers them to be more advanced.

Queequeg's disobedience of American norms, his willingness to remain a cannibal of the southern seas and his refusal to be assimilated makes his escape the typical noble savage stereotype. Instead of clinging to the greatness of Euro-American culture, he dismisses it as a disappointment and a ludicrous charade. In addition to rejecting the possibility of salvation, he makes Ishmael see American society and traditions in a new light. When Ishmael implies that he finds a feature of Queequeg's culture or way of life strange or ridiculous and says: "Queequeg, you

might have known better than that, one would think. Didn't the people laugh?" (*MD*, 70), Queequeg tells a story about a white man visiting his home country and failing to follow the traditions of Kokovokoans. After telling the story he asks: "Now, [...] what you tink now? – Didn't our people laugh?" (*MD*, 71). Thanks to Queequeg, Ishmael is able to look beyond his own culture and start to think of it as one among many, not the be-all and end-all, supreme civilisation.

Instead of enforcing the sense of the uniquely American past and future like is the purpose of typical noble savage stereotypes, Queequeg's imaginary home country brings the authenticity of America into question. In *Moby-Dick*, Kokovoko, a place that does not exist, and the United States, one of the leading colonial powers, are presented as equal. The people of Kokovoko do not need to be saved by Americans, they are not on the brink of extinction and do not care for American inventions; they are perfectly happy to stay as they are. Therefore, Kokovoko does not enforce the image of America as of higher importance. Queequeg, a mixture of various non-white identities, a complete Stranger, does not enforce the American identity; he merely shows his white counterpart that there is another way, a prospect of liberation. Queequeg's character does not justify colonialism, because even though he does not want to be educated and become a civilised American, he remains Ishmael's moral compass. Reflecting this, unlike a typical noble savage, Queequeg does not make Ishmael look better because Ishmael is willing to educate him; he makes Ishmael look better because after meeting Queequeg, Ishmael wants to improve himself, become someone as comfortable in his own skin as Queequeg is.

Shortly after their first meeting, Ishmael, observing his new acquaintance, notices Queequeg's sureness of self:

Here was a man some twenty thousand miles from home, [...] thrown among people as strange to him as though he were in the planet Jupiter; and yet he seemed entirely at his ease; preserving the utmost serenity; content with his own companionship; always equal to himself.

(*MD*, 59)

Queequeg, unlike Ishmael, is comfortable his own skin and does not look for a way to escape. When leaving his home country and wanting to make his people still better, he has carried the burden of internalized racism, which, as (Johnson 2008) defines it, is "an individual's conscious and unconscious acceptance of racial

hierarchy in which whites are consistently ranked above People of Color.” Unlearning internalized racism has made him a free man. Ishmael, who still longs to escape the boundaries of society, the monolith myth of white supremacy, is allured by Queequeg’s freedom. Like Martin ([1995] 2013, 442) writes: “Unlike the others, who establish a radical distance between self and world, between subject and object, Queequeg represents an unbroken unity of experience.” This unbroken unity is what Ishmael wants to achieve, and Queequeg offers him a way to find it.

Therefore it is not surprising that when Queequeg asks if they will share their bed again, Ishmael replies in the affirmative. After sharing Queequeg’s tomahawk pipe for social smoke, the two exchange the feeling of unity for a feeling of union; the two men get “married” (*MD*, 60-61):

He seemed to take to me quite as naturally and unbiddenly as I to him; and when our smoke was over, he pressed his forehead against mine, clasped me round the waist, and said that henceforth we were married; meaning, in his country's phrase, that we were bosom friends; he would gladly die for me, if need should be. In a countryman, this sudden flame of friendship would have seemed far too premature, a thing to be much distrusted; but in this simple savage those old rules would not apply.

Queequeg, with his strange name, habits, and countenance offers Ishmael a chance to lead a different life. As a someone who is already recognised as Stranger, his breaking of the New England norms and etiquette do not matter. He is able to do things that a white man cannot: the same rules do not apply to him. Crain (1994, 46) writes: “Queequeg is his own man. He is not a man who fails to reach the standard of independent nineteenth-century American manhood but a man by another standard, to wit, a cannibal standard.” According to Crain, Ishmael has found an outlet in befriending a cannibal: “[Ishmael] is able to love Queequeg like a cannibal loves another (Crain 1994, 46). Queequeg, a cannibal from a non-existing island, becomes Ishmael’s beacon of hope, Ishmael’s salvation. His love for Queequeg sets Ishmael free.

3 Queer studies and homosexuality in *Moby-Dick*

Herman Melville has been called one of America's most important writers and *Moby-Dick* his most extraordinary accomplishment (Martin 1986, 67), but like me, other readers who know *Moby-Dick* as the novel every American has to read in high school may be surprised by the novel's nature. A participant of the *Moby-Dick* reading marathon in 2014 commented: "It's, like, 'Brokeback Mountain' gay, not 'Brideshead Revisited' gay" (Shapiro 2014), and for a reason. According to Oliveira (in Baume and Oliveira 2017), it is a text that does not need queering because "in its first twenty pages [it] stages a marriage between a man and another man." He suggests that from that marriage onwards the novel creates a "recasting of the whole world", an inherently queer universe. Like myself, other queer readers have been lured into the world of Melville by its depiction of an alternate universe – the history of America free from homophobia.

In this chapter, I discuss queer studies and reading *Moby-Dick* as a queer text. I begin by discussing queer studies, the history of homosexuality and the tradition of adventure stories and their influence in the nineteenth century. I will proceed to study how Melville's reputation as a great American novelist affects the way the audience reads and understands *Moby-Dick*. After this, I will look into Melville's main themes, namely his illustration of universal brotherhood, and following this study the existing queer readings of *Moby-Dick*.

3.1 Queer studies and the history of homosexuality

The development of Lesbian and Gay studies can be divided into five paradigms: the search for authenticity from the start of the Gay Liberation movement to 1976, the social construction of identity from 1976 to present day, essential identity from 1975 to present day, difference and race from 1979 to present day, and cultural studies from 1985 to present day (Kekki 2003, 34). In my thesis I will utilise the discussion on homosexuality as an essential identity and the theories about homosexuality in relation to difference and race.

Since the 1980s onward the crucial question has been whether homosexuality and homosexual identity are universal, transhistorical concepts, or historical constructs (Solana 2018, 398; Kekki 2003, 36). Lately essentialism has been seen

mainly as a strategy for the legitimation of homosexuality; an approach created by activists who believed that proving the universality and transhistoricality of homosexuality would guarantee equal rights in the eyes of the government and its citizens (Kekki 2003, 36). Yet the legitimation has not been the only ambition of the essentialist approach: “The idea of transhistorical gay sexuality actually represents the personal understanding of many lesbian and gay people of their sexuality far better” (Gowning in Kekki 2003, 36). In the days of the Gay Liberation movement, the essentialist line of thought helped to create a positive homosexual identity (Kekki 2003, 36). A universal, transhistorical identity seemed to be something more easily acceptable for gay people themselves; if being gay has always been there, in the exact same way as it is understood now, it must be normal, natural and good. For this reason, I do not intend to claim that the essentialist approach is outdated or false.

Nevertheless, constructionism became the dominant theoretical approach by the 1990s (Kekki 2003, 37). To prove that homosexuality is indeed something constructed and not universal, the constructionists have aspired to compose “a complex historicizing of homosexuality as a cultural model” and to define how homosexuality has been “invented” (Kekki 2003, 34, 37). One of the main arguments in favour of the constructionist approach is that the term ‘homosexuality’ did not exist before the late nineteenth century. Originally the term was coined by German psychologists in 1869 (Kekki 2003, 34) and was added to the English dictionary in 1892 (Halperin 1990, 155), a year after Melville’s death. Additionally, the term “gay” became associated with men who have sex with other men only in the late 1890s (Ferguson 2010, 1146).

It has been suggested that using the terms “homosexual” and “gay” to describe behaviour exceeding the time frame (1890s to present day) is not appropriate (Solana 2018, 399): if the words have not existed before the late 19th century, neither have the identities that these contemporary words refer to. As early as in the late 1960s the constructionist research fought against anachronism in gay studies and academia in general. The constructionists’ aim was to go beyond the bipolar division and reassess the historical continuum of homosexuality (Kekki 2003, 38). Katz (1976, 446) sums it up as follows: “Categorizing human relations as homosexual or heterosexual should be replaced by research aimed at revealing the multiple aspects of the particular relations under study.” Instead of arguing that some historical characters or people can be labelled as “homosexual” or “gay”,

constructionists search to explain how the homosexual/heterosexual dichotomy has developed and become the minority identities of today. Considering the constructivist frame of reference, making modern queer readings of books older than 150 years is not an easy task; queer readings of classic texts can be regarded as anachronistic and ahistorical, and the readers' understanding of historical and social context can be brought into question.

In his article "Lovers of human flesh: homosexuality and cannibalism in Melville's novels" Crain (1994, 27) discusses the problem of studying pre 20th century literature from the gay studies' point of view:

Scholars often use carefully neutral phrases like "male-male intimacy." Often, these periphrases only substitute for the modern word "homosexuality"; they alert the reader to the epistemological anachronism without removing it.

Like Crain, I will not try to avoid referring to the word "homosexual", but I will keep the modern minority identity separate from what romantic and sexual relationships between men were like in the mid-nineteenth century. My aspiration to avoid anachronism is also one of the reasons why I prefer to call my field "queer studies" instead of gay studies. As Goldman (1996, 170) writes, the term 'queer' "emphasizes the blurring of identities." It is heavily implied that not everybody is queer the exact same way; queer presents a possibility to articulate one's own queerness. Yet queer is not simply a signifier for an alternative sexuality. It provides a way to express many intersecting queer selves which all counter to powerful societal norms and the heteropatriarchy. Queer cuts across race and gender lines: at its core is "a rejection of a minoritarian logic of toleration or simple interest representation" (Escoffier in Goldman 1996, 170). As opposed to "gay," which refers to a very specific identity, "queer" is a lot more ambiguous, even elusive. Each and every queer person much define queer for themselves; what do the word and the identity mean for them.

Barnard (1999, 206) writes: "Because a queer commitment emphasizes the queer differences among and within queers, rather than positing transhistorical queer universality, it is less likely to prescribe a single model of sexual identity or sexual liberation." Therefore, the term "queer," like the relationship of Ishmael and Queequeg, offers various different readings and interpretations. Anzaldúa (1987, 3) has associated the term queer with multiple terms, including "the troublesome, the

mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead”, and suggested that therein lies the power and potential of the term ‘queer’. From the point of view of my thesis the other meanings of the word ‘queer’ make the term even more endearing to me; the fact that it can, in certain contexts, mean ‘strange’ and ‘odd’, or, like Anzaldúa (1987, 3) writes, “troublesome” and therefore revolutionary, connect the Stranger and the homosexual. However, I want to emphasise that my aim is not to categorise Herman Melville or his characters in modern terms, or to define them by using the minority identities of the 20th and 21st century. I will discuss this more in subsection 3.3 on the Melville myth.

To understand the world of Melville and *Moby-Dick*, one needs to look into homosexuality in the nineteenth century. Katz’s book *Love Stories: Sex Between Men Before Homosexuality* (2001) aims at deepening our understanding of the intimacy between men in a nineteenth-century society. As is suggested in Katz’ earlier book, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* ([1995] 2007), the sexual system of the nineteenth century did not draw a neat line between men who were sexually attracted to men and men who were sexually attracted to women. In *Love Stories* Katz illustrates the difficulties of living in an era that failed to give queer men access to naming and defining the emotions they had for other men. Even though the society already accepted “loving, friendly, intimate, affectionate relationships between men”, and even though some men succeeded in coming to terms or even going public with their emotions which consisted of both love and lust (Katz 2001, 336), the world lacked an exact vocabulary for describing their feelings.

While Katz’s books study the life of the nineteenth century man attracted to other men from the present day’s point of view, Van Buskirk’s diaries from 1851–1870 (Burg in Ferguson 2010, 1141–42) depict it from the 19th century man’s point of view. They offer a peek into what male–male romance, intimacy and sex were in America of the nineteenth century, especially in the context of seafaring. They show that not only was male–male sex pervasive and available for people who were so inclined, but also that male-male desire was commonplace, especially in the military and on board ships (Ferguson 2010, 1142). Even though sexual contact between men was still on the society’s list of sins and social violations, by nineteenth century the society no longer associated homoeroticism with Satanism or witchcraft (Burg in Ferguson 2010, 1142).

As a whole, arts and science largely ignored homoerotic acts: for example, the literature educating on physiological and sexual matters failed to define sexual relations between men, leaving them obscure and indistinct (Burg in Ferguson 2010, 1142). According to Crain (1994, 26), the only terms one could use to describe close relationships between men were “friendship” and “sodomy” – and the leap from one to another is gigantic. In the field of psychology one could refer to the diagnosis of inversion, or “the phrenological category of adhesiveness” (Crain 1994, 27) but these both were used to a much more limited extent, only in jargon and scholarly context, and their meaning is not equivalent to the homosexuality or gayness (Crain 1994, 27, Solana 2018, 403). Homosexuality was, for the most part, defined by omission, which I will discuss further in section four.

It is important to note that fact that male–male sex was pervasive and not associated with Satanism does not mean that it was accepted. In his diaries Van Buskirk (Burg in Ferguson 2010, 1142) writes about male–male desire in the Navy: “There is no school of vice comparable to the Navy. Certainly ninety percent of the white boys in the Navy of this day [...] are, to an extent that would make you shudder, blasphemers and sodomites.” The same idea is echoed in a derogatory naval saying from the 1800s: “Ashore it’s wine, women and song; abroad it’s rum, bum and concertina” (Langworth 2008, 577). The whole Royal Navy was ridiculed for its notable sodomites; people’s personal lives were made into offensive quips about the state of the whole navy and the abasement and shamefulness of professional seafarers.

In addition to having to listen to degrading comments about male-male desire, some marines faced cruel punishments for their actions. From 1640s onwards, the Commonwealth government had set a series of different naval regulations forbidding sodomy and sexual indecency in the Royal Navy (Burg 2009, 176), and in practice the regulations served as the law upon His Majesty’s ships (Royal Navy [1757] 2004). This set of regulations was revised over the years, until in 1749 it reached its more permanent form. *The Articles of War* faced only minor changes over the years (for example in 1757) and remained in force until 1861 (Burg 2009, 176; Royal Navy [1757] 2004). Some of the articles hinted at sex acts between men. The second article, for instance, forbid “uncleanness, or other scandalous actions, in derogation of God’s honour” (Royal Navy [1757] 2004). Some of the articles were more explicit and demanded the ultimate punishment: the 28th article declared that if

“any person in the fleet shall commit the unnatural and detestable sin of buggery and sodomy with a man or beast, he shall be punished with death by the sentence of a court martial” (Royal Navy [1757] 2004). The 29th article also shows that homosexuality was likened to bestiality, and that the differences between the two acts were of no consequence. The term sodomy could mean engaging in a sexual act with a man or a beast, and both acts were considered as repulsive.

The records show that in the English Royal Navy during 1800–1830, sixty men were hanged for having had sexual relations with other men, and twenty Royal Navy employees were executed on abroad ships for the same reason (Ferguson 2010, 1143). On a ship called HMS *Africaine* about two dozen of its crew of a little under 240 men were accused of behaving in a sexually indecent manner (Burg 2009, 178). The earliest prosecutions of sodomites are vastly different compared those of the Napoleonic Wars, but some similarities can still be found: in almost all the cases the persecuted were a pair of marines who were charged with having disobeyed one or more of the regulations concerning sodomy and sexual indecency listed in the Articles of War (Burg 2009, 175). Even though the marines were often accused of having more than one short-term partner over time, the various sex acts were consistently between two people, and no connections could be drawn between the accused marines and any groups of the ships’ crew who had committed similar acts (Burg 2009, 175). One more feature that connects one prosecution to another is the relations between men and boys. According to Burg (2009, 182), all the commissioned and warrant officers who had faced prosecutions for committing sodomy with shipboard boys were the boys’ superiors. The evidence suggests that they “held sway over the boys not only by virtue of their higher rank, greater size and superior strength but because they exercised direct authority over them” (Burg 2009, 182).

Burg (2009, 183) describes the younger members of the *Africaine*’s crew who were involved in the sexual activities as “willing” and “in some cases enthusiastic partners in the ships homoerotic society”. According to him, the records show no indication that strength, threats or physical force were involved in “the seductions” of the ship’s boys. He adds:

Although *Africaine* seamen with proclivities for boys were in all likelihood larger and stronger than the lads of their choice, and they ranked above them

in the Navy's scheme of things, lads wishing to avoid sex with them could do so without *too much difficulty*.

(Burg 2009, 183)

However, in my opinion his choice of words suggests otherwise and indeed indicate that in at the very least some cases the boys' consent was coerced. Claiming that avoiding having sex with other members of the crew was possible "without too much difficulty" suggests that the boys did not give their consent completely freely, and that there was some difficulty to dissent and reject the attackers. The fact that the seamen were held in higher regard and in a position of power, as well as being in all probability stronger and larger than the younger boys, makes coercion seem more and more likely.

The evidence of coerced consent in the Royal Navy does not end there. Burg (2009, 183) writes that during ships' courts martials it was not uncommon to hear testimonies affirming that the younger members of the crew had been coerced into giving consent by their superiors' threats of flogging and use of violence. In addition to coercion by threats and violence, many declared in their trials that they were bribed into consenting to sex by offers of food and drink, and there is evidence of older crew members exchanging food to young boys for sexual favours (Burg 2009, 183). Although it can be suggested that the boys simply lied about their willingness in order to avoid a severe punishment, to me the evidence Burg (2009, 187) provides scarcely supports this suggestion. All the boys of the HMS *Africaine*, for example, avoided a severe punishment, and the evidence from previous court cases suggest that a different conclusion would have been unheard of. The record of the HMS *Africaine*'s trial does not include the ages of most of the boys, but as a rule courts martial could not charge boys under the age of 14 with sodomy. In addition to this, the recorded courts martial prosecutions show that starting from the earliest 18th century, court-martialing, convicting and hanging youngsters for violating the 29th Article of War was extremely rare (Burg 2009, 187-188). Since the courts martials were reluctant to convict young people for committing sodomy, it makes little sense for these young people to lie about their involvement. The inability to protect oneself from assaulters was enough to ruin a boy's reputation, so innocence did not help to restore their good name.

Nevertheless, using the experience of George Parsons from the HMS *Africaine* as an example, Burg (2009, 183) describes the easiness of saying no to an older man searching for a bedmate:

Parsons, who had previously rejected Francisco Jean's groping, was sleeping on the main deck when he was awakened by him trying to insert his member into his anus. The boy fled immediately. Some months later Jean again attempted climb into the boy's hammock to bugger him. The record does not explain exactly how Parsons 'obliged him to desist and leave his hammock,' but it would have been easy enough to do by hallooing loudly across the closely tenanted deck.

Burg calls this an illustration of "the latitude available to one youngster intent on avoiding initiation into the shipboard revels" (2009, 183). I would call it an attempted rape and a successful escape of the victim, one that probably still left the younger man distraught and traumatised. Regardless of the name given to the incident, the records show that George Parsons, a young man on board a ship far away from home, was more than once harassed by a crewmember with whom he had to continue working. The evidence reveals that other boys on HMS *Africaine* shared this experience – some with less successful escapes (Burg 2009, 179, 183). Considering that all these instances took place on the same vessel, the records of the court cases suggest that raping or coercing younger co-workers into sex acts was not unusual in the 19th century Navy ships.

In a similar manner, Busch (1994, 147) calls "practicing homosexuals" on whalers "nearly an invisible minority." No openly homosexual journals written during whaling journeys have survived, so either they have never been written or then they have been censored by families of the sailors or the librarians of the 19th century. As in the case of HMS *Africaine*, the records that have survived address the complaints of sexual assault and rape (Busch 1994, 147-148). Busch (1994, 147) writes about male–male relations on whaleships: "No doubt [...] there was homosexual rape, but again the societal belief that a man should be able to defend himself, along with the trauma of reporting such an incident, insures that the record is faint." The evidence shows that on whalers as well as Navy vessels, love between men was invisible, and homosexuality was confused with coercion, submission, sexual assault, and rape.

This seems to have been Melville's own experience regarding male–male relations abroad on ships. Melville's writings support Crain's (1994, 39) argument that the homosexual relationship as a love affair between two egalitarian people is particular to the twentieth and twenty-first century. In the America of the nineteenth century, the act of sodomy was automatically thought to include coercion and submission. Love between same-sex couples seemed impossible; a friendship between for example two men could not be sexual without becoming undemocratic (Crain 1994, 39). Correspondingly, Crain (1994, 39) writes, when Melville condemns sodomy in *White-Jacket* (1850) it is not because he thinks love between men is wrong but because he is concerned for egalitarianism in relationships between men (1994, 39). Like *White-Jacket*, Melville's posthumously published novella *Billy Budd* (1924) is based on Melville's own experience in the all-male world of a ship, and the novella has been called a plain tale of fatal love (Stanton [1995] 2013, 487). In *Billy Budd*, authority faces freedom and justice faces law with tumultuous consequences, and sexual attraction leads into a young man's execution. As Crain (1994, 41) suggests: "In the world Melville described, physical intimacy between men was inextricable from power. It almost always implied a loss of control over the body. The loss of control in turn suggested a compromise of the self and a disintegration of identity." Melville, aiming at depicting an equal, democratic, loving relationship, could not do so without addressing the inherent power structures typical to the Western society. In his works, physical intimacy requires a difficult compromise; the protagonist must give up parts of himself in order to receive physical intimacy, care, admiration or even love. Most often than not, like in *White Jacket* and *Billy Budd*, Melville sees this compromise as scary and damaging.

At the beginning, *Moby-Dick* has a similar approach to relationships between men. When the Spouter Inn's landlord suggests Ishmael share a bed with a strange harpooner, he says: "I s'pose you are goin' a'whaling, so you'd better get used to that sort of thing" (*MD*, 16). He insinuates that Ishmael will not be able to sleep by himself on a whaler; ending up with company, unwanted or not, is inevitable. Ishmael, as I pointed out in subsection 2.1, prefers to be private when he is sleeping (*MD*, 19). He is not against sharing a bed with someone else because he instantly assumes that someone is a person of colour and Other. His reason for preferring to sleep by himself is to avoid being assaulted. For Ishmael, sharing bed with someone is the most distressing option, something he wants to refrain from until he has no

other choice. Ishmael tells: “I made up my mind that if it so turned out that we should sleep together, he must undress and get into bed before I did” (*MD*, 17). He considers everyone about to share a bed with him as a possible threat, and he is determined to escape anyone who tries to touch him against his will. Not wanting to be or even seem vulnerable in front of a possible assailant, he wants to remain clothed until the other person has undressed and gone to bed.

Later, when he watches Queequeg undress and climb in his bed he is so frightened of what will happen next that he is incapable of uttering a single sound. He is startled enough to act only when Queequeg, surprised to find someone else in the bed, begins “feeling” him. Someone touching Ishmael without his permission seems to be more than Ishmael can possibly endure: “Stammering out something, I knew not what, I rolled away from him against the wall, and then conjured him, whoever or whatever he might be, to keep quiet, and let me get up and light the lamp again” (*MD*, 28). The only solution to the vile situation is to get as far away from the strange bedfellow as quickly as possible, light up the lamp and cry for help. When the innkeeper arrives and assures Ishmael that Queequeg will not “harm a hair of your head” (*MD*, 28), Ishmael remains suspicious. It is only after Queequeg politely motions Ishmael to join him in bed “rolling over to one side as much as to say—’I won’t touch a leg of ye’” (*MD*, 29) that Ishmael is convinced that Queequeg is a safe person to sleep next to. Ishmael has learnt that sleeping in the same bed with another man is dangerous. He needs to be promised by the innkeeper and Queequeg himself that no harm will come to him and that he will be allowed to sleep in peace before he is able to calm down.

After sleeping peacefully in the same bed with Queequeg, Ishmael is willing to let go some of his previous prejudices. As discussed in the Chapter 2, meeting Queequeg makes Ishmael change his mind regarding sharing a bed with another men. Suddenly “a compromise of the self and a disintegration of identity” (Crain 1994, 41) does not seem a terrible but an enticing prospect. Ishmael, after sharing bed with Queequeg and sleeping better than he ever has before, wakes up to find himself in Queequeg’s embrace, not quite able to tell where Ishmael ends and Queequeg begins (*MD*, 29–30), and describes the experience: “Now, take away the awful fear, and my sensations at the feeling the supernatural hand in mine were very similar, in their strangeness, to those which I experienced on waking up and seeing Queequeg’s pagan arm thrown round me,” (*MD*, 31). The feeling of Queequeg’s arm around him

is close to supernatural, and Ishmael emphasises that this time, the disintegration of self lacks “the awful fear.” Queequeg, though he has earlier made Ishmael shudder in fear, is now someone Ishmael feels safe with. Still, being embraced by Queequeg makes him feel so strange it is almost unreal; ghostly, or even heavenly, miraculous. Suddenly Ishmael is keen to let go of his loneliness. He wants the strange feelings of togetherness to continue.

As the narrative progresses, he realises he wants to remain Queequeg’s companion, board a ship with him and stay close to him. To feel even more attached to Queequeg, he is willing to let go some of his own habits and traditions. Even though he knows it is against the traditions of Christianity, he decides to participate in Queequeg’s pagan rituals:

I was a good Christian; born and bred in the bosom of the infallible Presbyterian Church. How then could I unite with this wild idolator in worshipping his piece of wood? But what is worship? thought I. Do you suppose now, Ishmael, that the magnanimous God of heaven and earth—pagans and all included—can possibly be jealous of an insignificant bit of black wood? Impossible! But what is worship?—to do the will of God—*that* is worship. And what is the will of God?—to do to my fellow man what I would have my fellow man to do to me—*that* is the will of God. Now, Queequeg is my fellow man. And what do I wish that this Queequeg would do to me? Why, unite with me in my particular Presbyterian form of worship. Consequently, I must then unite with him in his; ergo, I must turn idolator.

(*MD*, 61–62)

Ishmael, who was previously afraid of being assaulted and eaten by a repulsive cannibal, is now ready to let go of his own culture’s traditions and join Queequeg in worship. Instead of clinging to the views of the particular branch of Christianity he was brought up to believe in, he starts interpreting the word of God his own way. At the very heart of Ishmael’s new religion is his union with Queequeg. Suddenly to be with Queequeg is the will of God, and Ishmael is willing to do anything to stay obey God, remain in Queequeg’s company and be as close to him as possible. Later he describes his new beliefs to Bildad and Peleg:

I mean, sir, the same ancient Catholic Church to which you and I, and Captain Peleg there, and Queequeg here, and all of us, and every mother’s son and soul of us belong; the great and everlasting First Congregation of this whole worshipping world; we all belong to that; only some of us cherish

some queer crotchets no ways touching the grand belief; in *that* we all join hands.

(*MD*, 105)

Ishmael begins to believe in the “ancient” church, in other words, in what he considers as the true meaning of Christianity. Sacraments, baptism, and symbols of Christianity become meaningless, a mere hypocrisy. What matters is that they are all living and breathing human beings, all children of the earth, and therefore equal. Everything else is, according to Ishmael, “some queer crotchets”, useless gibberish stealing attention from the real message of God. In addition to the real message of his religion, he now values the togetherness of it: the act of joining hands in this belief, forming a union.

Meeting Queequeg changes Ishmael’s whole worldview. Instead of continuing his journey as a lonely “I” he lets his self be compromised and becomes a “we”, “a cosy loving pair” (*MD*, 62). Ishmael, in addition to moving from “I” to “we”, likens their relationship to a man and a wife’s on multiple occasions (*MD*, 30, 32, 62). By giving up his assumptions and prejudices, he is able to feel close to someone like he has not in a very long time if ever. Queequeg becomes “his Queequeg” (*MD*, 558), and Ishmael becomes part-pagan, following Queequeg’s traditions and adopting his ideology. After sharing the innkeeper’s wedding bed (*MD*, 23) with Queequeg, the boundaries set by the society become less insistent, and Ishmael is able to live his life as he wishes to, with his cannibal companion. In next subsection I will discuss the difficulty of making queer readings of text from the time before homosexual identity as well as the existing queer readings of *Moby-Dick*.

3.2 Queer readings of *Moby-Dick*

What makes a text gay or queer? Stanton (1995, 486) has proposed that a gay male novel is “a form of fiction in which male homosexuality is central – not always a central problem, but certainly a concern.” According to him, this is really all a novel needs in order to achieve a status as a gay novel:

“Few other absolute statements are possible. The Protagonist of such a novel is likely to be gay, or at least some of the lesser characters. Feelings of love arise; sexual acts occur; conflicts with the straight world – parents, teachers, friends, employers – happen.”

This is, of course, a criterion that mostly applies to contemporary texts. Correspondingly, according to Faderman's (1995, 52-53) article on the canon of lesbian literature, a contemporary work is usually considered to be a lesbian novel if it is written by an author who has declared themselves to be a lesbian, has a central character who identifies as lesbian or understand themselves to be a lesbian, and focuses on love between women. However, she writes that different rules may apply to earlier pieces of fiction, for before 1969 and the gay liberation movement it was hard to reach such consciousness and articulating it in print was even harder (Faderman 1995, 52-53). The same can be said about not only lesbian texts but queer texts in general, and similarly, it is more difficult to define which works of fiction would be a part the queer canon predating 1969.

Regarding the canon of lesbian literature, Faderman (1995, 57) suggests: "Perhaps we can (and need to) expand the canon by considering works in which lesbianism is not the clear centre but somehow encoded within the piece in various way". Echoing Berrong's (2006, 80) interpretation of this theory from lesbian to gay literature, the queer literature canon can be expanded by considering novels queer if they pass a less stern set of requirements. To put it simply, one can make queer readings of texts that firstly allow queer people to be active, desiring agents, and secondly, redefine the traditional gender dichotomies. Considering that in *Moby-Dick* the protagonist Ishmael meets, sleeps with and "marries" his bosom-friend Queequeg, a queer reading of the novel is possible, and during the past forty years, some queer readings of *Moby-Dick* have surfaced.

As suggested earlier in this thesis, "bosom friendship" between a white Christian and a foreign pagan is a recurring trope in Melville's fiction, and in his novels Melville often illustrates a dream of universal brotherhood (Herrmann, 2013, 65). In *Love and Death of the American Novel*, Fiedler suggests that a friendship between two men, often of different race and ethnicity, is not a characteristic in only Melville's work; it has been a recurrent pattern in many important American novels. These friendships, in addition to Ishmael and Queequeg, include Huck and Jim in *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain and Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook in *The Last of the Mohicans* by James Fenimore Cooper. Even though all these novels were released in the 19th century, they were not published in a row; *the Last of the Mohicans* preceded *Moby-Dick* by 25 years, and *Huckleberry Finn* was released 34

years after *Moby-Dick*. However, no matter how popular the interracial bosom-friendship was in the adventure stories of the 19th century, no one did it quite the same way as Melville.

In the Introduction of his study on male friendship in Melville's novels, Martin (1986, 4) writes that Melville's typical protagonist, "The Hero" or "experiencing self of the novels," is always caught between two opposing forces. The first one is a representation of the Dark Stranger, and he functions as a rendition of innocence, purity and state of nature. He is, because of his status as a person of colour and a foreigner in the white supremacist society, recognised as the Stranger and an outsider in the world of the Euro-American civilisation, and is therefore the Hero's complete opposite. Martin suggests that the other force is the Captain; a figure of strict authority, and a representation of the Western world and its search for control both over the space and over individuals. Eventually the Hero is forced to choose between these two forces – to rebel against the social order or to live by it (Martin 1986, 4–5). The Hero can achieve his freedom, the freedom from oppression and the freedom from the Euro-American society and its norms, by renouncing the power of the Captain.

Each novel has a slightly different approach to the dilemma of the Captain versus the Dark Stranger, and in each novel the Hero accomplishes his act of rebellion against the authority to a varying degree (1986, 4-5). However, of all Melville's novels, no Hero is as successful in the act of rebellion as Ishmael, and none of Melville's other novels reach the radically queer potential of Ishmael and Queequeg (Sanborn 2005, 228). As Martin (1986, 70) writes, the radical vision of the novel is thanks to the way it counters the Hero and the Captain, and the way it establishes that

no matter how seductive the figure of Faustian man, it is love alone, as manifested in the marriage of Ishmael and Queequeg, that can offer an alternative to the impending apocalypse of destructive, and ultimately self-destructive, fury.

Regardless of how dark the story gets, in *Moby-Dick* the prevalent force is not despair but love. According to Martin (1986), Queequeg and Ishmael and certainly, without any doubt, in love. Their marriage is not a sham, misunderstanding or a communication breakdown due to different cultural backgrounds; it is a loving

relationship that defines the message of the novel. Love alone can conquer hate. Love alone can help Ishmael escape and survive.

Martin has written about the relationship of Ishmael and Queequeg as a romantic and sentimental feeling of love on multiple occasions, in his book *Hero, Captain and Stranger* (1986), and in his articles “Herman Melville” ([1995] 2013) and “Sleeping with Savage” (1991). His belief in *Moby-Dick* as a love story seems unwavering: according to Martin (1991), Ishmael and Queequeg’s meeting and their ensuing marriage is “perhaps the most important site of the inscription of male sexual identity in mid-nineteenth-century America.” Queequeg “teaches Ishmael the lessons of love” and makes him aware of and capable of deconstructing a capitalist order of power. “The language of the first scenes featuring the two men is filled with imagery of marriage as well as with a sense of sexual and racial transgression” (Martin [1995] 2013, 442). Ishmael and Queequeg are, in multiple different ways, depicted as two men in love.

“Sleeping with Savage” (1991) focuses on the way the Pacific islanders have been depicted as the realisers of the white men’s sexual fantasies. Thanks to Queequeg’s identity as a Stranger, a savage, Ishmael is forced to rethink the cultural assumptions he has internalized. As a result, “‘unnatural’ becomes ‘natural,’ the pagan becomes Christian, and forbidden sexuality becomes love” (1991, para 8). Alongside of being forced to rethink his worldview, Ishmael comes to accept the love he has previously thought to be illegal as not only acceptable but even good. For Ishmael, the understanding and approval of his sexual identity is empowering, and no less than thrilling. After coming to terms with his queerness, Martin (1991, para 9) argues, Ishmael is able to recognise phallic symbolism and even revel in it; phallic is found in Queequeg’s idol, in a jack-knife, in the whales they are hunting. Thus, Queequeg and Ishmael’s love story is far from platonic, which is not surprising, considering that it is a realisation of white man’s sexual fantasies in novel form.

Hero, Captain, and Stranger (1986) and “Herman Melville” ([1995] 2013) deepen the reading of *Moby-Dick* as Melville’s dream of universal brotherhood and love between men. “‘In their hearts’ honeymoon,’” Martin [1995] 2013, 442) argues, “Queequeg and Ishmael unwrite many of the cultural fears that prevent communication across the boundaries of race and culture.” According to him, the message of *Moby-Dick* is the possibility of individual change. Thanks to Queequeg’s love, Ishmael is altered, and as a result able to resist the destructive force of Ahab’s

hatred. “It is because Ishmael has learned the lessons of Queequeg that he is able to function on the ship as an exponent of a restored sexuality and even to survive” (Martin 1986, 91). Loving Queequeg makes Ishmael invincible, and love alone makes it possible for him to use Queequeg’s coffin as a lifeboat and stay alive. Martin (1986, [1995] 2013) reads their relationship not only as romantic but as nurturing, essential for Ishmael’s survival of the shipwreck at the end of the novel.

Like Martin (1986, 1991, [1995] 2013), Herrmann (2013) has discussed *Moby-Dick* with the assumption that Queequeg and Ishmael are a couple and in love. His article, however, offers a very different look into their marriage compared to that of “Sleeping with Savage” or *Hero, Captain, and Stranger*. While Martin (1986, 1991, [1995] 2013) writes pure literary criticism, Herrmann’s article (2013), published in *Jung Journal*, addresses the love story from a psychological point of view. For him the marriage of Queequeg and Ishmael is not a enigma which needs a solution; it is merely the factual starting point. He asks, whether the union of Queequeg and Ishmael, the first portrayal of same-sex marriage in American literature, shows that same-sex marriage has “always been an unconscious aspect of the American spirit” and a “central part of [the] living myth” of Americans (Herrmann 2013, 65). Queequeg and Ishmael’s love is an antithesis to Ahab and Fedallah’s vengeance. The shipwreck at the end of the novel is a clear message: if homosexuality is not accepted, the humanity is faced with apocalypse (Herrmann 2013, 66, 69). Melville, although living before the time of homosexual identity, has written a novel about the radical queerness, the wholesome power of queer love, and the importance of lgbtq rights.

Third reading of *Moby-Dick* as a love story can be found in an article by Crain (1994, 45), which suggests that Melville

mixed the language of love between men with the language of cannibalism. In his early works, they are both fascinating horrors; he flirts with them and flees. In his late works, the mixing is deeply pessimistic: homosexual love has become cannibalism, a love that devours and destroys. But in *Moby-Dick* there is a brief and happy quirk in the imagery. Instead of homosexual love that is cannibalistic, there is a cannibal love that is homosexual: Queequeg.

In his reading, Queequeg is an exception to Melville’s rule of presenting homosexuality and homosexual love as something either frightening, impossible or

disastrous. Cannibalism is tied with homosexuality, making the latter acceptable and reachable, which I will discuss further in subsection 4.1. Crain (1994), much like Martin (1986, 1991, [1995] 2013) and Herrmann (2013) interpret Queequeg and Ishmael as a loving pair, and finds Queequeg's love positively transforming. The rules of homophobic society cease to matter: "Ishmael thinks he has found a loophole; is able to love Queequeg the way one cannibal loves another" (Crain 1994, 46). Crain (1994), similarly to Herrmann (2013) does not ask whether the relationship of Ishmael and Queequeg is based on mutual sense of romantic love. Instead, he studies the ways this romantic love is made possible in a society that did not fully acknowledge or accept men who love men.

The society that does not fully acknowledge or accept romantic relationships between men is what all these readings and interpretations really come down to. None of the readings above aim to define Melville's sexuality in modern terms or claim that his novels are based on lived homosexual experience, but even still, the persona of the author seems impossible to ignore. One of the reasons is, I assume, the notion that very often queer people write queer novels. Even at the beginning of this subsection, when examining the requirements of queer literature, the requisite that at least one of the two – the author or a character – has to be queer. In studies on *Moby-Dick* as love story, Melville is ever-present. Martin (1986, 90) writes:

The relative absence of Queequeg from the latter part of the novel is related to Melville's inability – both personal and cultural – to situate his homosexual romance in a social context. Everything we know about Melville's biography makes us suspect that nothing in his life could have given him any clue how to present a sustained loving relationship between two men, and certainly no fictional models offered themselves. That Queequeg exists is a tribute to Melville's deepest desire for a love that would operate toward social reconciliation; that he vanishes is a heartbreaking testimony to Melville's inability to realize those desires.

Since similar claims can be found in both Herrmann (2013, 71–73) and Crain (1994, 46–48), it seems that Melville and his own experience of love between men is always the driving force behind queer analysis on *Moby-Dick*. Melville's desire for universal brotherhood and an ideal friend is what explains the homosexual relationship in the beginning of his epic sea novel, and his failure to find and experience such brotherhood and friendship is what explains the death of Queequeg and the

subsequent death of love. Following the tradition of scholars reading *Moby-Dick* as a queer love story, I will move on to study today's portrait of Melville, and examine how Melville's reputation as the Great American novelist influences the reading of *Moby-Dick*.

3.3 The Melville myth

At the beginning of the Melville revival, Lawrence ([1923] 1971, 113) described the author as follows: "Melville has the strange, uncanny magic of sea-creatures, and some of their repulsiveness. He isn't quite a land animal. There is something slithery about him. Something always half-seas-over." Melville's personality and personal life has long been under the magnifying glass. Adapting the question Ferguson (2010, 1124) asks about Abraham Lincoln in his article "Was Abraham Lincoln Gay?", I could ask whether Herman Melville was gay, and whether the relationship of his characters Ishmael and Queequeg is based on the author's own homosexual experience. However, considering the time frame of modern homosexual identity, the question in itself is anachronistic; as Ferguson (2010, 1124) comments, to pose this question would be asking a nineteenth century person to answer a twentieth and twenty-first century question. For the reasons already covered in the subsections about homosexuality in the nineteenth century, studying whether Melville's sexual orientation aligned with what we understand to be the modern minority identity called homosexuality is not my intention.

Yet speculation about their sexual orientation is not the only thing these two men have in common. Much like Abraham Lincoln (Ferguson 2010, 1126), an image of Melville as an American hero was not widespread when he was alive. His art and persona were "a greatness recognized by few of his peers" (Hollmichel 2016). Many sources talk about Melville's books being "commercial failures," and state that he died penniless and unappreciated (Shelden 2016, 4, 5, 231, 234, 239–40, Beauregard 2016, 275) to the extent that even his name was misspelled in his obituary, although Parker (2002, 921) writes that it was merely a typesetting error. A typesetting error or not, the obituaries also got the publication year of his first novel *Typee* wrong and wrote that he had "fallen into literary decline" and described him as a "formerly well-known author" (Parker 2002, 921). All in all, Melville has a reputation as an underappreciated genius who died without the recognition he deserved, and only gained his good reputation posthumously.

“Everything about Melville seems to illustrate the enigma of creativity,” writes McCrum (2011). Even though academics as well as fans have not been able to draw definite conclusions on the author’s persona despite studying him and his book for a century, different depictions of Melville make one thing clear. The audience has created a so-called myth of Melville; the myth of an inexplicable, maniacal man, an adventurer, a hero, an artist and a genius, “the darkly imaginative, powerful, inspired, and eloquent author of *Moby-Dick*” (Gibaldi 2016, 56). Even his looks were those of a man’s man; Gibaldi (2016, 56) describes Melville as a beautiful man, “by all accounts,” a blue-eyed, tall, well-built, and “with a seductive voice” and a “virile beard,” Melville was an unignorable presence. Similar description of Melville’s looks is offered by Sheldon (2016, 3), who writes that Melville was “handsome in the rugged, masculine way of a young outdoorsman”, “tall for the times” and “broad-shouldered,” and also mentions Melville’s beard and blue eyes, the latter described as “ever curious and alert” (Sheldon 2016, 3). Both authors depict Melville as a conventionally attractive, infinitely masculine and desirable.

Gibaldi writes (2016, 56), echoing the real-life stereotype of the suffering, tortured artist, that it is “impossible to deny [Melville’s] melancholic and hermetic bent, his pessimism in the scowling face of life’s pointlessness – and just as impossible to deny his charisma.” All in all, the person who has written the great American classic has to be worthy of America and its people:

Moby-Dick remains the Great American Novel not only because it couldn't have been written by anyone other than an American, but because it alone wields the capaciousness to include the whole of American individualism, the Richter-scale collision of American mind and soul, the sacred grasp of the profane, that barbarous striving toward both a rumored heaven and a welcoming hell.

(Gibaldi 2016, 57)

The process of writing *Moby-Dick* is presented as a herculean task. Melville, for having succeeded in writing this monumental work and having become a certified American genius, must therefore be an ideal alpha male. After all, only the greatest of American novelists and the greatest of American men could have been able to create the Great American Novel. I argue that the Melville myth is strongly linked to hegemonic masculinity and the aspiration for ideal masculinity.

Connell ([1995] 1999, 67-68) writes that even though accounts of gender can be found in every culture, the concept of masculinity cannot. The concept of masculinity requires that women and men are regarded as opposites. For masculinity to exist like it does in the America of today, it has to be considered as the polar opposite of femininity. Additionally, describing someone as 'masculine' implies that the way they act is a result from "the type of person one is": "That is to say, an unmasculine person would behave differently: being peaceable rather than violent, conciliatory rather than dominating, [...] uninterested in sexual conquest and so forth" (Connell [1995] 1999, 67). The depiction of Melville as the great American novelist, the alpha male American people can be proud of, follows the definition of hegemonic masculinity. If normative masculine is what men ought to be (dominating, rational, sexually active), hegemonic masculinity is "the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable" (Connell, [1995] 1999, 76). Hegemonic masculinity is not a collection of eternally fixed characteristics that make an ideal man always and everywhere, but a collection of characteristics that are considered superior in the current society and culture.

Melville's assumed position as an ideal American man, that is, a man who meets the requirement of normative and hegemonic masculinities, makes it impossible to categorise him as homosexual or queer. As Ferguson (2010, 1127) writes, experiencing same-sex attraction or romantic intimacy are not included in the present day ideal of American manhood: "The reaction to homosexuality is visceral and intense, and touches nearly everyone." According to him, the negative reaction to homosexuality shapes the way we raise children and boys in particular. It makes people behaviorally demand that young men act a certain way; the presumed and internalised quintessential male way. Even the emergence of a slightly progressive acceptance, or, as Ferguson (2010: 1127) calls it, "a gradual grudging tolerance in some quarters," American society is not ready to include male-male intimacy in the possible behaviour pattern of an ideal man. As Connell ([1995] 1999, 40) argues: "The point of these practices is not just to abuse individuals. It is also to draw social boundaries, defining 'real' masculinity by its distance from the rejected."

As a result, to be a man means to be a heterosexual. Homosexuality is seen as an inferior, unnatural way of performing one's sexuality, not even necessarily an identity with which one is born. In a society which does not fully accept male-male

intimacy or sex, or finds it shameful and lowering, it is an insult to suggest that a historical figure might have experienced same-sex desire. Therefore, in order to imagine Melville or his characters as representations of the present day ideal masculinity of the American society, their same-sex attraction has to be excluded and ignored. To admit the author's or even only the characters' same sex desire would question the myth of Melville, his status as the Great American writer.

In addition to being heterosexual, an ideal alpha male has other requirements as well. Johnson (2014, 13) writes that in hegemonic masculinity

Men are assumed (and expected) to be in control at all times, to be unemotional (except for anger and rage), to present themselves as invulnerable, autonomous, independent, strong, rational, logical, dispassionate, knowledgeable, always right, and in command of every situation, especially those involving women. These qualities, it is assumed, mark them as superior and justify their privilege.

Similar conclusion can be drawn from reading the new publications on Melville in June 2016: Beauregard's *The Whale: A Love Story* and Shelden's *Melville in Love*. The former, telling a story of Melville falling in love with Nathaniel Hawthorne, aspires to deconstruct the Melville myth by depicting him as a sensitive, highly emotional, confused and unquestionably queer - making his way of performing masculinity the antithesis of hegemonic masculinity. *Melville in Love*, on the other hand, succeeds in further enforcing the Melville myth by depicting him as an adulterous rogue, a womanising, red-blooded American alpha male, the very picture of hegemonic masculinity.

In *The Whale: A Love Story*, Melville has a difficult time coming to terms with the fact that he is not the man he should be. Instead of being a good husband to his wife Lizzie or a good father to his son Malcolm, he decides to ignore his money troubles and move his whole family to the Berkshires just because he wants to be close to Nathaniel Hawthorne. In the novel, Lizzie describes Melville:

You are not always entirely honest, especially with yourself. Nor sensible. Nor kind. [...] You are so very far from perfect, but when it comes to the world and me, you will only accept absolute love, and that's why you always feel unsatisfied, most of all with yourself, because you are incapable of the things you desire the most.

(Beauregard 2016, 186)

The novel's Melville is a confused, depressed man, who, as the story proceeds, has to accept that he will never be enough. He is a queer man married to a woman he is not in love with, and his love and desire for his literary mentor Hawthorne must always remain unfulfilled and unacceptable. His is a life of secrets. He does not have words to describe the feelings he has for Hawthorne; he is not a sodomite, not like the amoral men he has met during his years at the sea, but at the same time, ordinary friendship does not cover the depth of his feelings nor his need for physical intimacy (Beauregard 2016, 100–102, 145–146). He dislikes having to deceive his family and convince Lizzie to waste her inheritance on false pretences but at the same time he cannot bear to be far away from the man he loves (Beauregard 2016, 35–38). He realises he is repeating his father's mistake; being as indifferent and unloving towards his own son as his father was towards him (Beauregard 2016, 215). All these features suggest he is well aware that the society expects him to be a different kind of man, but he cannot help failing to live up to the normative masculine behaviour. At the same time he does not regret failing to fulfill certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity; he does not want to become less passionate but more angry, dominant or violent. Instead he, teary-eyed and overwhelmed, regrets that society expects this of him, and longs for an alternate reality where he can be a better version of himself; someone who deserves Hawthorne's love and can live with him in harmony.

Melville in Love, then, presents the great American novelist in a very different light. According to Sheldon (2016), Melville is the paragon of American manhood; good-looking, sexually active, adventurous, if somewhat misunderstood in his time. In *Melville in Love* Melville relocates his family to the Berkshires to be close to the woman she loves – a woman intellectually much above his wife Elizabeth – the clever and sexually radical Sarah Morewood. Even though Melville has done “his best to make [his married life] work,” he could not deny that he was unhappy with his life (Shelden 2016, 38). Elizabeth was not clever, literary, nor “a good letter-writer” (Shelden 2016, 220), and thus incapable of seeing her husband's brilliance.

Shelden suggests it is no wonder that Melville ran into the arms of another woman, one he had not married just because it proved financially sensible (Shelden 2016, 34-36). Sheldon's Melville is a rational, even cold man, but at the same time

one who becomes passionate and daring when he is inspired by the right woman. His ideal masculinity (cleverness, rogue-ish charm and longing for adventure) finds its counterpart in Sarah Morewood's ideal femininity (beauty, wit, good social skills, empathy). Unlike Beauregard (2016), Sheldon (2016) does not show Melville's vulnerability. His Melville is not confused by his feelings for a person who is not his wife; he knows marrying Elizabeth, an insufficient woman, was a mistake, but he knows that his feelings for Sarah are real and pure. Even if the society deems his extramarital affair improper, he is not distressed. The Melville of *Melville in Love* does not burst into tears but soldiers on, untouched by the expectations of the society, carrying the flag of ideal masculinity high.

Yet both books, although presenting very different takes on the persona of Melville, fail to address a characteristic that has troubled the fans of Melville: his violence. Beauregard (2016, 112) only hints at Melville's violent nature; when angered, he throws a book and apologises right after. "I don't mean to hit you," Beauregard's Melville tells an acquaintance who has come to deliver some unpleasant news, "I would not have hit you with it. I apologize." This is the only scene that comments on the way Melville's processes anger. Sheldon (2016, 38, 225, 227), in turn, goes a bit further. He mentions that Melville and Elizabeth marriage was not a happy one. He states that as Melville got older, he became an angry father instead of only unattentive one, but also suggests that "like many couples who stay together when they should be apart, [Melville and Elizabeth] were making each other miserable." The blame is not only on Melville; Elizabeth is equally accountable for their unhappiness. Both authors fail to mention the ways Melville abused his wife, and made the members of his family miserable.

As the lack of discussion on Melville's abuse of his wife in both *The Whale: A Love Story* and *Melville in Love* shows, Melville's violence is a taboo in the academic circles that appreciate his work and have dubbed him as the Great American novelist. In her article "Herman Melville, wife beating, and the written page," Renker (1994) discusses the way the academia has chosen to ignore Melville's history of domestic abuse. Melville's violent history has been discovered in letters written by Elizabeth and her half-brother, and in Frances Melville's accounts. Frances, the only one of Melville's children to marry and have children, passed the stories to her daughter Eleanor Melville Metcalf (Renker 1994, 124, 126). Paul Metcalf, Eleanor's son, Herman Melville's great grandson, suggests that his

mother suffered a nervous breakdown at the time of her involvement in the Melville Revival in the 1920s. Thanks to Melville's posthumous glory, Eleanor was "forced to wrestle with a new conception of her grandfather." She had to face his grandfather's polished reputation: the critics and the academia has transformed "the beast" into "a Great Man" (Metcalf in Renker 1994, 126–27).

Melville's violence has been known since the mid-1970s, and in 1981 The Melville Society published a monograph addressing the discoveries. The conclusion was that some found this new information to be important to studies on Melville, some found it entirely insignificant (Renker 1994, 123). The fact that Melville remains the Great American novelist to this day suggests that all things considered, it does not matter that Melville abused his wife and children physically and emotionally. Violence is not unwanted in portrayals of hegemonic masculinity, and therefore Melville, no matter how violent he was, can remain someone Americans respect and admire. Some have even blamed Elizabeth for making his husband act in a violent manner: Rosenberry (in Renker 1994, 130) comments on the letters discussing Melville's domestic violence by writing that they "tell us nothing we did not know about Herman's moodiness and emotional perversity ('insanity'), or about Lizzie's imperfect understanding of the tormented artist in her husband." Hillway (in Renker 1994, 130) in turn writes that "on the whole, [Elizabeth] could not have been an easy person to live with;" she was "disorganized" and "a poor housekeeper." Elizabeth Melville was not an ideal wife or an ideal woman, therefore she deserved to be beaten up and thrown down the stairs. To excuse Melville's behaviour, the academics only need to find faults in hers. Once they do, Melville can continue being the hero of American literature.

Melville's reputation as the hero of American literature, in other words, the Melville myth, is of course the reason behind looking for faults in Elizabeth Melville and excuses for Herman Melville. As Reinker (1994, 30) writes: "The scholar's desire to exonerate Herman is no doubt rooted in the perspective Shneidman describes [...]: 'I wish to begin on solid ground, by making at least one statement with which everyone will agree: Herman Melville is the hero of the Melville Society.'" Proneness to domestic violence, while not against hegemonic masculinity and use of patriarchal power, does make Melville less admirable as a person.

However, I find it problematic that scholars seem more willing to accept Melville's wife beating than his possible queerness. While the letters written by

Elizabeth and her half-brother are regarded as evidence on Melville's history of domestic violence, Melville's letters to Hawthorne, no matter how homoerotic they may seem, will never – in the context of the Melville myth – be accepted as testimony that Melville loved and desired men. After quoting one of Melville's letters to Hawthorne ("Your heart beat in my ribs and mine in yours") McCrum (2011) writes: "So how homoerotic was this friendship? No one will ever know. It remains one of the mysteries of American letters." Speculating on this historical figure's queerness remains what it is – a speculation, an unresolved conundrum, one that many find even more daunting prospect than a historical figure's tendency to abuse his family. When it comes to hegemonic masculinity, queerness is one of the worst offences; being queer means willingly losing one's position of power, willingly debasing oneself and making oneself submissive.

4 The intersection of race and queerness

In his article “Queer race” Barnard (1999, 200) studies the intersection of race and queerness and writes: ”Sexuality is always racially marked, as every racial marking is imbued with a specific sexuality (gender, class, and other classificatory inscriptions are equally as determined and determining).” According to Barnard, race and sexuality are not components of subjectivity in contrast to or diverging from one another. Sexuality has always been racialized, and race has always been sexualized. These two do not exist independently from one another; they are not “two separate axes of identity that cross and overlay in particular subject positions, but rather, ways to circumscribe systems of meaning and understanding that formatively and inherently define each other” (Barnard 1999, 200).

In this chapter I study the intersection of the topics discussed in the previous chapters: race and queerness. I will begin by looking into the way the two were connected in Melville’s time, after which I will discuss what connects them today. Lastly, I will look into the critique of Queequeg and Ishmael relationship as a story of romantic love, and examine the reasoning behind said critique.

4.1 Cannibalism and homosexuality

As mentioned in subsection 2.2. on Queequeg and his role as the Stranger, cannibalism is an oft-mentioned feature of the protagonist’s companion. Even though Ishmael never witnesses Queequeg killing another human being and devouring human flesh, Ishmael takes it for granted that the man he shares his bed with enjoys eating people. At no point of the story does Ishmael start to wonder whether his bosom-friend has actually consumed human flesh, or whether his eating habits are only in Ishmael’s head. In spite of the fact that Ishmael is the only person Queequeg tells about his people’s traditional man-eating feast, Ishmael is not the only person who recognises Queequeg as a cannibal. A captain the pair meets in their search of a suitable whaler threatens to “kill-e [...] you cannibal, if you try any more of your tricks aboard here” (*MD*, 72), and when Ishmael has finally found that suitable vessel to employ him and his friend, the owner Captain Peleg says upon meeting Queequeg that “he had not suspected [Ishmael’s] friend was a cannibal” (*MD*, 104). From the

moment Ishmael and Queequeg meet, Ishmael calls his future bosom-friend as a cannibal (*MD*, 26), and for the majority of the story, a cannibal is the word characters use when they refer to Queequeg (*MD*, 504), and even Queequeg himself (*MD*, 73).

At the time of writing *Moby-Dick*, stories about the cannibals of the Pacific sea were not unusual. On 18 August 1838 an American naval officer and explorer Charles Wilkes set out to sea with 346 men. His goal was to rival the Europeans who, with their James Cooks and Christopher Columbuses, were the kings of the voyages of exploration. Even though Wilkes' journey has been dubbed as the "forgotten" expedition, it did catch and continues to catch the masses' attention thanks to a person who was not originally part of the crew. When visiting Fiji Islands, the Americans arrested a native called Ro Veidovi (or, as his jailers called him, Vendovi), put him in chains and forced him to travel to New York (Adler 2014, 256). When Ro Veidovi died shortly after reaching the American soil (Adler 2014, 260; Crain 1994, 28), the newspapers wrote in a satirical fashion that the cause of "the most valuable curiosity," "the cannibal king's" death was deprivation of human flesh (Crain 1994, 28; Adler 2014, 267).

Furthermore, Ro Veidovi's captivity was not the first time "a cannibal" had been brought to the United States; already in 1831 and 1832, the papers ran advertisements for exhibitions of cannibal savages. After paying the entrance fee, visitors could see how the terrible beasts had been turned into respectable American citizens. (Adler 2014, 260–261). Popular expeditions were written into memoirs, told in novel-form and adapted into plays. By the 1840s, the Pacific islands' reputation as the 'cannibal islands' was well-ingrained in the minds of the American public (Adler 2014, 262). Very few Americans had actually visited the Pacific islands, even fewer had met the natives and fewer still – if any – had seen the natives eat human flesh, but popular culture, science and commerce alike had ensured that Americans bought into the stereotype of the savage cannibal islander. In addition to all this, even the islanders themselves sought to enforce their reputation as cannibals. Banivanua-Mar (2010, 257) writes: "Fighting terror with terror, [...] Maori in New Zealand engaged European interest in cannibalism as tailored resistance to colonial incursion." Being labelled a cannibal became a shield against the European and American settlers; when their privacy and ownership was taken from them, what they still had was the option to remain fearsome. This is, I suggest, the reason why Queequeg not only allows himself to be called a cannibal but uses that term when describing himself.

Melville, too, was familiar with the narratives of the journeys to the South Pacific Islands long before he visited the islands himself. The life of a sailor was known to many of his relatives: Melville's uncle, who was a captain, befriended a German naturalist called Georg H. von Langsdorff who had visited the Marquesas in 1804, and Melville's cousin was a member of the crew on the U.S.S. Vincennes, which travelled to the same islands in 1829. Both of these visits to the South Pacific have been described in books. The account of Melville's cousin's journey on the U.S.S. Vincennes was written by the ship's chaplain, and Melville mentions the book in *Typee*. Langsdorff's narration of his adventures was used as a source for both *Typee* and *Omoo*, and he is referred to in length in *Moby-Dick* as well (*MD*, 242–43). Melville's early novels were without doubt examples of expeditions written into memoirs and told in the novel form, and after publishing the first novels, he was known to the wider audience as a "man who lived among the cannibals" (Melville in Horth 1993, 193).

Considering Melville's research and lived experience, it is no wonder that his writings resemble the writings of his contemporaries, be they scientists, journalists, or novelists. The narrations on the Fijians' "hideousness" (Adler 2014, 263) bring to mind Ishmael's description of Queequeg's looks, and the reports on the behaviour of Ro Veidovi before his time spent with the American sailors (Adler 2014, 266–67) have signs of Ishmael's recount of the cannibalistic feast he has heard from an unnamed sailor (*MD*, 102). Melville had read the popular accounts about the cannibals of the Southern seas, knew his source material and was well aware of the cannibals as a curiosity, and what is more, in writing *Typee* and *Omoo* and, to an extent, *Moby-Dick*, he contributed in making them even more of a curiosity.

However, Melville did not make his protagonist's companion a cannibal just because it was a popular trope at the time, and because cannibals were a thrilling curiosity. He was interested in another side of Cannibalism – its connection to desire between men. The link between cannibalism and homosexuality is not an obvious one to a contemporary reader, but looking into the two social violations in the 19th century, many similarities can be found (Crain 1994, 26). During Melville's lifetime, although two very different kinds of violations, love and/or sex between men and cannibalism were described in a similar rhetorical form. Literary evidence shows that they were talked about – or to be more precise, not talked about – in a coinciding fashion (Crain 1994, 28). Former sailors Savigny and Corréad wrote a best-selling

memoir about their experience as the survivors of the infamous wreck of the *Medusa*, but in the memoir, they are barely able to describe the act of eating the flesh of their dead crew members. Instead, they describe said nourishment as “that which we made use of,” and write that they “tremble with terror” each time they think about what they had to do in order to survive (Crain 1994, 28). In this narrative, cannibalism is described only vaguely; the writers have used an imprecise euphemism, and it is the readers’ responsibility to fill in the blanks. Crain (1994, 28) notes that correspondingly in Poe’s *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838) the narrator, although he describes the act of eating another traveller in more detail, also tells that “[s]uch things may be imagined, but words have no power to impress the mind with the exquisite horror of their reality.” Cannibalism is simply something too terrible for words. Even though “such things may be imagined,” it is unlikely that a civilised person’s mind could create a realistic account of what has transpired.

Conjointly, homosexuality was characterized as something “unspeakable,” something that should not be discussed. At the end of the 19th century Lord Alfred Douglas famously described the romantic and sexual relations between two men as “the Love that dare not speak its name”, but Douglas’ poem “Two lovers” (1894) was not the first time someone defined homosexuality by omission. Crain (1994, 28) discusses a case called *Davis v. Maryland*, where the accused was convicted for committing sodomy. In the case files his crime is labelled as “the most horrid and detestable” and “among Christians not to be named,” but the details have not been written down. Today’s reader is left wondering what actually transpired and led to the man’s sentence. The omission of homosexuality in documents from the era before the construction of homosexual identity is inevitable, of course: we return once again to the lack of terms and definitions for men who loved, desired and had sex with other men.

However, this rhetoric form common for both homosexuality and cannibalism is not the only thing that connects the two. In addition to being famous for their assumed habits of eating fellow humans, the inhabitants of the South Pacific Islands were famous for being highly promiscuous (Crain 1994, 28-30). When the modern exploration of the Pacific Islands began in the late 18th century, an abundance of European and American sailors formed sexual relations with the islanders. Typically, these relations have been depicted as heterosexual, between Polynesian women and European men. However, many published documents

concerning the Pacific explorations suggest that there were sexual encounters between European and Polynesian men as well (Wallace 2003, 2-7). Euro-American sailors would, regardless of the morals of their home country, find themselves intrigued by the beautiful Pacific men and establish sexual relationships with them.

Agreeably, at the time of the “European discovery” of the Pacific Islands, the Enlightenment and its rationalist concerns were at large. In opposition to the common mindset of earlier colonialism, the Enlightenment was interested in studying the sexual practices of other cultures without immediate judgement. Instead of condemning them as sinful, the intellectuals of the time wanted to understand the sexual practices of different countries (Wallace 2006, 263). As a result, the Western anthropologists started thinking that perhaps it was possible for people who shared their own ethnicity to be similarly inclined without it being a betrayal of the Euro–American civilisation (Wallace 2006, 263, 267). The Otherness of the Pacific islanders gave them a permission to have different sexual practices, and studying those practices allowed Euro–Americans to consider that maybe some of them, too, might be interested in similar practices.

Crain (1994, 38) suggests that cannibalism and homosexuality are both the beginning and the end of the Western civilisation. “In myth and religion, cannibalism often marks the advent of civilisation.” He refers to “the mythic origin of Greek culture,” Oresteia and Thyestes’ curse, and also to the Bible and the way the Christian rite of communion suggests cannibalism by telling the churchgoers to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ: “A myth or memory of cannibalism may found civilization, but only the uncivilized are cannibals” (Crain 1994, 38). The presence of cannibalism in the groundworks of Western civilisation, the Greek classics and the Bible, indicates that eating humans is not only a feature in “savage” cultures and societies, but a prominent part of the Western culture as well.

Coincidentally, the Greeks are also famous for homosexuality. Although the societal system of pederasty works very differently compared to homosexual identity of today (Hupperts 2006, 31-35), the same Greek classics that are considered to be the hallmarks of Western literary canon discuss the love between men which transcended the private love between man and wife (Crain 1994, 38). Even today, sodomy is considered a crime so serious that it has been named after the story of Sodom, the biblical “mythical destruction of civilization.” Homosexuality, although an important feature of the culture that gave us *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, *Plato’s*

Republic and other canonical works of the Western literature, is also the symbol of the end of the world.

In the subsection 3.1, I explain how the nineteenth century Americans considered physical intimacy between men shameful, coerced, submissive and inegalitarian. Correspondingly, it is often thought that at the heart of cannibalism lies power (Crain 1994, 42). Queequeg, telling about his history of eating human flesh (*MD*, 102), affirms that he has only eaten the enemies of his tribe, not his friends or family members. Correspondingly, the captain of Town-Ho tells three insurgent members of his crew: “But as for you, ye carrion rogues, [...] I mean to mince ye up for the try-pots” (*MD*, 297). For Melville’s cannibals, eating someone is an excellent revenge and a show of power. Ishmael, out of context but accurately, states: “Who has but once dined his friends, has tasted what it is to be Caesar” (*MD*, 173). As Sagan (in Crain 1994, 42) declares: “What is the worst punishment that one could inflict on someone one wished to hurt in the most radical way? Eat him, of course.” The one who eats holds the ultimate power over the one who is being eaten.

An important difference between the two violations was that as opposed to homosexuality, in the 19th century there was a word for the act of eating human flesh and for the people who committed this act. In contrast, when one had only friendship and “sodomy” to describe the relationships between men, the men who had felt feelings that could not be described in either of those words had to resort to symbols and euphemisms. A suitable symbol was found not only in cannibalism practiced by the Strangers, but in cannibalism resulting from shipwrecks. Shipwrecks, as opposed to talk of homosexuality, were not unusual, and neither were shipwrecks that resulted in cannibalism. There are fourteen recorded cases of cannibalism among the post-shipwreck sailors from 1807 to 1836 (Crain 1994, 27-28). The “Extracts” prefacing *Moby-Dick* show that Melville knew at least about shipwreck of Essex in 1820, caused by a sperm-whale, because Essex survivor Owen Chase’s book *Narratives of the Wreck of the Whale Ship Essex* is among the quoted texts, and Chase’s book is mentioned later in the novel as well (*MD*, xxvi, 241).

Shipwrecks and the resulting cannibalism were, not unlike sodomy, a disaster one had to bear in mind when boarding a whaler or a Navy vessel. The two even shared a visual representation: Géricault’s “Le radeau de la Méduse” (1818-1819) depicts a raft floating in a stormy sea, carrying a swarm of nude or nearly nude men. They are clinging to each other, lying on top of each other, their idealised physiques

well-displayed and their faces a show of extreme suffering. Yet, as Crain (1994, 26) notes, cannibalism is hidden from the viewer. Their bodies are still whole, unconsumed by the surviving members of the crew: “The cannibalism was symbolized by physical intimacy between statuesque nude men.” Cannibalism and homosexuality share the language and the visual imagery and become, in Euro-American culture of the 19th century, an inseparable entity. Next I will discuss how power, race and homosexuality are connected today, and how that affects the reading of *Moby-Dick* as a love story.

4.2 Race, queerness and shame

Although the similarities between cannibalism and sexual relationships between men were evident to an American of the nineteenth century, in today’s culture the two have been separated and become very distinct. Queerness is generally viewed as a constructed, hidden identity, while race is self-evident and stable (Barnard 1999, 205–06). In actuality, however, race is not self-evident but unstable and constructed, much like sexuality. Correspondingly, one’s sexuality shapes people’s perception of their race, and vice versa (Barnard 1999, 206). One of the reasons why the way cannibalism and homosexuality are connected is not obvious to the contemporary reader is that unlike cannibalism and the subsequent sexual promiscuity and interest in more than one gender, homosexuality of today is often regarded as an identity for white people. In her book *Touching Feeling* Sedgwick (2003, 31) goes as far as to refer to the intersection of queer and black as “the apparently unrepresentable dangerous and endangered conjunction.”

In the modern Euro–American society to be queer is to be white. While the United States is considered as fairly accepting toward gay people, many mainly non-white countries are not, regardless what their official stance to lgbtq people actually is (Puar 2007, 4). From this point of view, a modern reader can fail to see Queequeg as a queer character. As a person of colour, his queerness is automatically less likely, and his marriage to Ishmael (*MD*, 61) is not a homosexual act, merely a sign of his very different culture. Queequeg, as a native of Kokovoko, cannot be queer; he is only an outsider, and therefore his marrying Ishmael loses its meaning and, like Ishmael says, only translates to being “bosom-friends.”

In spite of the presumed whiteness of queer subjects, queerness and non-whiteness are connected even in today's Euro-American society. The link between the two minorities is, as Stockton in her book *Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame: Where 'Black' Meets 'Queer'* (2006) suggests, the feeling of shame and debasement. Even though contemporary scientific consensus is that different human races do not exist, race is not meaningless; people of different ethnic backgrounds are treated differently socially, culturally and politically (Barnard 1999, 205-206). The understanding that scientifically there are no human races does not "eradicate the reality of the material and psychological effects of these constructions on people's lives and identifications, and on the ways in which [people of colour] are 'racialized' by themselves and others, both historically and today" (Barnard 1999, 206). From a very young age, the society teaches children of colour that they are inferior, less significant than white, and that they should be ashamed of their ethnicity, ashamed of their skin. Likewise, even though the "born this way" ideology has spread, and queer people have gained civil rights since 1969 to the extent that many countries now allow same-sex marriage, homophobia is still well and alive; queer people are more likely to face discrimination, suffer from depression, commit suicide (Stonewall 2017).

Fanon (in Stockton 2006, 8-9) describes the feeling of internalized racism in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*: "Shame. Shame and self-contempt. Nausea [...]. The evidence was there, unalterable. My blackness was there, dark and unarguable. And it tormented me, pursued me disturbed me, angered me." He continues by telling the reason he has written his book: he hopes to help his "brother, whether black or white" to destroy "the shameful livery" of racial inequality. He hopes to guide people of colour like himself on their journey to unlearn their unconscious biases against themselves, to help them to stop automatically giving themselves less value than they give white people.

Shame is similarly associated with queerness. In the beginning of his book *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, Katz ([1995] 2007, 1-2) writes about his queer awakening:

"[W]ith a new and dawning horror, I had first consciously applied the word *homosexual* to my feelings for men [...]. Even now, after all these years, I still recall the dread that the word *homosexual* evoked on that conformist fifties morn. I also recall the later, humiliating sting of 'Fag!' and the mortifying

punch of 'Queer!' hurled at me [...]. I spent the next fifteen years shamed and isolated, tortured by the word *homosexual*, and by my homosexual feelings.”

A homosexual person, like a person of colour, learns from a young age to resent themselves and their identity.

According to Bersani (in Stockton 2006, 14), in public discourse gay men are lumped together with sexual passivity. The act of anal sex makes gay men, like women who engage in vaginal penetration, the receiving ends of masculine, dominant sex acts, and therefore submissive, even weak. Allowing oneself to be penetrated means abdicating power and consequently lacking the masculinity and dominion of real men (Stockton 2006, 14). This conclusion falsely suggests that every gay man has anal sex, but also that being penetrated is shameful because it is something to which heterosexual women have to consent. In a misogynistic world, having feminine characteristics or having interests that can be considered feminine is demeaning.

The shame both people of colour and gay people experience is due to lack of power; failure to perform in a way that would make them belong in the hegemonic identity category. Non-whiteness is shameful because white people are in the hegemony, in dominant position compared to people of colour. Queerness is shameful because heterosexual people are in the hegemony and hold more power over queer people. Stockton (2006, 23) states:

There is no purely black form of debasement – nor a queer one. Only blended forms of shame. A circuitry of switchpoints keeps associations sparking between “black” and “queer” and the signs attached to them. Between cloth and skin, between sexual dirtiness and the filth of neighborhoods, between tabooed attractions and actions of racial punishment, between miscegenation and sexual sameness, and between the autoimmunities of memory and those of the body.

Historically, as well as in Western society of today, being white and heterosexual is more beneficial than being non-white or queer, or both: “Black and gay identities have been creatively crafted out of the basest of insults” (Reid-Pharr in Stockton 2006, 21). Regardless of the improving civil rights, to be queer and/or a person of colour means instant abasement in the eyes of the society. A man of colour fails to perform hegemonic masculinity because he is not a white man, no matter which

other requirements of hegemonic masculinity he fills. A queer man is automatically more feminine than a heterosexual man, and therefore not as ideal.

As suggested by Martin (1986, 1991, [1995] 2013), Crain (1994) and Herrmann (2013), the intersection of race and queerness is the very feature which deconstructs the patriarchal society. Like Martin ([1995] 2013, 442) writes:

One of Melville's most daring insights in *Moby-Dick* is the recognition of homophobia as a force linked to racism and required patriarchal society just as much as the suppression of women. Male friendship, as Melville presents it, has the capacity of interrupting an economy of production. Like his contemporary Whitman, Melville sees in male friendship a social potential that is linked to the democratic mission of America.

Melville is aware of the link between homosexuality, race, the patriarchy, and the subsequent shame. Ishmael's falling in love with Queequeg, a homosexual and a cannibal, is what, ultimately, makes democracy a possibility. Ishmael, in accepting Queequeg, proves that escaping the hatred of the patriarchy is not impossible. However, Martin ([1995] 2013, 442, emphasis original) continues:

But Melville's view is much darker than Whitman's, for he places the scene of racial and sexual harmony *prior to* the death-driven journey of the *Pequod*. For Melville, the democratic potential is threaten not so much by a reassertion of traditional political authority as by the persistence of structures of hierarchy and abuse in a democratic culture.

In the end, this democratic relationship does not succeed. Queequeg's love can only save Ishmael, not the rest of the *Pequod* or even Queequeg himself. As the story proceeds, Queequeg becomes less and less present until he disappears from the narrative entirely. Ahab and his vengeance steal the stage from the democratic potential, and at the end Ishmael, the lone survivor of the shipwreck (*MD*, 663), returns to the beginning of the novel and becomes the same lonely orphan of the first chapter (*MD*, 3–9). Although Queequeg and Ishmael refuse to feel shame and proudly defy the expectations of the society, in the end their revolution fails to create a new world order. Their love does not succeed; Ishmael is destined to survive alone and continue living without the care and love of Queequeg. This interracial love story becomes an impossibility even in the sphere of the novel. Next I will look into the impossibility of *Moby-Dick* as a love story closer.

4.3 The impossibility of interracial love story

Although *Moby-Dick* has been studied closely for a hundred years, and although it stages the first gay marriage in the history of American literature (Herrmann 2013, 65), the amount of academic readings of the novel as a queer love story or even just a queer story is surprisingly small. Clearly something in *Moby-Dick* prevents people from recognising Ishmael and Queequeg's relationship as queer and their union as marriage. Various other definitions of their relationship have been offered instead of a loving marriage: more often than not, Queequeg is interpreted as Ishmael's "sidekick" or "buddy," a friendly character of less importance. Seeing him as a "dark companion," a minor character who sacrificed his ties to his culture for the white hero" (Abele 2014, 142), is not uncommon. The latter is an extension of the Noble Savage stereotype; a character who only exists to make the white character seem even nobler.

Identifying Queequeg as a noble savage is not surprising. As I discussed in subsections 2.2 and 4.1, and briefly in the subsections 3.2, a complete Stranger as the white narrator's companion is not an unusual pair in the history of American literature, especially in the adventure story tradition of the nineteenth century. The scholars' refusal to read their relationship as romantic would make sense if Queequeg indeed were a noble savage stereotype. If Queequeg were a typical noble savage, Queequeg and Ishmael's relationship would never reach an acceptable level of equality. Queequeg, as a mere accessory of the white protagonist, would not be able to make his mind freely. However, as suggested earlier, Queequeg, when examining more closely, seems to dodge the stereotypes of typical Noble Savage imagery, and his character does not seem to exist as a realiser of sexual fantasy, either. Queequeg is written as his own man, with his own motives and agendas, "always equal to himself" (*MD*, 59). Therefore his relationship to Ishmael, a person who is willing to distance himself from his own culture in order to feel close to a Stranger, seems to be of his own design, as much his own choice as Ishmael's.

Regardless of Queequeg's differing from the noble savage stereotype, scholars are reluctant to define Queequeg and Ishmael's relationship, or at least reluctant to define it as queer and/or romantic. In the introduction I mentioned Fiedler ([1967] 1970, 325) who, even though he has been quoted by scholars who argue that the relationship of Queequeg and Ishmael is queer, would vehemently

disagree with said scholars. The queer readings of *Moby-Dick* bothered him to such extent that he commented on them in the second edition of his book *Love and Death in the American Novel*:

”Homoerotic” is a word of which I was never very fond of, and which I like even less now. But I wanted to be quite clear that I was not attributing sodomy to certain literary characters and their authors, and so avoided when I could the more disturbing word “homosexual”. All my care has done little good, however, since what I have to say on this score has been at once the best remembered and most grossly misunderstood section of my book.

(Fiedler [1960] 1970, 325)

According to this revision, Fiedler only used the word “homoerotic” because no other word could adequately describe the close relationship of two members of the Pequod’s crew. However, using “homoerotic” was a dire mistake; people assumed Fiedler implied that the characters created by the Great American author are queer, participate in acts of sodomy and therefore wilfully abase themselves. Fiedler’s denial is founded on his time of writing; merely a year after the Stonewall riots, homosexuality was a lot more shameful than it is today, and attributing queerness to the main character of the Great American novel would have been an insult. Fiedler ([1960] 1970, 325) calls the word “homosexual” disturbing, and insinuates that a queer reading of *Moby-Dick* is a gross misunderstanding, revealing his own prejudices against queer people. He finds it better to leave the relationship undefined than to define it in terms that might be mistaken for homosexuality, the ultimate evil and debasement.

Sanborn’s (2005, 231) lack of definition is has less overt homophobia and is therefore, in my opinion, a lot more interesting. He writes:

Melville wants the relationship between Ishmael and Queequeg to suggest the value of distance and formal equality in global and interpersonal relations. Out of a desire to safeguard whatever distance there is between the imperial power and the rest of the world, Melville metaphorically expands that distance to an astronomical extent, thereby making the unity of his bosom companions not the outcome of an open-ended experience but a matter of theoretical assertion. At the same time, however, the relationship between Ishmael and Queequeg is not purely and stiffly abstract; *something* passes between them. But it is indeed a something: it is easier to say what it is not – a romantic or sentimental feeling of love – than to say what it is.

(Sanborn 2005, 231, emphasis original)

According to Sanborn, the relationship suggests egalitarian intention. The two men, although born and raised in very different environments, succeed in coming together and forming a liaison unburdened by colonial power imbalance. However, Sanborn suggests that Melville's motives do not lie in the deconstruction of the patriarchy or in the dream of a universal brotherhood. His reading proposes that Melville is writing about "the value of distance and formal equality" (Sanborn 2005, 231), not a true marriage of minds which goes beyond the boundaries of countries and cultures.

While other writers of Melville's time emphasise "the prospect of colonial union" between the Europeans and the Strangers, Melville highlights the importance of maintaining the distance between the two. Unlike Martin (1986, [1995] 2013) suggests, Sanborn's Melville is not imagining a new world order, but according to him (2005, 251), "the most important thing" about Queequeg and Ishmael's relationship is its depiction of "a way of being alone in which we are nonetheless together and a way of being together in which we are no longer ourselves." Sanborn's reading of the relationship falls somewhere between an interracial love story and a noble savage narrative. Where to, he cannot exactly say. What he does know and is adamant about, however, is that the relationship is not romantic.

Sedgwick ([1990] 1994, 52–53) has gathered a series of popular dismissals of queer readings, including:

Passionate language of same-sex attraction was extremely common during whatever period is under discussion – and therefore must have been completely meaningless. [...] Attitudes about homosexuality were intolerant back then, unlike now – so people probably didn't do anything. [...] The word 'homosexuality' wasn't coined until 1969 – so everyone before then was heterosexual. (Of course, heterosexuality has always existed.) [...] The author under discussion is certified or rumored to have had an attachment to someone of the other sex – so their feelings about people of their own sex must have been completely meaningless.

Out of these dismissals, each and every single one can be – and often has been – used against queer readings of *Moby-Dick* in some form or another. Queequeg and Ishmael's marriage is meaningless, because in the language of Kokovoko, it means only friendship. Ishmael abandoning the lonely "I" and moving to the shared "we" does not mean anything, because Queequeg is merely Ishmael's sidekick. As described in length in Chapter 3, the attitudes towards homosexuality were

everything but favourable in the America of the nineteenth century, which is why neither Melville nor his characters can have been queer. The fact that the term “homosexual” was coined only after the release of *Moby-Dick* further verifies this argument. Melville was married to a woman, and, according to some, even had extramarital affairs with women, therefore the letters using homosexual symbolism do not mean anything.

The lack of successful romance in Queequeg and Ishmael’s relationship has been described in detail; at times it is due to the imagery of the colonial relations (Abele 2014, 142), sometimes Queequeg’s disappearance from the latter part of the novel (Lawrence [1923] 1971, 156; Martin 1986, 90), at times Queequeg saving a random sailor and not his bosom-friend from drowning, and sometimes Ishmael’s not nursing Queequeg back to health when he gets so ill he decides the only correct action is to commission a coffin (Sanborn 2005, 242–43). The reasons may be diverse, but on the whole, the common factor in the different non-queer reading of *Moby-Dick* is that they lean heavily on the fact that Queequeg and Ishmael are an interracial couple.

I argue that readings claiming the impossibility of a queer understanding of Queequeg and Ishmael’s relationship always reach the same conclusion: the relationship cannot be queer, romantic, loving, and sexual because Ishmael is a white man and Queequeg is not. Scholars either dismiss *Moby-Dick* as a love story or cannot (or refuse to) define the relationship because it is cross-cultural and interracial. As discussed in the beginning of subsection 4.2, in today’s Euro-American society, non-white and queer identities are seen as something that cannot co-exist. When analysing a novel written in the era before the modern concept of homosexuality, at the time of overt white supremacy, the intersection of race and queerness is considered as something even less likely. Because of the lack of homosexual identity intersecting with the colonial imbalance, what passes between Queequeg and Ishmael is only “something” (Sanborn 2005, 231), the broadest possible generality, not anything specific.

My argument is supported by the fact that as soon as something about the relationship changes, defining it becomes easier. If the couple is of the same ethnicity, thus erasing their cultural difference, or if one of them is of different gender, thus making them a heterosexual couple, calling the motives behind the union of Queequeg and Ishmael “loving” is possible. Bernard (2002, 384) reads

Ishmael as biracial, and because of this, he is able to call Ishmael's "love" for Queequeg as "undying." The imperial power imbalance is absent. A tale about a Polynesian man and an African American man cannot be a tale of two "buddies," and in addition to this, Ishmael's identity as a biracial man erases the possibility of a noble savage stereotype. Queequeg is no longer considered to be Ishmael's sidekick or a "dark companion." A shared identity of men of colour makes them flagrantly equal. Bernard (2002, 384) does not specify whether the love Ishmael feels is romantic, which is not surprising; as discussed in subsection 4.2, queerness is considered to be an identity for white people. However, for biracial Ishmael and Polynesian Queequeg love – however one defines it – comes naturally. Bernard (2002) does not consider whether Ishmael truly loves Queequeg or if Queequeg loves him back. Their love is seen as self-evident. A biracial Ishmael can "love" Queequeg without any doubts, because a man of colour can love another man of colour in a way that a white man cannot love a man of colour. Their love does not need justifications.

If the characters are interracial but their union is heterosexual, the effect is the same. In a new stage adaptation of *Moby-Dick*, directed by Adam Cook, Queequeg is played by a woman. Romai (2018) writes: "A female Queequeg puts an intriguing slant on *Moby-Dick* which has long been read as having homoerotic elements. [...] So, now that Queequeg is a woman and Ishmael is still a man [...], will we see a heterosexual romance?" The answer is yes; with a female Queequeg, the budding romance is impossible to ignore. Society that relies on presenting women and men as exact opposites, permits heterosexuality as the only way to access a romantic, sexual relationship (Butler [1990] 1999, 163, 71), men and women cannot share a bed without an implication of a sexual relationship. The cast of the new dramatization of *Moby-Dick* does not deny the heterosexual relationship either (Romai 2018). It seems that the point of the play is not to present the relationship as unromantic or sexless. A heterosexual, even if interracial, couple can be read to be in love. Correspondingly, when Melville describes the beauty of the Polynesian women in *Typee*, no one seems to ask whether Melville was actually sexually interested in them. His interest in them is taken for granted, and it requires no further examination. A man's desire for women, unlike a man's desire for men, is considered to be inherent, natural, even unstoppable.

Ishmael and Queequeg, as long as they are both queer and of different ethnicities, as long as they remain a white man and a male cannibal, cannot be in

love. As an interracial queer couple, they must always remain unequal and distant from each other, unable to obliterate the gap between different cultures. No matter how close to each other they get, they cannot reach the perfect understanding reserved for heterosexual couples, even though Ishmael continuously describes their relationship by using imagery usually reserved for romantic, heterosexual couples, and emphasises that what he feels for Queequeg is love (*MD*, 53-64). In Ishmael and Queequeg, Melville sought to imagine a relationship that would transcend the boundaries of the America of the nineteenth century and create a new world order, an America without racism and homophobia. Unfortunately, his views are not shared by all, and the society's intolerance remains. A world that cannot fully understand or realise the universal acceptance of Melville's dream cannot comprehend how someone living in a white supremacist society before the invention of homosexuality could even imagine such a thing. Queequeg, although he manages to change Ishmael's whole worldview, does not manage to convince the heterosexual readers of today of the realness of their marriage.

Due to Queequeg and Ishmael being an interracial couple, many have deemed their love story impossible. Melville states that they are married, and when describing them, Melville uses romantic language that was, in the nineteenth century, largely reserved for married couples. The novel shows repeatedly that what Queequeg and Ishmael feel for each other is love, and when either ethnic difference or homosexuality is removed from the story, this love becomes acceptable. However, it seems that as long as the couple remains both interracial and queer, their love cannot be named. No matter how many queer readers see a love like theirs in Queequeg and Ishmael, it seems that this understanding can be regarded as anachronistic, erroneous and misinformed. Next, I will briefly go over my arguments and findings, and conclude my thesis.

5 Conclusion

Reading *Moby-Dick* for the first time, I was immediately fascinated by Queequeg and Ishmael's relationship. I found this depiction of an interracial queer couple in the nineteenth century America extremely radical; a show of rebellion, a progressive reimagination of America's racist, homophobic past (and, to an extent, present). To my understanding, Queequeg and Ishmael's marriage functions as the antithesis to the novel's fundamental theme of hate and revenge. Queequeg and Ishmael, a cosy loving pair, represent the dream of universal brotherhood and all-encompassing, nurturing love. Queequeg, as the Stranger and Ishmael's complete opposite, gives Ishmael the opportunity to escape the boundaries of society that bind him.

At first horrified at this Polynesian man-eater, Ishmael refuses to share a bed with Queequeg, but soon changes his mind. Ishmael realises that because of his status as a complete Other, Queequeg exists outside of the Euro-American community, and that becoming his bosom-friend will give Ishmael a chance to perform his identity the way he wishes to. In the era before homosexuality, cannibalism was used as a symbol for the yet unnamed feelings of love and desire that some men felt towards other men, and Queequeg, a cannibal and a homosexual, frees Ishmael from the burden of trying to live up to the expectations of the patriarchy. After meeting Queequeg, Ishmael adopts a new worldview and openly defies the hegemonic masculinity and white supremacy. In the end, Queequeg's love and the way he has taught Ishmael to regard his surroundings in a different way are Ishmael's salvation. It is thanks to Queequeg that Ishmael survives the shipwreck of Pequod and lives to tell the story of his less fortunate crewmates.

However, studying Melville and *Moby-Dick* is unproductive without understanding the context. No matter how much one tries to avoid speculating the author's personal life, the persistent Melville myth affects the reading of this 'Great American novel'. Furthermore, the homosexual and racial histories of the United States need to be considered without yielding to anachronism, always a danger in a contemporary reading. I have examined the intersection of race and queerness and pointed out that, although the two identities are very different from each other, they have something in common, both historically and today. In the nineteenth century they shared a sense of Otherness, and both queer people and people of colour existed outside the status quo of Western society. Today, even though the human and civil

rights of queer people and people of colour have improved in Western society, both minorities face discrimination and suffer from internalised shame.

When studying the context of Melville and *Moby-Dick*, I drew a few conclusions. Firstly, the status of homosexuality in the nineteenth century – or rather the absence of it – makes it possible for scholars to dismiss contemporary queer readings. Homosexuality did not exist as it does today, which means that queer readings are unavoidably limited. Secondly, the Melville myth, the belief that Melville is the Great American Novelist, makes queer readings less likely. In the nineteenth century society as well as in the society of today, being queer means to be socially devalued. As the man who has written the Great American Novel has to be an ideal man, therefore he must also fulfil the requirements of hegemonic masculinity. Thirdly, even though queerness has been linked to cannibalism and othered identities, it is nowadays considered to be a mainly white identity. In the nineteenth century, multiple features connected cannibalism to queerness: Cannibalism and queerness shared a rhetoric, cannibalism has functioned as a symbol for queerness, and both cannibalism and queerness are presented as the beginning and the destruction of the Western civilisation. Additionally, it was thought that both cannibalism and male–male intimacy were based on power imbalances; both were grounded on coercion, use of force and violence. Arriving to the twentieth century, the connection between cannibalism and queerness has faded, and according to contemporary stereotypes, queerness and otherness cannot co-exist, thus making a nineteenth century interracial queer love story an impossibility.

Although the relationship of Queequeg and Ishmael aims at surpassing the limits of the Euro–American society of the nineteenth century, it fails to surpass the limits of today’s society. Queequeg and Ishmael’s different cultures and origins make them an interracial couple, and according to many, an interracial homosexual couple living in America of the nineteenth century cannot accomplish egalitarianism. Ishmael, a white man living in the white supremacist society, will always remain in a position of power while Queequeg, a colonised other, will never escape his inferiority in the eyes of Western society. Melville depicts Queequeg as a man who is always equal to himself, but Queequeg has been read as a sidekick, dark companion, fetish and a noble savage stereotype. Ishmael, a man who is able to pass as an ideal male of the nineteenth century, is considered to hold power over Queequeg. Add to this the nineteenth century understanding of male–male intimacy as always

something entailing coercion and loss of power, and a depiction of an unequal, highly problematic power dynamic is complete.

Ishmael and Queequeg, two men of very different origins, have to overcome multiple harmful social norms in order to live happily ever after, and since Queequeg does not survive the shipwreck at the end of the novel, many argue that their narration does not read as a love story. Queer readings of *Moby-Dick* face the same dismissal time after another; scholars might not be able to define what passes between this, as Ishmael defines them, cosy loving pair. They are, however, often able to define the relationship as undemocratic and therefore loveless. If one takes away queerness or ethnic difference, love between the two seems self-evident. The intersection of race and queerness, however, seems to make their love impossible. Inequality is regarded as the reason why Queequeg and Ishmael cannot be a loving couple, and that unacceptable amount of inequality is due to the couple's different ethnicities that converge with queerness.

However, the fact that the couple is interracial is also the very thing that makes the intimate male–male relationship possible. In the nineteenth century Western society, cannibalism and queerness were both considered the Other, and because of this often regarded as intertwined. By depicting Queequeg as the complete Other, a Polynesian and a Cannibal, Melville hints at his sexual identity in a way that could be recognised – but not condemned – by the nineteenth century readers. Ishmael is able to fall in love with Queequeg precisely because Queequeg is the complete Other. If Queequeg were a white man, Ishmael could not escape the boundaries of society by falling in love with him. Falling in love with a white man is an impossibility, because to love a white man would be to continue to belong to Western society. Ishmael would have to stay ignorant of his privilege, and not live with his companion openly without shame. In contrast, loving a cannibal allows Ishmael to overcome the limits of society, to live according to a different set of rules, namely, the rules Queequeg and Ishmael have set themselves. To love a cannibal means to reimagine the present, to create a new world order. Even though queerness and ethnicity are regarded by many as vastly different, even mutually exclusive identities, they remain linked even to this day. In *Moby-Dick*, the intersection of queer and race, personified by Queequeg, becomes the protagonist's salvation.

On one hand, as argued earlier, Queequeg and Ishmael's ethnic difference makes their love easier to deny. On the other hand, their ethnic difference allows

Ishmael to escape the limits of the society, to love Queequeg and be saved by him. Therefore, as an interracial couple, Queequeg and Ishmael create an interesting paradox. In *Moby-Dick*, a love story between interracial men is considered to be an impossibility, yet the intersection of queer and race is the very thing that allows the relationship in the first place. Melville depicted a couple who can escape the restricting society of New England in the mid-1800s, but even though the human and civil rights of lgbtq people and people of colour have improved immensely from the era of *Moby-Dick*, it seems that Ishmael and Queequeg still cannot be a loving couple and survive. The work continues.

In my thesis I have hoped to shed light on readings and understandings of *Moby-Dick*, and I wish that in the future reading Queequeg and Ishmael as a queer couple in a loving relationship will be easier. I have looked into the reasons why the relationship has, according to many scholars, successfully escaped definitions beyond “not romantic” and “not sexual,” and explained why the intersection of queer and race creates a paradox which both allows and denies the marriage of Queequeg and Ishmael. By doing so, I have hopefully fractured said paradox, and made it more possible for Queequeg and Ishmael to fulfil the potential of their radically queer, radically loving relationship.

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Appendix 1: Finnish summary

Tutkielmani käsittelee Herman Melvillen meriroomaania *Moby-Dick* (1851), joka on viimeisen sadan vuoden ajan kutsuttu suureksi amerikkalaiseksi romaaniksi. *Moby-Dick* on teos, jota määrittää sen perustuminen erilaisiin dikotomioihin. Maa ja meri, tuttu ja tuntematon, ihminen ja eläin, sekä minä ja muukalainen ovat tekijöitä, jotka taustoittavat romaanin juonta ja moraalisia kysymyksiä, sekä luovat sen merkillisen tunnelman. Romaanin sisältämät vastakkainasettelut eivät kuitenkaan lopu kirjan viimeiselle sivulle – niin lukijat kuin tutkijatkin ovat olleet kiinnostuneita pohtimaan paitsi tarinaa, myös sen tekijää. Melville, mies suuren amerikkalaisen romaanin takana päätyi, kohdattuaan useita taloudellisia vaikeuksia, työskentelemään tullissa virkamiehenä, ja kuoli vailla mainetta ja kunniaa. Mutta vaikka kirjan lopussa Pequod uppoaa miehistö mukanaan, *Moby-Dickin* perintö ei ole osoittanut laimentumisen merkkejä – sen Melvillen kuoleman jälkeen saavuttama maine jatkaa purjehdustaan menestyksen merellä.

Tutkielmassani suurennuslasin alle joutuu pari keskeistä teoksessa esiintyvää dikotomiaa. Ensisijaisena kohteenani on Queequegin ja Ishmaelin suhde, ja sitä kautta dikotomiat tutun ja tuntemattoman sekä minän ja muukalaisen välillä. Tarkastelen rodun ja queerin intersektiota, ja pohdin niitä syitä, jotka ovat mahdollistaneet sen, että sadan vuoden tutkimuksen aikana Queequegin ja Ishmaelin suhdetta on ollut vaikea määritellä. Mitkä tekijät ovat johtaneet siihen, että Queequegin ja Ishmaelin suhdetta tarkastellessa pyritään usein vakuuttamaan, että mitä tahansa se onkin, ei mistään romanttisesta tai seksuaalisesta ole kyse. Queequeg ja Ishmael menevät romaanin alussa naimisiin, ja heidän suhdettaan kuvataan sanoilla ja tavoilla, jotka on ajalle perinteisesti varattu romanttisille, heteroseksuaalisille rakkaussuhteille, mutta tästä huolimatta 1900- ja 2000-luvun tutkijat ovat kieltäneet suhteen romanttisen ja seksuaalisen puolen. Vaikka olisi vaikea määritellä, millainen suhde Queequegilla ja Ishmaelilla on, ei näytä olevan vaikea määritellä, millainen suhde heillä ei ole. Perusteluista huolimatta *Moby-Dickin* queer-luennat ovat saaneet paljon kritiikkiä.

Romaania analysoitaessa Queequegin ja Ishmaelin on nähty muodostavan ajan seikkailukirjallisuudelle tyypillinen toverisuhde: suhteeseen verrattavissa oleva valkoisen ja ei-valkoisen miehen välisen suhteen on esitetty löytyvän mm. Mark Twainin *Huckleberry Finnista* ja James Fenimore Cooperin *The Last of the*

Mohicansista. Melvillen kuvaus miestenvälisestä suhteesta eroaa kuitenkin näistä kahdesta muusta esimerkistä huomattavasti, sillä Melvillen teos on avoimen antirasistinen ja pyrkii kuvaamaan uutta, universaaliin veljeyteen ja patriarkaatin purkamiseen pohjautuvaa maailmanjärjestystä. Lisäksi Queequeg on hyvin erilainen hahmo kuin Twainin Bumpo tai Fenimore Cooperin Chingachgook. Queequeg, jonka hahmon kehitys ei sisällä kristinuskoon kääntymistä eikä päädy euro-amerikkalaisen kulttuurin ihannointiin, ei suostu asettumaan tyypilliseen jalon villin muottiin. Queequeg, polynesianainen kannibaali, säilyttää oman minuutensa, taipumatta amerikkalaisen yhteiskunnan tai hegemonisen maskuliinisuuden vaatimuksiin. Jo tavatessaan Ishmaelin hän on saavuttanut tilan, jossa on aina tasa-arvoinen itsensä kanssa, eikä hänen hahmonsa ole tarkoitus saada Ishmaelin edustamaa valkoista amerikkalaisen miehen esimerkkiä näyttämään paremmalta. Ishmael ei onnistu kääntymään Queequegia tai tekemään hänestä kunnan amerikkalaista; Queequeg läpäisee euro-amerikkalaisen yhteiskunnan hänelle asettamat koetukset ja pitää kiinni omasta kulttuuristaan ja näkemyksistään.

Myöskään Ishmael ei, varsinkaan romaanin edetessä, näyttäytyä hegemonisen maskuliinisuuden ideaalina. Romaanin alussa Ishmael esitetään masentuneena, amerikkalaiseen yhteiskuntaan lopen kyllästyneenä nuorukaisena, jonka vastaus itsetuhoisten ajatusten ja tekojen välttelylle on pestautuminen merimieheksi. On esitetty, että Ishmael olisi, toisin kuin luojansa, rodullistettu mies, mutta nähdäkseni useat yksityiskohdat romaanissa viittaavat siihen, että Ishmael on etnisyydeltään valkoinen. Kenties keskeisin näistä yksityiskohdista on Ishmaelin kauhistus hänen kohdatessa Queequegin ensimmäistä kertaa. Queequeg, monin tavoin Ishmaelin täydellinen vastakohta, kauhistuttaa Ishmaelia kaikessa erilaisuudessaan, mutta pian Ishmael huomaa, että juuri Queequegin erilaisuus voi koitua hänen omaksi pelastukseksi.

Ishmael, joka on ennen nähnyt merille lähtemisen ainoana tapana poistua yhteiskunnan vaikutuksen ulkopuolelle, ymmärtää, että eläessään Queequegin kanssa hän voi elää toisenlaisen standardin mukaan. Hän hylkää euro-amerikkalaiset toimintamallinsa ja omaksuu kannibalin filosofian, mikä mahdollistaa avioliiton muukalaisen kanssa. Tavattuaan Queequegin Ishmael alkaa tiedostaa omia ennakkoluulojaan ja etuoikeuksiaan, ja karistaa hänelle ennestään tuttuja kolonialismiin ja patriarkaattiin perustuvia ajatusmalleja. Lopussa tämä osoittautuu hänen pelastukseksi; Queequegin rakkauden ansiosta Ishmael pelastuu lopun

haaksirikosta ja voi kertoa tarinan valkoisesta valaasta. *Moby-Dickissä* miestenvälinen suhde näyttäytyy siis positiivisena, jopa pelastukseen johtavana edistyksellisenä euro–amerikkalaisen yhteiskunnan vastustamisena.

Kuten aiemmin kirjoitin, suhteen romanttisuutta on kuitenkin myös epäilty. Nähdäkseni tähän on muutama syy. Ensinnäkin, homoseksuaalien ja homoseksuaalisuuden sosiaalinen asema 1800-luvulla – tai lähinnä aseman puute – mahdollistaa sen, että nykyajan queer-luentoja voi vähätellä. Nykyinen homoseksuaalin vähemmistöidentiteetti on alkanut kehittyä vasta 1800-luvun puolivälin jälkeen, ja sana on lisätty englanninkieliseen sanakirjaan vasta 1890-luvulla. *Moby-Dickin* kirjoittamisen aikaan ei homoseksuaalisuuden, niin kuin ei heteroseksuaalisuudenkaan, käsitettä ollut olemassa. Tämä on johtanut usein siihen, että on ajateltu, ettei myöskään nykyisten homoseksuaalisten suhteiden kaltaisia suhteita ollut olemassa, eikä niistä siten ole voitu kirjoittaa. Miestenväliset suhteet olivat joko ystävyyttä tai sodomiaa, ja kuilu näiden kahden välillä oli valtava. Vaikka miestenväliset seksuaaliset suhteet eivät olleet epätavallisia, eivätkä varsinkaan merellä, olivat nämä suhteet kuitenkin lainvastaisia ja paheksuttuja. Lisäksi sodomia nähtiin äärimmäisen epätasa-arvoisena; esitettiin, että kahden miehen välinen suhde sisältää lähes poikkeuksetta pakottamista ja alentamista, eikä voi toteutua ilman, että toinen osapuoli joutuisi huonompaan asemaan. Homoseksuaalisuutta ei siis ollut olemassa sellaisena identiteettinä, jona sen nykyään ymmärrämme, minkä takia myös queer-luentojen tekeminen hankaloituu. Onkin tavallista, että ennen homoseksuaalisen identiteetin syntyä julkaistuista kirjoista tehtyjä queer-luentoja pidetään anakronistisena.

Toiseksi, 1920-luvulla alkanut ja nykypäivänä jatkuva Melvillen nousu suuren (etenkin amerikkalaisen) yleisön suosioon on luonut niin sanotun Melville-myytin. Melville-myytille on tunnusomaista se, että myyttiin uskovat pitävät Melvilleä suurena amerikkalaisena kirjailijana, ja tämän postuumin leiman vuoksi myös Melvillen persoonaan liitetään tietynlaisia piirteitä. Myytin vuoksi Melvilleä ei voi tarkastella objektiivisesti; miehen, joka on kirjoittanut suuren amerikkalaisen klassikon, on oltava kirjoittamansa kirjan ja samalla koko Yhdysvaltojen ja sen kansan arvoinen. Melvillen täytyy siis täyttää ideaalimaskuliinisuuden vaatimukset. Amerikkalaiseen ideaalimaskuliinisuuteen kuuluu vahvasti heteroseksuaalisuus, ja niinpä queer-luennat *Moby-Dickistä* näyttäytyvät Melville-myyttiin uskoville arveluttavina. Jos Melvillen hahmot ovat homoseksuaaleja, mitä se kertoo suuresta

kirjailijasta? Homoseksuaalien hahmojen olemassaolo tekisi Melvillestä huomommin hegemoniseen maskuliinisuuteen sopivan henkilön; hän ei enää mukailisi amerikkalaisen miehen ihannetta. Tämän vuoksi myös queer-luennat, huolimatta siitä, väitetäänkö niissä kirjan queeryyden pohjautuvan kirjailijan omaan kokemukseen, nähdään pahimmillaan loukkaavina.

Kolmanneksi, vaikka 1800-luvulla kannibalismi liitettiin vahvasti queeryyteen, on linkki tähän päivään tultaessa kadonnut. 1800-luvulla kannibalismia ja homoseksuaalisuutta yhdisti toiseuden leima, ja länsimaissa polynesianlaiset tunnettiin ja heitä kummeksuttiin paitsi ihmissyöntinsä, myös seksuaalisen seikkailullisuutensa vuoksi. Kannibalismista ja queerista puhuttiin samoin ilmauksin ja retorisin keinoin, ja kummallekin oli tyypillistä kertominen kertomatta jättämisen avulla. Homoseksuaalisuutta ja kannibalismia kuvataan toisiaan mukailevalla tavalla myös länsimaisen sivistyksen merkkiteoksissa, Raamatusta ja antiikin klassikoissa. Lisäksi homoseksuaalisuuden ja kannibalismin nähtiin jakavan samanlainen valta-asetelma. Kuten aiemmin kirjoitin, 1800-luvulla miestenväliset seksuaaliset suhteet nähtiin lähes poikkeuksetta perustuvan väkivaltaan, toisen osapuolen alistamiseen ja pakottamiseen, ja kiistämättömään epätasa-arvoon. Epätasa-arvon nähtiin löytyvän myös kannibalismista. *Moby-Dickissä* kannibalismia kuvataan ultimaattisen vallan osoituksena. Queequeg on osallistunut ihmissyöntiin voitettuaan vihollisheimon, ja kapteeni uhkaa tekevänsä kapinoivasta miehistöstään jauhelihaa padan täytteeksi. Sekä homoseksuaalisuuden että kannibalismin katsottiin kumpuavan vallankäytöstä, väkivallasta ja epätasa-arvosta.

Huomionarvoista on se, että 1800-luvulla sana ”kannibaali” ei merkinnyt ainoastaan ihmissyöjää; se toimi synonyyminä kaukaisten maisten tuntemattomille asukkaille. Melvillen teoksissa on yleistä, että lähes kaikki rodullistetut hahmot nimetään kannibaaleiksi huolimatta siitä, ettei kukaan koskaan näe heidän harjoittavan ihmissyöntiä, ja tarinat ihmissyönnistä ovat täynnä liioittelua ja mielikuvitusta. Melvillen teoksissa kannibaali ei tarkoita ihmissyöjää vaan oikeastaan ketä tahansa rodullistettua muukalaista; esimerkiksi Pequodin miehistöstä kannibaalina pidetään sekä polynesianlaista Queequegia, Amerikan alkuperäisasukasta Tashtegoa ja afrikkalaista Daggoota. Ei siis ole väliä, onko kyseinen henkilö todella syönyt ihmisiä; jos hän on rodullistettu toinen, hän on automaattisesti kannibaali. Rodullistettu toinen saattoi siis tulla helposti luetuksi ihmissyöjänä ja, johtuen kannibalismin ja länsimaisesta normista poikkeavan seksuaalisuuden suhteesta,

queerina. Nykyään rodullistettu henkilö luetaan kuitenkin helpommin juuri heterona, ja seksuaalisuus ja etnisyys nähdään toisistaan merkittävästi erilaisina identiteetteinä. Seksuaalisuus nähdään konstruoituna ja helposti kätkeytyneenä, etnisyys taas vakaana ja itsestään selvänä. Lisäksi queerin ja rodullistetun identiteetin intersektiota pidetään harvinaisena. Länsimaiden ajatellaan olevan suhteellisen hyväksyä seksuaalivähemmistöjä kohtaan, kun taas muut kuin länsimaat nähdään seksuaalivähemmistöjä sortavina. Homoseksuaalisuus nähdään nykyään pääosin valkoisena identiteettinä, mikä johtaa myös siihen, ettei Queequegia, johtuen polynesialaisesta taustastaan, lueta queerina hahmona. Hänen ja Ishmaelin avioliitto on seurausta hänen erilaisesta kulttuuristaan, eikä sillä ole mitään tekemistä hänen seksuaalisen suuntautumisensa kanssa. Queequegin taustan takia avioliitto Ishmaelin kanssa menettää merkityksensä ja kääntyy tarkoittamaan ainoastaan ystävyyttä.

Syy, joka johtaa Queequegin ja Ishmaelin suhteen romanttisuuden kieltämiseen juontaa queeriyden ja etnisyyden intersektiosta. Intersektio luo paradoksin, joka sekä mahdollistaa että kieltää Queequegin ja Ishmaelin avioliiton. Avioituessaan polyneesialaisen kannibaalin kanssa Ishmael voi paeta yhteiskunnan kahleita, löytää uuden tavan katsoa maailmaa, ja toteuttaa itseään haluamallaan tavalla vailla yhteisön paheksuntaa. Kuitenkin juuri Queequegin toiseus on suurin syy suhteen romanttisuuden kieltämiselle; johtuen vallitsevasta kolonialismista ja valkoisesta ylivoimasta, Queequeg on yhteiskunnan silmissä Ishmaeliin nähden aina altavastaaajana. Rodullistetusta identiteetistään johtuen Queequeg ei voi koskaan nousta Ishmaelin tasolle, ja koska jo pelkästään miesten väliset seksuaaliset suhteet nähtiin 1800 rakentuvan epätasa-arvolle, ei Queequegin ja Ishmaelin suhde voi saavuttaa tasa-arvoa eikä siksi myöskään olla rakastava.

Tutkielmani päämäärä on purkaa tätä etnisyyden ja seksuaalisuuden luomaa paradoxia ja tehdä *Moby-Dickin* tulevista queer-luennoista mahdollisia ja todennäköisempiä. Toivon, että tutkielmani auttaa Queequegia ja Ishmaelia saavuttamaan sen radikaalin queeriyden ja rakkauden, joita näen heidän suhteellaan olevan.