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noble deed:

“Was there ever such unconsciousness? He did not seem to think that he at all deserved a medal from the Humane and Magnanimous Societies. He only asked for water – fresh water – something to wipe the brine off; that done, he put on dry clothes, lighted his pipe, and leaning against the bulwarks, and mildly eyeing those around him, seemed to be saying to himself – ‘It’s a mutual, joint-stock world, in all meridians. We cannibals must help these Christians.’”(Chapter xiii)

#### 4. Conclusion:

Psychologically, the emotion of fear goes far beyond the negative interpretations and fully contributes to a definition of the characters’ identity. The Merriam Webster’s Dictionary (2011) defines identity in the following terms: “The set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group: The distinct personality of an individual regarded as a persisting entity; individuality.” The construction of one’s identity literally involves life experiences, relationships and connections, a solid mental or emotional stamp. But fear is not always negativity. The subject of fear is a common element as the stimulus and dominant feature in several literary works. It has demanded the attention of literary critics focused on psychological and aesthetic characteristics. Critics see the specifics of fear in literary works both as the function of historical time and as a constant feature

aroused by the human dread of the unknown and unknowable. If fear increases so much as to disturb the reason, it prevents action even on the part of the soul. The characters in Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* are shaped by the positive effects of their fears. The product of identity is a complicated one. More fluid than fixed, our identity is comprised of a mixture of inner feelings and outer presentation of self. In short, fear is the ability to recognize danger leading to an agreement to confront it or to flee from it. Both Ishmael and Ahab take to sea in order to overcome their fears: the fear of nothingness (Ishmael), the fear of the white whale (Ahab). According to Bryant

Ishmael’s ideology grows and embraces growth... It begins with a hopeful proposition: “Nothing exists in itself”. The post-modern assertion is the seed of his salvation, for if it is true, then all actual things connect, and ideality exists in the connectiveness of actuality. Ishmael ... defines himself in terms of Queequeg, and vice versa, and the two affirm each other’s consciousness. Significantly, Ishmael’s democratic politics grow out of his therapeutic exorcism of his fear of alienation” (Bryant, 2007: 207).

As Nelson Mandela says in his book, *Long Walk to Freedom*, “I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who doesn’t feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear”.

completely nonplussed and confounded about the stranger, I confess I was now as much afraid of him as if it was the devil himself who had thus broken into my room at the dead of night. 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.” (Chapter iii)

During the first chapters that precede his boarding *The Pequod*, Ishmael does not hesitate to show that he is both fearful and courageous. The dark streets of New Bedford, the prospect of sharing the bed with a savage, and the cenotaphs in the Whaleman’s Chapel – all feed Ishmael’s imagination, because he fears death and destruction, and premature burial most of all. Gradually, his fear deepens:

“This circumstance [Elijah’s warning] coupled with his ambiguous, half-hinting, half-revealing, shrouded sort of talk, now begat in me all kinds of vague wonderments and half-apprehensions, and all connected with the *Pequod*; and Captain Ahab; and the leg he had lost; and the Cape Horn fit; and the silver calabash; and what Captain Peleg had said of him, when I left the ship the day previous; and the prediction of the squaw Tistig; and the voyage we had bound ourselves to sail; and a hundred other shadowy things” (Chapter xix)

Ishmael is everything to the story in the first twenty-five chapters. He suffers from doubt and uncertainty far more than he suffers from homelessness. Finally, in “The try-

works” “an apocalyptic vision of darkness and inversion teaches Ishmael to accept the preponderant tragedy of life without succumbing to woe, as Ahab in his madness had done. According to John Bryant, “Ishmael begins in crisis, seeing death and the blackness of darkness everywhere. Faith, like a jackal, gnaws at hope. But his deepest fear is not death; he fears that there is nothing beyond our shell of existence; there is no ideal reality beyond the material; there is nothing. This ultimate doubt pushes Ishmael to ask questions not even God can answer: Where does being come from? How does consciousness happen?” (Bryant, 2007: 206)

Regarding Queequeg, now one of the three harpooners on the ship, he is a deeply religious man in his own heathenish manner. Elijah’s warnings would not impress him neither does he see the other men boarding the ship, simply because, to Ishmael’s astonishment, he has no fears. Unlike the inexperienced Ishmael, Queequeg is always in control of his emotions.

He risks his life to save another man’s life. He falls ill and thinks that he is going to die. He asks the carpenter to make the coffin for him, he fears that his body would be eaten by sharks, soon afterwards he begins to recover from his illness, and the coffin saves Ishmael’s life. So I can say this savage heathen shows himself not just to be superior to most modern men but also his expected fear will save his friend’s life. This is how Ishmael describes Queequeg’s

courage flourishes only occasionally in the mate:

"I will have no man in my boat," said Starbuck, "who is not afraid of a whale." By this, he seemed to mean, not only that the most reliable and useful courage was that which arises from the fair estimation of the encountered peril, but that an utterly fearless man is a far more dangerous comrade than a coward" (emphasis added).

Starbuck is a careful and religious man, as it shows in his fear to chase whales after sunset because it is risky to do so. So we can say he is an intellectual and rational man. Starbuck objects to Ahab's purpose of tracking the white whale, saying that the main purpose of the voyage is to collect the white waxy substance produced by the sperm whale. Indeed, his fear of God's punishment prevents him to commit a crime of killing Ahab in order to save the thirty men on the ship and himself, too, but finally he gives it up because of his moral sense and his religion. He says "let us flee these deadly waters! Let us home". Starbuck's reaction to fear may seem unusual:

"Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Hem! clear my throat! – I've been thinking over it ever since, and that ha, ha's the final consequence. Why so? Because a laugh's the wisest, easiest answer to all that's queer; and come what will, one comfort's always left – that unflinching comfort is, it's all predestinated. [. . .] Well, Stubb, wise Stubb – that's my title – well, Stubb, what of it, Stubb? Here's a carcass. I know not all that may be coming, but be it

what it will, I'll go to it laughing." (Chapter xxxix)

Ishmael is the narrator of the story in *Moby-Dick*, he is an educated man and his fear of a lack of communication with others into a sociable type of man. He becomes quickly intimate with the savage Queequeg. At first he fears from the heathen Queequeg's behavior and physical appearance. As Queequeg had brought with him a few human skulls, Ishmael trembles with fear, as he narrates,

"When you sleep with an unknown stranger, in a strange inn, in a strange town, and that strange harpooner... When I heard a heavy footfall in the passage, and saw a glimmer of light come into the room from under the door. "Lord save me", thinks I, that must be the harpooner. The infernal head peddler. But I lay perfectly still, and resolved not to say a word till spoken to. "Landlord, for God's sake, Peter Coffin!" shouted I. "Landlord! Watch! Coffin! Angels! save me!" (Chapter iii)

Finally he has to share his bed with Queequeg at Spouter Inn, in other words, Ishmael shares his bed with fear. Ishmael asks his fellow human beings to live in this world without losing their identities. His inner world of thought is strongly symbolic because he must think and think in order to prove to himself that there is a necessary connection between man and the world. Ishmael's first reaction towards Queequeg is motivated by his ignorance:

"Ignorance is the parent of fear, and being

thing that is meant for sereneness, to send up mild white vapors among mild white hairs, not among torn iron-grey locks like mine. I'll smoke no more --'

"He tossed the still lighted pipe into the sea. The fire hissed in the waves; the same instant the ship shot by the bubble the sinking pipe made. With slouched hat, Ahab lurchingly paced the planks." (Chapter xxx) Ahab feels that he is a captive to this pipe or smoking, so he decides to give up smoking and be free, and of course, this is a good result. Ahab fears from disobedience from the members of the crew. There are certain of features to overcome that feeling, for instance, sometimes we find Ahab as a dictator, philosopher, religious man, humanity, sympathetic etc. these characteristics, all, produced from the emotion of fear. Ahab spends a lot of time in thinking. He often indulges in soliloquies and monologues; he says that he has lost the power to enjoy the beauty and loveliness. He feels that he has been damned in the midst of paradise. "Who's to doom, when the judge himself is dragged to the bar?" cries Ahab, and his fear attains existential dimensions. According to Alfred Kazin, Ahab's search

"...represents Ahab's real humanity. For the ancient covenant is never quite broken so long as man still thirsts for it. And because Ahab [...] represents the aristocracy of intellect in our democracy, because he seeks to transcend the limitations that good conventional men like Starbuck, philistine materialists like Stubb, and unthinking fools

like Flask want to impose on everybody else, Ahab speaks for the humanity that belongs to man's imaginative vision of himself" (in Bloom, 2007: 13)

In Book II of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, the Greek philosopher Aristotle comments on the origins of bravery:

"[...] of all the things that come to us by nature we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity ... but the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by building and lyre players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts." (emphasis added)

If Aristotle is right, bravery is sometimes motivated by fear. In Chapter XXVI: *Knights and Squires*, Ishmael, the narrator of *Moby-Dick*, comments that Starbuck, the first mate of The Pequod, who, "for all his hardy sobriety and fortitude" displays an unusual degree of "conscientiousness". His prudence that becomes so obvious during the whale hunting is tinged with a superstition stemming not from ignorance but from a complete knowledge of all the dangers surrounding him. Starbuck's persistence in the fishery despite the death of his father and brother in whaling accidents serves as proof for Ishmael of an extreme "courage", yet the narrator qualifies his praise with the observation that this

2008: 709)

The forms of fear differ according to the circumstances that surround the human beings. Indeed, fear is a variety from society to others and from time to time, but is still there are general forms of fear that human beings share: fear of failure; we do or don't some actions and decisions in order to avoid failure. Failure is actually a way to learn lessons and try again, fear of death, we know the death is truth but we afraid of it, in spite of, there are several texts in the whole religious books that explain the life after death, the fear of loneliness and alienation caused by the lack of the communication with others.

### 3. Fear as a motivation of bravery

*Moby-Dick* abounds not only in dramatic situations and episodes but also in philosophical reflections and meditations. Melville describes this novel as "a romance of adventure founded upon certain wild legends in southern whale fisheries". The novel tells the story of a frantic search by Ahab, the captain of the ship *Pequod*, for a white whale known as *Moby Dick* which has in previous encounter, snatched away one of Ahab's legs. The voyage continues for a long time. Ahab doesn't listen to anyone to stop this chasing, he believes that he is destined by fate to kill *Moby Dick*, he says, "Ahab is forever Ahab, man. This whole act's immutably decreed. I am the fates' lieutenant; I act under orders" (Chapter cxxxiv). At the end of this story, the monster *Moby-Dick* kills not only Ahab but also sinks the ship,

so that all the members of the crew, with the exception of narrator of the story, Ishmael, are drowned.

When Ahab, the hero, lost his leg during an encounter with a whale, his feeling of weakness or losing power make him challenged that by his strong personality. Ahab is the man of action; he can't forget that a particular whale, known as *Moby-Dick* had "reaped off" his leg. The basic purpose of this voyage is to race the white whale and kill it. He never at any stage thinks of abandoning his purpose. When Starbuck, objects to Ahab's purpose of tracking the white whale, he says "Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me" (Chapter xxxvi)

The person more strongly motivated to avoid failure, rather than to achieve success, tends to be unrealistic in his vocational aspiration (under or over) rather than to aspire towards some realistic goal wherein he might actually have to prove himself. In his research "fear of success" Tresemer says, fear of failure is demonstrated when people avoid situations in which there is possible failure but not situations in which there is possible of success. Psychodynamic writers (e.g. Fenichel) viewed fear of success to stem from guilt, fears of future failure, and conflicts around independence.

Ahab is the man of determination; he throws his pipe into the sea, saying "I'll smoke no more" he from the sight of white whale, he says:

"What business have I with this pipe? This

the instinct of self-preservation. And so the occasions, viz., the objects and situations which arouse fear, will depend largely on our knowledge of and our feeling of power over the outer world” (Freud, 1993: 2)

Because we remember the pain and the threat of death more vividly than pleasure, this tendency, is naturally enhanced by the fact that uncertainty and danger are always closely allied. Fear, itself, may be considered purely as an emotion, in which case it is recognized by most authorities as a primary emotion, appearing among the first if not the very first of the emotions of man. Richard Solomon and John Corbit developed what they call the “opponent process theory of emotion.” They suggest that the experience of an emotion disrupts the body’s state of balance and that our basic emotion typically has their opposing counterparts (1974). For example, the opposite of pleasure is pain. The opposite of depression is elation; the opposite of bravery is cowardice, etc. When we experience one emotion, it suppresses the opposite emotion. Once the initial emotion subsides, we naturally experience the opposing emotion to balance out the two. For instance, we might feel a high level of fear before jumping off the ledge. After the jump, we feel a high level of relief, the opposite emotion of fear. Psychology, it is true, has never made much progress in determining whether common fear is natively attached to certain signs in the beginning or if it is, what those signs may be.

Robert S. Woodworth, in his *Psychology: A Study of Mental Life* (1921) had the following comment on fear:

“On the whole, the danger-avoiding reactions are probably not linked by nature to any special signs of danger. While the emotion of fear, the escape impulse, and many of the escape movements are native, the attachment of these responses to specific stimuli aside from directly irritating stimuli is acquired. *Fear we do not learn, but we learn what to fear*” (Woodworth, 1921: 144, emphasis added).

Marks vividly conveys how many aspects of behavior and physiology may be entrained by certain kinds of fear: During extreme fear humans may be “scared stiff” or “frozen with fear.” A paralyzed conscious state with abrupt onset and termination is reported by survivors of attacks by wild animals, by shell-shocked soldiers, and by more than 50% of rape victims (Suarez & Gallup, 1979). According to Arne Öhman, at a more general level,

“Fear is a ubiquitous experience among humankind that can be traced back to a distant mammalian heritage. Recent world events, with terrorist attacks randomly striking innocent bystanders at many places, highlight the longstanding insight that fear is an inevitable part of human existence. Throughout human history, fear and its close ally, anxiety, provide recurrent themes for people pondering their existential predicament and have inspired frequent artistic representations” (Öhman,

alization of danger; Extreme reverence or awe, as toward a supreme power." Fear can also have a positive side by causing us to avoid danger, such as that written by King Solomon. "The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge... (Prov. 1:7)." The medical and psychological definitions are as follows:

- Fright, dread: "Primitively, the emotional reaction to an environmental threat; it now also, presents itself frequently as an indicator of inner problems." (Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary).

- Panic: "a sudden overpowering terror, often affecting many people [Fr. panique, terrified]." Terror is: "an intense, overpowering fear. [Lat. terror-terrere, to frighten.]"

- Anxiety: "A troubled feeling; expressing a feeling of dread or fear especially of the future or distress over a real or imagined threat to one's mental or physical well being" (Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary).

One of the basic motivating forces is fear, when we are afraid, we will back from life. In her book, *A Return To Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles* (1992), a spiritual activist, Marianne Williamson says, "Our deepest fear is not that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frighten us. As we are liberated from our fear. Our presence automatically liberates others". (Williamson, 1992: 190-91) In fact, there are many forms of fear that all people shar-

ing them. Fear has two versions: negative and positive.

Fear is an unsatisfactory and unpleasant, often strong feeling caused by the expectation of realization of risk. Fear is not always negativity. The subject of fear is a common element as the stimulus and dominant motif in several literary works. It has demanded the attention of literary critics focused on psychological and aesthetic characteristics. Novelist Karen Thompson Walker started her 2012 TED talk with an example taken from Melville's *Moby-Dick*, and concluded that "Our fears focus our attention on a question that is as important in life as it is in literature what will happen next... How we choose to read our fears can have a profound effect on our lives." It is in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* that we find how the emotion of fears changed to be the important motif of courage, wisdom, greatness, leadership, power, etc. It is what inspired Melville's contemporary Mark Twain to say, in Chapter 12 of his novel *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894): "Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear – not absence of fear. Except a creature be part coward it is not a compliment to say it is brave; it is merely a loose application of the word." According to Sigmund Freud, "Real fear seems quite rational and comprehensible to us. We may testify that it is a reaction to the perception of external danger, viz., harm that is expected and foreseen. It is related to the flight reflex and may be regarded as an expression of

فهو أكثر مرونة من كونه ثابتًا، ويتألف من مزيج من المشاعر الداخلية والمظهر الخارجي للذات. باختصار، الخوف هو القدرة على إدراك الخطر، مما يؤدي إلى الاتفاق على مواجهته أو الفرار منه. يهدف هذا البحث في جوهره إلى الكشف عن كيفية تجاوز عاطفة الخوف في هذه الرواية للتفسيرات السلبية، وكيف تُسهم إسهامًا كاملًا في تحديد هوية الشخصيات. الكلمات المفتاحية: الشجاعة، الخوف، الهوية، ميلفيل، موي ديك، الخوف الإيجابي، صيد الحيتان

### 1. Introduction

Generally considered by the critics and the readers alike the author of the most important novel in American literature, compared with Tennyson and more than often compared to Hawthorne, the great model he always admired, Herman Melville has never ceased being a controversial writer, just like *Moby-Dick*, his great novel. Published in 1851, the novel suited perfectly to the taste of the age for accounts of great voyages seen from a metaphysical perspective in accordance with the transcendental orientation imposed on the American literature in the decades prior to the Civil War by Emerson and Thoreau.

Actually, before the publication of *Moby-Dick*, Melville himself had written about the exotic nature of the far-off islands in *Typee* (1846), continuing with a real transcendental utopia of the South Seas in *Omoo* (1847), or *Mardi* (1848), just like Ed-

gar Allan Poe had placed the plot of *Arthur Gordon Pym* in the arctic territories. It is the moment when the theme of the voyage becomes essential to the American literature as a whole, thus bringing into discussion the numerous and difficult trials that the individual had to overcome in order to prove not only his initiation, but also his capacity to take into possession and dominate forever the newly-discovered geography – not always hospitable and friendly – of the North American continent.

In other words, Melville manages to fully embody the new age which Emerson called “the age of the first person singular”, thus practically putting to test the new metaphysics, but in a different sense from that of Hawthorne. But in Melville’s case, we cannot overlook the numerous difficulties encountered by the reader, especially in terms of new ways of using symbols, but also in terms of the multilayer structure of the narrative. Moreover, a series of statements by the author himself are likely to put us ahead and open an unexpected perspective for interpretation. The ideal of Melville’s novels has never been to reveal the meanings on the spot and therefore they do not have the usual endings, thus trying to fit, abruptly, in the eternal flow of time and fate.

### 2. The psychology of fear

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary* fear is: “an emotion of alarm and agitation caused by the expectation or re-

# POSITIVE FEAR AS AN IDENTITY CONSTRUCT IN HERMAN MELVILLE'S MOBY-DICK

## الخوف الإيجابي لبناء الهوية في رواية موبي ديك لهيرمان ميلفيل

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### Abstract:

The feelings of fear that control the characters' behavior in Melville's novel play the vital role of depicting the progress of the incidents due to the positive adjectives that generated these hateful feelings. The characters in Herman Melville's Moby-Dick are shaped by the positive effects of their fears. The product of identity is a complicated one. More fluid than fixed, our identity is comprised of a mixture of inner feelings and outer presentation of self. In short, fear is the ability to recognize danger leading to an agreement to confront it or to flee from it. The ultimate goal of this paper is to

reveal how the emotion of fear in this novel goes far beyond the negative interpretations, and fully contribute to a definition of the characters' identity.

**Keywords:** courage, fear, identity, Melville, Moby-Dick, positive fear, whaling

### ملخص:

تلعب مشاعر الخوف التي تتحكم في سلوك الشخصيات في رواية ميلفيل دوراً محورياً في تصوير تطور الأحداث، وذلك بفضل الصفات الإيجابية التي ولدت هذه المشاعر السلبية. تتشكل شخصيات هيرمان ميلفيل في رواية «موبي ديك» بفعل التأثيرات الإيجابية لمخاوفهم. إن نتاج الهوية معقد،