

Harmony through Conflicts: Herman Melville's Attitudes towards Transcendentalism in *Moby-Dick*

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Abstract—According to the Transcendentalist beliefs proposed by great American thinker Ralph Waldo Emerson in the mid-19th century, this article carries out a detailed analysis of Melville's both Anti-Transcendentalist thoughts and Transcendentalist tendency in the perspectives of Oversoul, Individualism, and Man-and-Nature relationship revealed in *Moby-Dick*. It also lists the reasons for Melville's complex and sophisticated attitude towards Transcendentalism in the hope of directing the critical attention to this aspect that *Moby-Dick* is a twisted and ambiguous interpretation of Melville's attitude towards Transcendentalism.

Index Terms—Herman Melville, attitude, transcendentalism, *Moby-Dick*

I. INTRODUCTION

Now generally acknowledged as one of the greatest writers of the nineteenth century in the United States, Herman Melville (1819-1891) is best known for his fiction *Moby-Dick*, a tale which “Melville reached the high-point of his art” (Ousby, 1979, p. 70). Richard Chase (1957) refers to the novel as “the grandest expression of the American imagination” (p. 89), and it is appreciated as one of the towering masterpieces in world literature.

This novel is a record of the wandering sailor Ishmael's coming into society, his development, his response to the universe and the people around him and his final and mature insight into human nature as well as his spiritual search for self-identity. Based on a profound, encyclopedic knowledge of the ocean and vessels, Melville succeeded in portraying vivid sea adventures and exotic island life in his constant quest for the mystery of destiny and his preoccupation with good and evil in the universe.

Meanwhile, the American Romanticism period in history also witnessed the outbreak of the Transcendentalist movement, represented by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) who had advocated a series of Transcendentalist views. One major element of his philosophy is the transcendence of the “Oversoul” — the supernatural level of reality. Emerson believes that “man is made in the image of God and is just a little less than Him. This is as much as to say that the spiritual and immanent God is operative in the soul of man, and that man is divine” (Chang, 2007, p. 61).

While Oversoul is the gist of Emerson's belief, Self-reliance acts as the way that makes Oversoul practical. As God is in every man's heart, following one's heart means to hear and act on the voice of God. It naturally leads to another concept of Transcendentalism, which is democratic individualism. Emerson explains individualism to the fullest in his statement that “Mankind should remain the centre of the world, for, if fate is something that limits him, it will also become something that he can control... and circumstance is half, but positive power is the other half” (Emerson, 1990, p. 35).

This study aims to find answers to questions concerning the relationship between Melville's thoughts and the American Transcendentalist beliefs. To be specific, what kind of attitudes Melville holds towards Transcendentalism and how they are revealed in his work *Moby-Dick*.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

After a fleeting success in the late 1840s, Melville's popularity declined dramatically. “In his secret proud way, Melville had challenged the world with his genius”, as John Freeman indicated, “but the world had defeated him by ignoring the challenge and starving him” (Freeman, 1926, p. 69).

“Posterity has rectified this injustice. From the 1920s onwards, there has been a steady revival of interest in Melville's work” (Ousby, 1979, p. 70). Melville's reputation then “surge from the lesser American writers into the rarefied company of Shakespeare and a few fellow immortals of world literature so that only Whitman, James, and Faulkner were seen as his American equals” (Gottesman, 1979, p. 204). The Melvillean study, especially the study on his masterpiece *Moby-Dick*, has proliferated with increasingly-growing research interests throughout the twentieth century even until now.

Such an unexpected return of Melville's great fame inevitably caused a more careful study about the findings of modern critics in this white whale story. The discoveries have attested *Moby-Dick* to be a book much richer than somewhat a mixture of prose and a poetic language. Ever since the 1920s, when *Herman Melville: Mariner and Mystic* by Raymond Weaver got published, *Moby-Dick* has continuously received sharp critical attention from all kinds of perspectives. Weaver was enthusiastically pro-Melville. He called *Moby-Dick* “indisputably the greatest whaling novel” (Weaver, 1921,

p. 105). The year 1929 saw the publication of Lewis Mumford's *Herman Melville: A Study of His Life and Vision*. To some degree, Mumford projects Melville's real life and autobiographical documents onto his fiction and literary works. In 1939, an incredibly important study of *Melville in the South Seas* was brought out by Charles R. Anderson, who undertook highly close research about factual data of Melville's three-year-long voyage in the Pacific. And he argued that Melville has shaped and transformed factual material instead of just "invented" things (Anderson, 1939, p. 230).

Additionally, a variety of *Moby-Dick* in different languages and editions emerged in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s. Kevin J. Hayes (2008) once made a relatively comprehensive conclusion of such situation: "Translations of *Moby-Dick* appeared in Finnish (1928), French (1928), German (1929), and Italian (1932)" (p. 203). In the eye of most critics, *Moby-Dick* was a rare achievement rather than a big failure. The prediction of Van Wyck Brooks that the "Melville boom is only a question of time" was validated as true (quoted in Parker, 1970, p. 144).

It was since the 1970s that the issues of reading *Moby-Dick* have become more and more complicated according to modern criticisms. Various interpretations have been invoked among critics. For instance, in Leslie A. Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel*, the companionship between Ishmael and Queequeg is given careful attention. And John Parke altogether finds seven levels of meaning in his essay: the "Seven Moby-Dick's" (Parke, 1981).

In particular, several scholars contributed to the realm of Melvillean study from the transcendental perspective. In Hershel Parker's (1970) *Melville's Satire of Emerson and Thoreau: An Evaluation of the Evidence*, he has established the fact that Melville in at least one work does satirize Transcendentalism and Transcendentalists. In Milton Stern's (1957) *The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville*, he believes that Melville's early attack on the missionaries was a prelude to a bolder attack on the concept of God itself, or even against the Spirit of Innocence, the universal purity and goodness which the Transcendentalists treasured. In *A Whale of a Tale*, Davis (1991) digs deep into Melville's early hardships of life on whalers and claims that the brutal, difficult and uncertain way of life in the nineteenth-century marine industry led to Melville's anti-Transcendentalist viewpoint.

Furthermore, in *A Companion to Herman Melville*, Matthiessen (1941) maintains that Melville "felt a strong attraction in the transcendental beliefs; he frequently underscored Emerson's lines with that heavily-freighted nineteenth-century word 'noble'" (p. 145). However, on the other hand, Melville struggled uncomfortably with Emersonian Transcendentalism. Again, in the paper *Negotiating Transcendentalism, Escaping Paradise: Herman Melville's Moby-Dick*, Ramon Espejo Romero (2010) undertakes a close reading of *Moby-Dick* and carries an ongoing debate between the novelist and Transcendentalist philosophy. For the reason that each interpretation has its solid foundation, it is unlikely to unify the various themes and the rich diversity of the form discussed. It can be said that every age can find its own implication in this "leviathan" book.

In China, Melville was first introduced in 1957 when Cao Yong translated his *Moby-Dick*. From then on, more translated versions of both the masterpiece and other works were received by Chinese readers. "Melville study in China mainly focuses on four perspectives: the chapter reviews of Melville and *Moby-Dick* in books like *Comments on 20 American Classics* by Yu Jianhua; the preface and epilogue when *Moby-Dick* was translated; various textbooks of the history of American literature, for example, *A Survey of American Literature* by Chang Yaoxin; and the last one is the academic essays" (Li, 2006, p. 11-12).

In the CNKI (China's National Knowledge Infrastructure), nine journal articles themed on *Moby-Dick* are found in the 1980s, seventeen in 1990s. The twenty-first century, especially the period from 2010 to 2019, witnessed a considerable rise in Melville study in China. What's more, there is also a large number of theses of both Master and Doctoral degree level discussing Melville and his *Moby-Dick*. Generally speaking, almost every year saw publications of journal articles and theses on *Moby-Dick*. In overall terms, the study of *Moby-Dick* is on the dramatic rise, which shows that the Melvillean research tends to be more comprehensive and text-oriented.

Despite the achievements in China, there still lies a particular gap. It is not hard to notice that most of the Chinese scholars' research have focused on close or similar subjects embedded in this novel, such as symbolism, tragic spirit, eco-criticism, religious thinking, and the Man-and-Nature relationship. And there exists a significant amount of overlap in both their titles and contents. However, only a fraction of research focuses on the representation and interpretation of Transcendentalism reflected in this novel.

III. THE ANTI-TRANSCENDENTALIST THOUGHTS IN *MOBY-DICK*

To say that the whole of *Moby-Dick* is a negative reflection upon Transcendentalism is not, in fact, an exaggeration (Ousby, 1979, p. 84). Throughout the story, Melville incorporates the Anti-Transcendentalist principles in the characterization of Ahab and the relationship between man and nature.

A. Ahab — Suicidal Individualist

1. Ahab's innate evil

Emerson believes that the world is filled with goodness and human nature is potentially good, positing "The individual is the most important of all and man can become better and even perfect" (Emerson, 1990, p. 60). However, Melville refutes this Transcendentalist principle by believing in the more reasonable idea that man has the potential to be either good or bad and that every soul is born with the stain of the original sin and man is the most destructive force in nature.

After Ahab loses his leg to the white whale, he creates himself as the "race-hero" who vows to kill the source of evil:

Moby Dick (Stern, 1957, p. 74). To Ahab the pursuit of the white whale is all-important, and his determination to get his revenge becomes an obsession. The whale, he insists, struck him out of malice, not a blind instinct; indeed, it represents "all the evil in the natural universe" (Ousby, 1979, p. 81). In a way the whale also personifies the evil that exists within Ahab. Blindly, the very evil embedded in Ahab was ignored by transcendentalists. And fiercely, the Transcendentalist ideals were struck upon by Melville.

2. Ahab's blasphemous pride

The key to Transcendental philosophy lies in the notion that God could be found through nature. Emerson brings God back into common people's heart as he states: "God is here within" and "God in us worships God" (Emerson, 1990, p. 45).

Melville deals heavy blows against the optimistic views by portraying Ahab as a man who not only has a God in his heart but even thinks he is the only God for all. In Chapter 124, the narrator summarized: "In his fiery eyes of scorn and triumph, you then saw Ahab in all his fatal pride" (Melville, 1994, p. 405). Ahab is angry for his pride is severely wounded, and his "wounded pride" is essentially blasphemous from the very bottom. He fails to accept human limitations and his nerves have been disturbed by the blind and purposeless outrage towards the whale. As the outcome turns out to be, Ahab's egotism makes him a destructive and malicious threat to *Moby Dick* and finally causes his self-annihilation in the end.

3. Ahab's deadly extreme individualism

Melville's era saw the acme of Transcendentalist individualism that had been gaining ground for some time. Emerson established a relationship between human and the world—instead of being confined by the world, man becomes the active controller and creator of the outside world. In other words, self-reliance and individualism must outweigh external authority and blind conformity to custom and tradition.

Melville lost no opportunity in his criticism of extreme individualism. Ahab denies the humanity and individuality of his fellowmen ruthlessly and is said to be too much of a self-reliant individual to be a good human being. To him, the only existing law is always his own will. Richard Chase hits the nail when he says that the idea Melville conveys in *Moby-Dick* is "death—spiritual, emotional, physical," which is the price of self-reliance when it is pushed to the point of solipsism (Chase, 1962, p. 57). Ahab is, to be more exact, a victim of solipsism, "his tragedy stemming in the main from extreme individualism, selfish will, and a spirit too much withdrawn to itself to warrant salvation" (Kartiganer & Griffith, 1972, p. 359). *Moby-Dick* thereby represents the fundamental pattern of the nineteenth-century American life: extreme loneliness and deadly suicidal individualism in a self-styled democracy.

B. Attacks on Man-and-nature Relationship

"American fiction is perpetually fascinated by man's relation to nature, and in this area, Melville is supreme" (Ousby, 1979, p. 28). Melville holds different views about the relationship between man and nature from his contemporaries during his time.

1. The human's frustrating journey to the mystery of nature

Emerson experienced a moment of "ecstasy" recorded in his *Nature*. "I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God" (Emerson, 1989, p. 905). It is evident that Emerson believes that with man's intuition, he is capable of transcending the limitations of himself and coexisting with nature.

On the contrary, the Anti-Transcendentalists believe that man could observe nature, experience nature and even admire nature; however, man could never uncover the mystery of nature, nor could he fuse into nature. "The man who goes too far in the effort, who crowds too close upon the mystery, destroys himself" (Higgins & Parker, 1992, p. 459). Meanwhile, Ahab's passion for dominating nature gives him an evil persona and counters Transcendentalist views that man and nature are equal before God. "He, Ahab, is evil, Melville seems to say, because he seeks to overthrow the established order of dualistic human creation" (Stern, 1957, p. 74).

Melville showed intense interests in the problem of the conflict between people's pursuit for the meaning of life and Nature's indifferent response. Just like some critics declare, man cannot overcome or manipulate nature at its source. Indeed, he must, ultimately, put himself at the mercy of nature. The moment he attempts to gain power over nature, he is predestined to disaster. The idea that man can recreate the world for himself is nothing but a Transcendentalist folly.

2. The icy-coldness of nature

Melville challenged the Transcendentalist naïve perception of nature as being loving and rational by depicting the vast sea as indifferent, unforgiving and often unexplainable. He unveiled the true nature of the sea in the following description: "But as the oarsmen violently forced their boat through the sledge-hammering seas, the before whale-smitten bow-ends of two planks burst through, and in an instant almost, the temporarily disabled boat lay nearly level with the waves" (Melville, 1994, p. 327).

It could be drawn from above that Melville firmly believed in the malicious sides of nature because he sensitively learned that nature was often capricious, disinterested, or cruel to man's sufferings. In this sense, Melville differed from the Transcendentalists in holding that there existed an untranscendental gap between man and nature. Following this thread, he shattered the Transcendentalist false illusion of a happy world by using numerous images of destruction and iniquity.

IV. THE TRANSCENDENTALIST TENDENCY IN *MOBY-DICK*

A. Two Main Transcendentalist Characters

Although Herman Melville holds some Anti-Transcendentalist thoughts as mentioned above, his book *Moby-Dick* focuses and explores the inner world of humans, which accords with a massive part of the Transcendentalist beliefs. Melville touches on Ahab's more deep-seated reasons for the persistent chase of Moby Dick; he also ends the story letting Ishmael survive the catastrophe because of his Transcendentalist qualities.

1. Ahab — a Transcendentalist hero of self-reliance

Ahab is an image living in a nation which encourages the value of self-reliance because of its unique history. At the time when *Moby-Dick* was written, the question of the individual and his unique personal rights was nowhere more alive than in America. The literary characters cannot avoid such influence during this specific historical period. In *Moby-Dick*, whaling is Ahab's profession, and his long-time seclusion in the remotest seas has led to independent thought and complete self-reliance. With these qualities, Ahab succumbed to nothing and nobody and chased his enemy to the last corner.

While Harold Beaver (1981) refers to Ahab as “Emerson's transcendental philosopher who was dedicated to the solitary search for truth and turned satanic”, Vincent concludes in agreement that “Ahab is Melville's portrait of the self-reliant man seeking to fulfil the ‘law of being’ according to Emerson's directive” (Vincent, 1949, p. 161). Even Melville himself is impressed by Ahab's extraordinary ability of self-reliance and his spiritual quest for the terminal truth. Thus it can be seen that “Ahab may have been Melville's portrait of an Emersonian self-reliant individual” (Chang, 2007, p. 84).

2. Ishmael — an Emersonian individualist

Emerson emphasizes the significance of the individual and that people should depend on themselves for spiritual perfection as “Nature is God's enlightenment toward human beings. And the spirit is present everywhere” (Emerson, 1989, p. 835). In his views, harmonious communication between man and nature could be reached through Oversoul.

Ishmael's religious attitude has much relevance to the requirement of touching with the Transcendental Oversoul, which emphasizes spiritual communication through a comprehension of the divine symbols in nature so that one can arrive at “a moment of expanded consciousness in which boundaries and divisions seem dissolved in a transporting sense of unity” (McSweeney, 1986, p. 95). Voyaging for Ishmael has become a process of communion with the unity of the universe, the wholeness of God, the great spiritual force the Emerson described as “Oversoul”. Eventually Ishmael is saved by the upward thrust of a more idiosyncratic Transcendentalism, for he does not incorporate Transcendentalism uncritically as he affirms of himself that “while ponderous planets of unwaning woe revolve round me, deep down and deep inland there I still bathe me in eternal mildness of joy” (Melville, 1994, p. 498).

B. An Embodiment of Oversoul in *Moby-Dick*

Emerson holds that the transcendentalist law is the “moral law” through which man discovers the nature of God as a living spirit. God's presence can be found in all things in nature, for they are the symbols of the spiritual. Under this influence, it created one of the most prolific periods in the history of American literature.

How did Melville convert a simple adventure story into so rich and complex an achievement? Much of the answer lies in his use of mysticism and symbolism, those favourite devices of American nineteenth-century fiction (Ousby, 1979, p. 80).

1. Mysticism — a veil of nature

Briefly speaking, Transcendentalists emphasize the spirit, or the supernatural. In this period, a new group of writers under the influence of Emerson began to “incorporate Transcendental thought into their work. They thought of a kind of mysticism inspired by nature for the most part” (Wang, 1999, p. 102).

Ronald Mason argues that the transformation of “symbolic images into a creative myth, embodying a significant reflection of the most profound human pre-occupations was Melville's achievement in *Moby-Dick*” (Mason, 1972, p. 27). And Slochower summarizes the mythic importance of *Moby-Dick* in the following terms: “Melville's *Moby-Dick* is the first major American literary myth sounding the central motifs of creation and quest. Its distinctive American quality lies in its uncertain attitude toward creation” (Slochower, 1978, p. 182). It indicates that the mysterious colour of *Moby-Dick* derives from Transcendentalism and naturally mirrors the Transcendentalist's thoughts. “Throughout the book, Melville is in the habit of finding allegorical or symbolic meaning in the simplest and most concrete facts. This is partly encouraged by the importance which American Transcendentalism gave to the symbolic interpretation of the world” (Matthiessen, 1941, p. 422). Therefore, it is safe to say that Melville uses ambiguity and mysticism to keep the readers wondering for the truth of the world, establishing a vital position for *Moby-Dick* in the creation of myth in literary realms.

2. Symbolism — a sign of nature

Melville fills this novel with symbolism. The Pequod is, to D.H. Lawrence, “the ship of the American soul” (Lawrence, 1923, p. 160). And the voyage itself is a metaphor for “search and discovery for the ultimate truth of experience” (Hoffman, 1960, p. 235). Furthermore, “The sea is an archetypal symbol of the mystery of life and creation — birth, the flowing of time into eternity, and rebirth” (Guerin, 1999, p. 161).

In Ishmael's eyes, it is only through the sea that man can keep in touch with the terminal truth as in “landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God”. He claims that truth belongs to the sea due to its indefinite

quality and flexibility, because “meditation and water are wedded forever” (Melville, 1994, p. 121). In other words, the endless water represents the very essence of life and the image of the ungraspable phantom of life. “The sea is such an ideal, divine and mysterious place where you could communicate with God, or ponder over something supernatural” (Macphee, 1997, p. 17). More importantly, the sea itself is uncertain, ineffable and poetic. Man can observe and try to interpret only the surface of the ocean, whereas, the depth of the sea seems mysterious and inaccessible, thus left unknown. Melville intends to keep it that way for he deliberately keeps the function and characteristics of the sea ambiguous to the end, thus thickening the mystic colour and symbolic representations of the sea.

V. REASONS FOR MELVILLE’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS TRANSCENDENTALISM

A. Reasons for Melville's Anti-transcendentalist Thoughts

1. Life experiences

It is known that Melville undergoes a series of humiliating events, “particularly his father's death in 1830 when Herman was twelve, which posed the most traumatic public event in his young life” (Adamson, 1997, p. 21). Arvin affirms that “Allan's (Melville's father) death was the direct and the most decisive event emotionally of Herman Melville's life” (Arvin, 1963, p. 23). During his life, memories of ruthless abandonment never cease to haunt him even though he keeps fighting to come out of it. Ishmael, the foundling in *Moby-Dick*, is a good case in point.

Later Melville joined a whaling voyage out of financial desperation. On the sea, these ships were “the last refuge for criminals and castaways” (Unger, 1974, p. 75). He experienced hardships of this lifestyle, which provided the perfect background for his great symbolic novel as well as tempered his spirit and made him wary of the optimism of Transcendentalism.

In literary life, Melville’s acquaintance and later a close spiritual connection with Nathaniel Hawthorne reinforces his sense of the blackness in human nature” (Howard, 1951, p. 168). Their short yet significant friendship contributed, to a profound degree, to Melville’s composition of this great novel and the two men were philosophically closely related. In fact, their meeting inspired Melville on the philosophy of life and bolstered his confidence in anti-Transcendentalism. After finishing *Moby-Dick*, Melville dedicated it to Hawthorne and wrote to him, “I’ve written a wicked book and feel spotless as a lamb” (Melville, 1994, p. 590).

2. Religious cultivation

Since his childhood, Melville was under the cultivation of Calvinistic belief. He later described it as “that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free” (Arvin, 1963, p. 33). Afterwards, Melville grew more and more dissatisfied with Emerson's inadequacy. Once he remarked after hearing Emerson's lecture, “No, I do not oscillate in Emerson's rainbow, but prefer rather to hang myself in my halter than swing in any other man's swing” (Matthiessen, 1941, p. 445). It is his religious beliefs that form Melville's unique attitude towards Transcendentalism.

Being a tragic writer, Melville cuts off his social connections in the outside world and withdraws into his inside world. He spends a wealth of time dreaming, fancying, brooding and exploring, pursuing a satisfying answer to these complicating questions. “Extreme of introverted thinking may evaporate into a representation of the irrepresentable, far beyond anything that could be expressed in an image” (Sharp, 1987, p. 74). Such long attachment to the inner world leads to great melancholy and depression, which gradually develops into his pessimistic tendency, which forms a sharp contrast to the optimistic thinking in Transcendentalism.

B. Reasons for Melville's Pro-transcendentalist Thoughts

1. The influence of Transcendentalism on American literature and Melville

Undoubtedly, Emerson's Transcendentalism and the Transcendental movement exert a powerful impact on American romanticism history and cause unprecedented prosperity in American thought and culture.

It cannot be untrue if we say the Transcendental literature movement is all the while influencing writers and poets in their thoughts and writing style. In fact, from the perspectives of theme, style and subject matter, *Moby-Dick* was a purely American book. Inevitably, it mirrored the American tendency back then. As Ralph Emerson wisely puts it: “No piece of artistic work can avoid the stain of its times. And no writer can wipe out of his work every trace of the thoughts amidst which it grew” (Vincent, 1949, p. 63).

2. Melville's interest in Transcendentalism and favorable opinion of Emerson

Early in 1849, Melville wrote in several places such statements as: “I have heard Emerson. Say what they will, he's a great man” (McSweeney, 1986, p. 9). Melville's interest in Emerson continued for years. He read Emerson's essays with critical interest, as is attested by the marked copies from his library, with their marginal notes. John B. Williams demonstrates that “it was the Emerson of 1849 that impressed him most” (McSweeney, 1986, p. 10). He was clear in his faith that Melville was inevitably inspired by his contemporary culture and benefited from his extensive reading for the development of his best work.

In a deeper sense, the most notable example of idea was shadowed by Emerson and more profoundly explored by Melville is the final dart of the rope around Ahab's neck. Through this character of Ahab, it exhibits “Melville's portrait of the self-reliant man seeking to fulfil the ‘law of his being’ according to Emerson” (Vincent, 1949, p. 161).

VI. CONCLUSION

Melville was alternately attracted and repelled by Transcendentalism, and he could not rest simply on one single axle of interpretation. Namely, Melville was unwilling to stand in the rank of optimistic Transcendentalism led by Emerson and concerned to “show the dangerous inadequacy of a philosophy that denies man's darker nature” (Martin, 1986, p. 75). He “respected the sincerity and good intentions of the Transcendentalists even while he mocked them as misguided men blind to the brute facts of existence” (Vincent, 1949, p. 56). Meanwhile, Melville was eager to wake his people up from their beautiful yet worthless “American dream”.

In *Moby-Dick*, the Pro-Transcendentalist and Anti-Transcendentalist beliefs rely on one another to remain intact like two sides of the doubloon. This book is an ever-lasing battlefield in which neither of those two or more opposing sides can win the final victory, “with the air of a man echoing a truism rather than arguing a case” (Ousby, 1979, p. 79). Critics now generally hold that “books remain canonical not because they embody lasting transcendent values but because they still speak or are still of great use to the current generations of readers” (Davey, 2004, p. 65). Michael McLoughlin thus discourages any “Pro-Emerson” or “Anti-Emerson” approach to Melville's fiction (McLoughlin, 2003, p. 67).

Accordingly, the conclusion lies in the fact that Melville deals with the subject of Transcendentalism in his own and unique dialectical way. His work *Moby-Dick* is far beyond the reach of Transcendentalism. Hence, it is widely acknowledged as a great literary classic in world literature. Undoubtedly, it will continue to arouse the interest of an extensive and diverse community of readers and attract the attention of all academic researchers. In this way, it is suggested that every reading and interpretation of *Moby-Dick* should be neutralized and reader-oriented.

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