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The theme of the twentieth century "wasteland" began with T. S. Eliot's influential poem, and has reached its present culmination point in the literature of the Absurd. In a wasteland or an Absurd world, man is out of harmony with his universe, with his fellow man, and even with himself. There is Nothingness in the center of the universe, and Nothingness in the heart or center of man as well. "God Is Dead" in the wasteland and consequently it is an Iconoclastic world without religion, and without love; a world of aesthetic and spiritual aridity and sterility.

Most writers, critics, and students of literature are familiar with the concept of the wasteland, but many do not realize that this is not a twentieth century thematic phenomenon. The contemporary wasteland has its parallel in the early and middle nineteenth century with the Romantics; with such writers as Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville.

The disillusionment of western man at the end of World War I was similar in many respects to that experienced by the Romantics at the end of the French Revolution. Furthermore, the break-up of the old order, and the disappearance of God from the cosmos in the closing years of the eighteenth century, along with the shattering of many illusions by the discoveries of science, the loss of both religious and secular values, and the break-down in the political order in the early nineteenth century, left man alienated, isolated, homeless, and friendless. Disillusioned man was now confronted by the "Void," the "abyss," or "gulf"; the nineteenth century terms for what twentieth century critics designate as the "wasteland." Indeed, the reactions of man to

the encounter with external and internal Nothingness varies in degree but not in kind from one century to the other. In the nineteenth century, Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville experienced the Nothingness without and within, and expressed their reactions to the encounters in their poetry and prose.

These Romantics journeyed into, around, and through the Great Void in the nineteenth century. On each journey, they were graphically charting the external features of their wasteland world. In reading their poetry and prose, one can only conclude that there is no avenue of escape from the omnipresent Nothingness in the external world--the Nothingness which permeates space, ocean, desert, city, cave, mountain-top, ancient ruins, and primitive paradises.

Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville descended the spiral staircase in an exploration of the Nothingness in the internal Void. In tracing their journeys into the bottomless abysses of the human psyche, it is apparent that the internal Void exceeds the external in both vastness and vacuity. Indeed, the external world is a sterile desert or sea of Nothingness, and the human psyche is an appalling, infinite Void.

In the final analysis, Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville have delineated the Nothingness in both the external and the internal world, and have shown modern man that he is encompassed by a Void above and below, before and behind, without and within, and around and around. They have also reminded man, in their literary works, that he has the capacity to face this omnipresent Void, and the capacity to endure the vacuity of his Absurd world. And this is, after all, the most important contribution of these three precursors of the wasteland tradition which permeates our contemporary literature.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY WASTELAND: THE VOID IN THE WORKS OF BYRON, BAUDELAIRE, AND MELVILLE

by

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APPROVAL SHEET

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE VOID

> Human moods and reactions to the encounter with Nothingness vary considerably from person to person, and from culture to culture. The Chinese Taoists found the Great Void tranquilizing, peaceful, even joyful. For the Buddhists in India, the idea of Nothing evoked a mood of universal compassion for all creatures caught in the toils of existence that is ultimately groundless. In the traditional culture of Japan the idea of Nothingness pervades the exquisite modes of aesthetic feeling displayed in painting, architecture, and even the ceremonial rituals of daily life. But Western man, up to his neck in things, objects, and the business of mastering them, recoils with anxiety from any possible encounter with Nothingness and labels talk of it as 'negative'--which is to say, morally reprehensible. Clearly, then, the moods with which men react to this Nothing vary according to time, place, and cultural conditioning; but what is at issue here is not the mood with which one ought to confront such a presence, but the reality of the presence itself.[1]

Life for Western man has become a kind of sterile dead end in the negative, life-destroying, machine-dictated context of the twentieth century. Novelists, poets, dramatists, and critics, especially American, have persistently described the sickness, ugliness, emptiness--the Nothingness of contemporary life, and have concluded that the sensibility of modern Western man is nihilistic self-destruction. T. S. Eliot and other writers have portrayed our century as a wasteland in which there is Nothingness in the heart or center of the Universe. "God is

[1]William Barrett, Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy (Garden City, N.Y., 1962), p. 285.

dead" in the wasteland and consequently it is an Iconoclastic world without religion; a world of aesthetic and spiritual aridity. There is no real love or reciprocity between individuals living in a sterile, corrupt, and fragmented world. Man is either "up to his neck in things, objects, and the business of mastering them"[2] or languishing in boredom because he has made no real commitment to life. "We are the hollow men / We are the stuffed men," says Eliot,[3] for there is Nothingness in the heart or center of man as in the universe.

Life for the "hollow," "stuffed" men in the nineteenth century was similar in many respects to that in the twentieth, and the "reaction to the encounter with Nothingness"[4] varies in degree but not in kind from one century to the other. Modern writers possess, what Robert F. Gleckner calls, a "wasteland tradition of disintegrated images, disjunctive history, and cacaphonous sound to rely upon for expressing [their] despair,"[5] and most writers, critics, and students of literature are familiar with the concept. In the nineteenth century, on the other hand, there was no such tradition to draw upon, and few people seemed to recognize or acknowledge "the reality of the presence"[6] of Nothingness both without and within. The "presence" was felt, however, in such countries as England, France, and America by such Romantic

[2] Ibid.

[3] T.S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men," I, 1-2.

[4] See headnote.

[5] Robert F. Gleckner, Byron And The Ruins of Paradise (Baltimore, 1967), p. 52.

[6] See headnote.

writers as George Gordon, Lord Byron; Charles-Pierre Baudelaire, and Herman Melville, among others.

Since the word "Romantic" carries diverse connotations, I feel that I should clarify my use of the word in this thesis. I am designating Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville as "Romantics," not in the sense of a literary period classification, but in the sense of ideas, concepts, and affinities, generally classified as "Romantic," which are prevalent in their works and lives. Melville, for instance, is perhaps the most consistently "Romantic" of the three writers, although he is writing in a period later than that which is generally designated as "Romantic" in England and France. The Romantic period in American literature was delayed approximately a generation, i.e., from 1830 to 1865.[7] Although Byron is classified as a Romantic poet in English literature, he reveals many affinities with eighteenth century Classicism as well as with nineteenth century Romanticism. Indeed, the same thing may also be said of Baudelaire who is essentially post-Romantic. He is not part of the Romantic movement as defined in French literature. Nevertheless, he is "Romantic" in many respects. As Henri Peyre points out, Baudelaire is

> a romantic first because of his life or rather because of the way in which he lived his poetry and allowed himself to be devoured by his own creations ... Baudelaire is profoundly romantic also through the role he grants, in the work of art, to sensibility and to sensuality ... Baudelaire is romantic ... in his passionate advocacy of modernity and through the role which he grants to strangeness as a component of beauty ... No less romantic in its

[7] A Handbook To Literature, ed. William Flint Thrall, Addison Hibbard, and C. Hugh Holman, rev. ed. (New York, 1960), p. 13. See also pp. 425-26.

> deeper manifestations, was Baudelaire's fondness for the revolte: a rebelliousness which expanded and exalted the nature of man and was to acquaint him with all vices, all excesses, to make him hover on the verge of many an abyss, and to cherish death itself in order to live more courageously.[8]

It is these "Romantic" aspects of Baudelaire's life and poetry with which I am concerned in this thesis, and it is in this sense that I am classifying him as a Romantic. Granting, therefore, that Byron, Melville, and Baudelaire may be called Romantics, I would suggest that as Romantics, they were the precursors of the wasteland tradition which is inherent in twentieth century literature.

Leslie A. Marchand notes that Byron, of all the romantic writers, comes the closest "to expressing the modern temper,"[9] and Ernest J. Lovell, Jr. concludes that Byron was the first of our true contemporaries among the great English poets. Although Byron "has provided us with no great number of very clear answers," Lovell says, "the questions he asked and the confusion which were his, are still ours."[10] Baudelaire, too, as Martin Turnell points out, expresses "the spiritual and emotional frustration of the contemporary man" in his poetry,[11] as does Melville in

[8]Henri Peyre, "Baudelaire, Romantic and Classic," Baudelaire: A Collection Of Critical Essays, ed. Henri Peyre, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962), pp. 22-25.

[9]Leslie A. Marchand, "Byron and the Modern Spirit," The Major English Romantic Poets: A Symposium in Reappraisal, ed. Clarence D. Thorp, Carlos Baker, and Bennett Weaver (Carbondale, Ill., 1957), p. 163.

[10]Ernest J. Lovell, Jr., Byron - The Record of a Quest: Studies in a Poet's Concept and Treatment of Nature (Hamden, Conn., 1966), p. 229.

[11]Martin Turnell, Baudelaire: A Study of his Poetry (Norfolk, Conn., n.d.), p. 302.

his poetry and novels, particularly in Moby-Dick and Pierre. In "moody," "awful" Captain Ahab of the Pequod, Melville created "a megalomaniac of the modern world," says Tyrus Hillman.[12] Ahab, according to Richard Chase, is "the central sun of a doomed phantom world."

> Melville knew instinctively as well as intellectually this deep flaw in American culture. The American personality was unconditioned, only imperfectly human. The wealth of present experience in which this personality found itself was wonderful, rich and exciting, but finally meaningless by itself. Melville's books therefore present the symbolic figure of Ishmael, seeking for his own humanity, looking from present to past for the revelation of his paternity, hunting for the form and substance of his own being, contesting with God and Nature the right to refuse the revelation. Space, that obsessive image of the American, is psychologically the Void--the Void of personality, experience, and consciousness which have been neutralized or emasculated. There are many symbols of this Void in Melville's books: the whiteness of the whale, the rainbow turned white, the pure emptiness behind the mask, the 'sheer vacancy' of the world of Bartleby the Scrivener--even, in the Encantadas, the vacant lot. The inhuman horror of space and emptiness fascinated Melville, and it is what drags his characters off center, away from full humanity toward the unmanned--the humanly voided--the condition of the titan, the beast, the machine, or the child. The American failure, he showed, was the sterilizing of the human core or personality. Melville's fictional heroes, searching for the secret of their paternity and their selfhood, seek to rehumanize and reprinciple the Void.[13]

I have quoted Chase at length, because, first of all, he is, to my knowledge, one of the few critics who have specifically labeled this

[12]Tyrus Hillway, "A Preface to Moby-Dick," Moby-Dick Centennial Essays, intro. Tyrus Hillway and Luther S. Mansfield (Dallas, Texas, 1953), p. 24.

[13]Richard Chase, Herman Melville: A Critical Study (New York, 1949), pp. 97-98.

concept or tendency in American literature as "the Void," and secondly he has touched upon some of the aspects of the topic which I will further examine either explicitly or implicitly, in this thesis: the meaninglessness of life and experience, the "symbols of this Void," the confrontation with "space" (the external Void), and the search for "selfhood" in the internal Void of personality and consciousness, as both exemplified in and as experienced by the isolated and alienated Romantic heroes: Ishmael, Ahab, Childe Harold, Manfred, Cain, and the poet-hero of The Flowers Of Evil.

In this thesis I propose to show that: (1) the twentieth century wasteland has its parallel in the early and middle nineteenth century with the Romantics--with such writers as Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville; (2) although these writers had no wasteland tradition upon which to draw for expressing their angst and nausée, they nevertheless not only recognized an external or internal Void, or the Nothingness at the center of the external universe and in the internal self, but described and explored the concept in their poetry and prose; and (3) their perception of the Void presupposes a deficiency, i.e., something lacking externally and/or internally which caused the existence of this phenomenon. For Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville, this deficiency is ultimately the loss of identity or selfhood which may be attributed to such factors as the isolation and alienation of the individual and the concomitant loss of love, the break-up of the old order, and the disappearance of God from the cosmos in the closing years of the eighteenth century with the consequent shattering of man's illusion that he was the proud center of his universe--a loss which left man

alienated, rootless, homeless, and friendless. Man's "anchor of faith had been rent away," says Paul E. Moore,[14] and homeless man was now confronted by the "Void," the "abyss" or "gulf"; the nineteenth century terms for what twentieth century critics designate as the "wasteland."

I shall begin with a general discussion of the background and causes for the "presence" of Nothingness in nineteenth century life and literature, and explore various aspects of the Void in Chapter One. I shall then examine more specific references to the external Void in Chapter Two, and to the internal Void in Chapter Three, and conclude, in Chapter Four, with suggestions as to how, in my opinion, Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville and/or their Romantic protagonists attempt to face the Great Void in the wasteland of the nineteenth century.

[14]Paul E. More, ed., The Complete Poetical Works Of Byron (Cambridge, Mass., 1933), p. xv. All quotations from Byron's works, in the text, are from this Cambridge Poets edition.

CHAPTER II

THE OMNIPRESENT VOID

THE VISION OF NOTHINGNESS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY LIFE AND LITERATURE

The Nothingness which permeates the sterile landscape of the twentieth century wasteland has become one of the major themes in contemporary literature.[1] In Ernest Hemingway's story, "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" for instance, the cafe waiter realizes that "it was all a nothing and a man was nothing too," and he prays: "Give us this nada our daily nada..." and "Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee."[2] If man feels Nothingness in relation to time and space, and feels nothing but boredom in the enervating routine of mundane daily life--a routine of "The hot water at ten / And if it rains, a closed car at four"[3]--he has no perception of really existing at all except in a kind of vacuum between life and death--in a Void.

In contradistinction to this, man once existed in an ordered, finite world. The earth, men thought, was the center of the universe, and man had his appointed psychological place in the Great Chain of Being. But, "if it can be said," as Milton R. Stern contends, "that two thousand years

[1]Cf. Robert Martin Adams, Nil: Episodes in the literary conquest of void during the nineteenth century (New York, 1966), p. 6. Adams notes that "in art, in literature, in science, in our culture as a whole, we are a void-haunted, void-fascinated age."

[2]Ernest Hemingway, "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway (New York, 1927), p. 383.

[3]T.S. Eliot, The Waste Land, II. 135-36.

of western idealistic systems ever break down at all, the beginnings became most apparent in the nineteenth century under the impact of a new science, a new politic, a new sociology."[4] Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville, as we shall see, became three of the greatest spokesmen of the breakdown.[5] Although "cracks had begun to appear in the social structure in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," says Martin Turnell, the writer was still, to a large extent, "the spokesman of an aristocratic elite." In the nineteenth century, on the other hand, "he was an outsider in an alien world. The old order had gone and there was no external system to which his experience could be related."[6] The poet of The Flowers of Evil, for example, "remained a being without a center in a world without direction, haunted by the 'gulf' and tortured by his own divisions."[7]

The romanticists, Jacques Barzun points out, were forced "to take stock of the universe anew, like primitives, because the old forms, the old inter-subjective formulas, had failed them."[8] Science, as Barrett notes, "stripped nature of its human forms and presented man with a universe that was neutral, alien, in its vastness and force, to his human

[4]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville (Urbana, Ill., 1957), p. 27.

[5]Ibid. Stern maintains that "Melville became the greatest spokesman of the breakdown" in America. To his statement, I have added the names of Byron (in England), and Baudelaire (in France).

[6]Martin Turnell, Baudelaire: A Study of his Poetry (Norfolk, Conn., n.d.), p. 17.

[7]Ibid., p. 233.

[8]Jacques Barzun, Classic, Romantic And Modern (Garden City, N.Y., 1961), p. 68.

purposes."[9] The loss of the medieval ideals and symbolism[10] presented man with a world in which his illusion of "personal value" had been "rudely shattered."[11] With the break-down in the political order, as in France, man's "belief in the divine right of rulers had [also] been burst as an insubstantial bubble," as Paul E. More points out, and "in the late-born ideal of a humanity bound in brotherhood and striving upward together the individual was very slow to feel the drawing of the new ties; he had revolted from the past, and still felt himself homeless and unattached in the shadowy ideals of the future."[12] The loss of religion is finally and undoubtedly the most important factor of all. This loss, according to Barrett, stripped man of "a system of images and symbols by which he could express his own aspirations toward psychic wholeness." Religion had once "been a structure that encompassed man's life," but "with the loss of this containing framework man became not only a dispossessed but a fragmentary being."[13]

Few people today would disagree, I think, with Barrett's postulation that "the central fact of modern history in the West--by which we mean the long period from the end of the Middle Ages to the present--is unquestionably the decline of religion,"[14] or with J. Hillis Miller's state-

[9] Barrett, Irrational Man, p. 25.

[10] Cf. J. Hillis Miller, The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 12.

[11] More, Works of Byron, p. xv.

[12] Ibid., p. xix.

[13] Barrett, p. 35.

[14] Ibid., p. 24.

ment that "post-medieval literature records among other things, the gradual withdrawal of God from the world."[15] By the nineteenth century God had disappeared from the cosmos. Such a situation, however, is not to be interpreted as the atheistic belief or theory that "God Is Dead" as espoused by a Nietzche, Sartre, or even a Bishop Pike. "God still lives," as Miller says, "but he is out of reach" and there is no immediate evidence of His existence as an omnipresent force in the world or in the everyday life of man.[16] "The lines of connection between us and God have broken down," Miller explains. God "no longer inheres in the world as the force binding together all men and all things. As a result the nineteenth and twentieth centuries seem to many writers a time when God is no more present and not again present, and can only be experienced negatively, as a terrifying absence."[17] The deists of the eighteenth century, i.e., the ones who believed in an absentee God, or a "watchmaker God,"[18] prepared the mise en scène for the religious rebels of the nineteenth century. As Melville writes Hawthorne in June, 1851: "The reason the mass of men fear God, and at bottom dislike Him, is because they rather distrust His Heart, and fancy Him all brain like a watch."[19]

The absence of God, and the subsequent loss of religion was deeply felt by the religious rebels: Melville, Byron, and Baudelaire. These

[15] Miller, Disappearance, p. 1.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., p. 2.

[18] Ibid., p. 7.

[19] Merrell R. Davis and William H. Gilman, eds., The Letters of Herman Melville (New Haven, Conn., 1960), p. 129.

three men are alike in that each had a strong religious indoctrination as a child (Melville and Byron in Calvinism, and Baudelaire in Catholicism); each was obsessed by the concept of "Original Sin," and the "Innate Depravity" of man;[20] and each rebelled against orthodox religion, and at times against the absentee God Himself.[21] The "classic statement of Melville's spiritual condition during the latter half of his life," says William Braswell,[22] is that recorded by Hawthorne in his journal (November 20, 1856), a week after Melville's visit with him at the Liverpool Consulate and at his home at Southport, England:

[20] See, for example, Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," in The Portable Melville, ed. Jay Leyda (New York, 1952), p. 406: "Certain it is," writes Melville, "that this great power of blackness in [Hawthorne] derives its force from its appeals to 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. For, in certain moods, no man can weigh this world without throwing in something, somehow like Original Sin, to strike the uneven balance."

[21] Cain, for instance, "is Byron's complete rejection of God in a almost fulblown nihilism," says Robert F. Gleckner in Byron And The Ruins Of Paradise (Baltimore, 1967), p. 324. The same thing could perhaps be said of Melville's Moby-Dick and Pierre. See Henry A. Murray, ed. Pierre Or, The Ambiguities (New York, 1962), p. lxvii: Murray contends that "Pierre's generalized punitive response to the disclosure of his father's sin, blaming him and the heavenly powers for the loss of his Eden of innocence, is strictly comparable to Cain's attitude towards Adam and God in Byron's Cain." See also Murray, p. xiv: "Moby-Dick had been so nearly a complete catharsis of Melville's grief-hate that after it he could say, 'I have written a wicked book, and feel spotless as a lamb.' Through the Ahab of his imagination he had cursed God and drowned, but on waking from the dream, discovered that he was still among the quick"; and p. xxix: "Moby-Dick was Melville's blast of negative truth carried to the extreme of positive falsehood, nihilism. This was catharsis, no solution." Baudelaire's rebellion is best illustrated in the section "Revolte" in The Flowers Of Evil, in the poems: "The Denial of Saint Peter," Abel and Cain," and Litany to Satan." ("Le Reniement de Saint Pierre," "Abel et Cain," and "Les Litany de Satan").

[22] William Braswell, Melville's Religious Thought: An Essay In Interpretation (Durham, N.C., 1943), p. 3.

> Melville, as he always does, began to reason of Providence and futurity, and of everything that lies beyond human ken, and informed me that he had 'pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated'; but still he does not seem to rest in that anticipation; and, I think, will never rest until he gets hold of a definite belief. It is strange how he persists--and has persisted ever since I knew him, and probably long before--in wandering to-and-fro over these deserts, as dismal and monotonous as the sand hills amid which we were sitting. He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other. If he were a religious man, he would be one of the most truly religious and reverential; he has a very high and noble nature, and better worth immortality than most of us.[23]

Of Byron's "spiritual condition," as an adult, Edward E. Bostetter writes:

> To the end of his life, Byron could not shake off the baleful influence of the Calvinistic training with its emphasis upon predestination, sin, and damnation which he received as a child from his mother and nurse. It fused in his mind with the superstitious awe with which he brooded over the fates of his ancestors and underlay the conviction that he had been doomed from birth. Against it he revolted violently, both emotionally and intellectually. Emotionally he asserted the independence of his own will against the tyranny of destiny; intellectually he became a free thinker and sceptic, unable to accept the doctrine of Christianity or put another in its place. He could only insist that the meaning of existence must be found in terms of the human mind.[24]

With Baudelaire, as indeed with Byron and Melville, the religious question is very complex. In a letter to his mother, dated May 6, 1861, he

[23]Nathaniel Hawthorne, The English Notebooks, ed. Randall Stewart (New York, 1941), pp. 432-33.

[24]Edward E. Bostetter, ed., George Gordon, Lord Byron: Selected Poetry and Letters (New York, 1965), p. ix.

writes:

> 'And what about God!' you will say, I wish with all my heart (and with what sincerity I alone can know) to believe that an exterior invisible being is concerned with my fate; but what can I do to make myself believe it?
>
> (The idea of God makes me think of that cursed parish priest. In spite of the painful feeling that my letter will cause you, I do not want you to consult him. That priest is my enemy, perhaps only through sheer stupidity.)[25]

It would seem that even when Baudelaire could not "make" himself believe, he could not, like Melville, "be comfortable in his unbelief." Concerning the above letter, Marcel Ruff maintains that we must, nevertheless, "realize that even at such times his spirituality continued to manifest itself. This explains his association of spiritualism and dandyism. We recall the first sentence of Fusées: 'Even if God did not exist, Religion would still be Holy and Divine.' Baudelaire's dandyism," says Ruff, "may be defined as the expression of a religion which has remained holy and divine in the absence of God."[26]

As an adult, Byron rebelled against the orthodoxy of his childhood. He was "unable to accept the doctrine of Christianity or put another in

[25]Lois Boe Hyslop and Francis E. Hyslop, Jr., ed. and trans. Baudelaire: A Self-Portrait (London, 1957), p. 172.

"'Et Dieu!' diras-tu. Je désire de tout mon coeur (avec quelle sincérité, personne ne peut le savoir que moi!) croire qu'un être extérieur et invisible s'intéresse à ma destinée; mais comment faire pour le croire?

(L'idée de Dieu me fait penser à ce maudit curé. Dans les douloureuses sensations que ma lettre va te causer, je ne veux pas que tu le consultes. Ce curé est mon ennemi, par pure bêtise peut-être.)" Correspondance Generale in Oeuvres complètes de Charles Baudelaire, ed. Jacques Crépet (Paris, 1948), III, 280.

[26]Marcel A. Ruff, Baudelaire, trans. Agnes Kertesz (New York, 1966), p. 144.

its place." Baudelaire, however, seems to have always retained at least a framework of Christianity. According to Ruff, when Baudelaire's childhood ended he seems to have preserved only a more or less empty framework of Christianity. In 1848 this early theology dissolved into the vague religious aspirations which were popular at the time. But Baudelaire's connection with Christianity was never broken," Ruff maintains, and "from 1861 on, he openly proclaimed himself a Catholic."[27] With Baudelaire, the religious question is so complex, and uncertain that critics disagree in their interpretations. Henri Peyre contends, for instance, that Baudelaire never found God "with any finality, or the serene satisfaction of concentration in his work of which he naively dreamt, or perfected beauty, or any degree of triumph over his nerves and his emotions, or any control over his fear of the abyss. He never ceased to search. He remained a dual creature."[28] François Mauriac, in contrast, believes that "as he neared the end of his life, Baudelaire deep in the pangs of suffering, found the strength to submit to God. He died a penitent."[29] My point, however, is that Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville all seemed to acutely feel the absence of God during varying periods of their adult life; their Christianity seemed to become "a more or less empty framework" during their most productive years, and they rebelled against the absentee God, at times, in their poetry and

[27]Ruff, Baudelaire, pp. 84-85.

[28]Peyre, "Baudelaire, Romantic And Classic," p. 29.

[29]François Mauriac, "Charles Baudelaire, The Catholic," Baudelaire: A Collection Of Critical Essays, ed. Henri Peyre, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962), p. 37.

prose if not in their personal lives.

Man's situation in a Godless universe is essentially one of alienation. There is a loss of communication between man and God, and subsequently there is, as Miller notes, a "disconnection between man and nature, between man and man, even between man and himself."[30] In such a world,

> we are alienated from ourselves, the buried life we never seem able to reach. The result is a radical sense of inner nothingness. Most of the great works of nineteenth-century literature have at their centers a character who is in doubt about his own identity and asks, 'How can I find something outside myself which will tell me who I am, and give me a place in society and in the universe?' In eighteenth-century English literature too, for example in Tom Jones, the hero is initially in doubt about his identity, but it usually turns out in the end that there is a place waiting for him in a stable society. In eighteenth century England the stability of the social order, sustained by divine Providence, is a guarantee of the stability of selfhood. For some writers at least God is still immanent in society.[31]

In nineteenth-century literature, on the other hand, the Ishmaels and Childe Harolds must find "the stability of selfhood" in an unstable society--in a society not "sustained by divine Providence."

In a world where God is no longer "immanent in society," man becomes a fragmented, deracinated being. "Henceforth," says Barrett, "in seeking his own human completeness man would have to do for himself what he once had done for him, unconsciously by the Church, through the medium of its sacramental life." Henceforth man is "cast adrift" as a

[30]Miller, Disappearance, p. 2.

[31]Ibid., pp. 8-9.

homeless alien in a meaningless universe in search of his "own human completeness." For "to lose one's psychic container"[32](i.e., spiritual home) is also to lose one's sense of identity or relatedness to others and to the external world. The tragedy of "this condition of being a nonself, a no man" says Charles I. Glicksberg, is that it exposes one "to the terrifying vision of nothingness."[33]For the Romantics and their protagonists, the search for their lost selfhood, and for their lost paternity (God the Father) must be made in confrontation with the Nothingness of the Void, without and within, in the wasteland of the nineteenth century.[34]

The word "Void" is here defined as an empty space or feeling; emptyness, non-being; a wasteland; a vacuum; zero; nil; meaningless; nothing, Nothingness. The words "Void," Nothingness," "abyss," and "gulf," in this thesis, mean the same thing, but the concept encompasses such concomitant aspects as the isolation, alienation, and homelessness of the individual faced with the problems of negation, annihilation, nihilism, solipsism, and Nothingness as he exists in a fragmented visible world which is lost in "a little cell" of an alien in-

[32]Barrett, Irrational Man, p. 25.

[33]Charles I. Glicksberg, The Self In Modern Literature (University Park, Penn., 1963), p. 184.

[34]Cf. Adams, Nil, p. 244: "It is not just that God has disappeared behind the screen of his creation," says Adams, " --that might leave one with a dead but still substantial material universe. The screen itself is felt not to exist any more; it is penetrable, soluble, it lets one fall through into a void without or a void within. The shell of personal identity collapses, the yolk of individuality is split."

different universe.[35] Finite, homeless man, lost in a small remote corner of nature, cannot begin to conceive of infinity in terms of space and time, or of the dimensions of the universe--"an infinite sphere, the center of which is everywhere, the circumference nowhere ... What is man in nature?" questions Pascal, "A Nothing in comparison with the Infinite, an All in comparison with the Nothing, a mean between nothing and everything."[36] In another passage of the Pensées, Pascal brilliantly describes the true state of modern man,[37] homeless and adrift like a rudderless boat, like Rimbaud's "Le Bateau ivre," sailing "within a vast

[35] Blaise Pascal, The Provincial Letters, Pensées, Scientific Treatises, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, Great Books of the Western World, (Chicago, 1952), XXX, 181 (#72): "... Let [man] consider what he is in comparison with all existence; let him regard himself as lost in this remote corner of nature; and from the little cell in which he finds himself lodged, I mean the universe, let him estimate at their true value the earth, kingdoms, cities, and himself."

"Que l'homme ... considère ce qu'il est au prix de ce qui est qu'il se regarde comme égaré dans ce canton détourné de la nature; et que de ce petit cachot où il se trouve logé, j'entends l'univers, il apprenne à estimer la terre, les royaumes, les villes et soi-même son juste prix." (Blaise Pascal, Pensées in Oeuvres de Blaise Pascal, ed. Léon Brunschvicg (Paris, 1925), XII, 73-74 (#72). All quotations from Pascal, in the footnotes, in French are from this edition. I am supplying Pascal's original French, in footnotes, for all passages quoted in English translation in the text.

[36] Ibid., pp. 181-82 (#72). "C'est une sphère infinie dont le centre est partout, la circonférence nulle part ... qu'est-ce que l'homme dans la nature? Un néant à l'égard de l'infini, un tout a l'égard du néant, un milieu entre rien et tout." (Ibid., pp. 73, 78).

[37] Pascal, in the seventeenth century, was writing about the human condition, not modern man. Yet, "in what Pascal says about the human condition," says Barrett, "we recognize ourselves all too painfully. As a psychologist, he is contemporary," Barrett, Irrational Man, p. 113. See also p. 118: "It is our world, the modern world, that Pascal depicts, and reading him we enter that world as our home just because we are as homeless there as he was."

sphere, ever drifting in uncertainty."

> This is our true state [Pascal writes] ; this is what makes us incapable of certain knowledge and of absolute ignorance. We sail within a vast sphere ever drifting in uncertainty, driven from end to end. When we think to attach ourselves to any point and to fasten to it, it wavers and leaves us; and if we follow it, it eludes our grasp, slips past us, and vanishes for ever. Nothing stays for us. This is our natural condition and yet most contrary to our inclination; we burn with desire to find solid ground and an ultimate sure foundation whereon to build a tower reaching to the Infinite. But our whole groudwork cracks, and the earth opens to abysses.[38]

Pascal, in the seventeenth century, perceived the Great Void, and saw the possibility of Nothingness lurking beneath our feet; an abyss into

[38]Pascal, Pensées, p. 183 (#72).
"Voilà notre état véritable; c'est ce qui nous rend incapables de savoir certainement et d'ignorer absolument. Nous voguons sur un milieu vaste, toujours incertains et flottants, poussés d'un bout vers l'autre. Quelque terme où nous pensions nous attacher et nous affermir, il branle et nous quitte; et si nous le suivons, il échappe à nos prises, nous glisse et fuit d'une fuite éternelle. Rien ne s'arrête pour nous. C'est l'état qui nous est naturel, et toutefois le plus contraire à notre inclination; nous brûlons de désir de trouver une assiette ferme, et une dernière base constante pour y édifier une tour qui s'élève a l'infini; mais tout notre fondement craque, et la terre s'ouvre jusqu'aux abîmes." (Oeuvres, XII, 85-86).
Cf. Childe Harold III.lxx:

> The race of life becomes a hopeless flight
> To those that walk in the darkness: on the sea,
> The boldest steer but where their ports invite,
> But there are wanderers o'er Eternity
> Whose bark drives on and on, and anchor'd ne'er shall be;

and Cf. Melville's letter to Sophia Hawthorne, dated Jan. 8, 1852, in Davis and Gilman, Letters, p. 147: "Life is a long Dardenelles, My Dear Madam, the shores whereof are bright with flowers, which we want to pluck, but the bank is too high; & so we float on & on, hoping to come to a launching-place at last--but swoop! we launch into the great sea!"

which we might hurtle at any moment. "The idea of Nothingness or Nothing," as Barrett points out, "had up to this time played no role at all in Western philosophy,"[39] and it played no role in Western literature until the early nineteenth century.[40]

This idea of Nothingness in the center of the universe and in man is the theme of Baudelaire's poem "The Abyss" in which he delineates Pascal's abyss as an omnipresent aspect of his own nineteenth century world:

> Pascal's abyss went with him, yawned in the air --
> Everything's an abyss! Desire, acts, dreams,
> Words! I have felt the wind of terror stream
> Many a time across my standing hair.
>
> On all sides around me shores are descending ...
> Silence ... terrible, terrifying Space ...
> At night I watch God's knowing finger trace
> Unending nightmares on the dark unending.
>
> Sleep itself is an enormous lair
> Full of vague horrors, leading who knows where?
> All windows open on Infinity;
>
> My spirit, haunted now by vertigo,
> Yearns for extinction, insensibility.
> -- Ah! never to be free of Being, Ego![41]

[39]Barrett, Irrational Man, p. 116.

[40]There are foreshadowings of it, however, in Shakespeare, in some of Hamlet's soliloquies and speeches, for example, as in Act II.ii.307-21: "... the earth seems to me a sterile promontory ...." says Hamlet; in Macbeth's famous speech in Act V.v.23-28: "Life's ... a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing"; in John Donne's "An Anatomy of The World: The First Anniversary," and perhaps in Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels, among other works.

[41]Charles Baudelaire, The Flowers of Evil, ed. Marthiel and Jackson Mathews, rev. ed. (Norfolk, Conn., 1962), pp. 193-94. All quotations are from this New Directions edition. See Appendix for the original version of "The Abyss" in French. I am supplying Baudelaire's orig-

Baudelaire's The Flowers Of Evil is suffused with references to and with images of the external and internal Void: "From heaven or the abyss ... From Satan or from God" ("Hymn To Beauty"), "Nothing equals your bed's abyss ("Lethe"), "Above the stricken, suffering man there glow / Far azure plains of unimagined bliss / Which draw his dreaming spirit like the abyss" ("The Spiritual Dawn"), "Vainly Revenge, with red strong arms employed, / Precipitates her buckets, in a spate / Of blood and tears of the dead, to feed the void," and "The Fiend bores secret holes in these abysms" ("The Cask of Hate"); "How you would please me, Night! without your stars / Which speak a foreign dialect, that jars / On one who seeks the void, the black, the bare" ("Obsession"); "Night deepens. The abyss with gulfy maw / Thirsts on unsated, while the hourglass drains" ("The Clock"); "From down this black pit where my heart is sped, / A sombre universe ringed round with lead" ("De Profundis Clamavi"); "Night touches them like a torturer, pushes them to the open / Trapdoor over the gulf that is all too common" ("Comes The Charming Evening"); "Who drunk with the pulse of their own blood, preferred / Deep pain to death and Hell to nothingness" ("The Gaming Table"); "Lesbos, where kisses are as waterfalls / That fearless

inal French in footnotes or in the Appendix, as indicated, for all passages quoted in English translation in the text.

See Jean Prévost, "Baudelairean Themes: Death, Evil, and Love," Baudelaire: A Collection Of Critical Essays, ed. Henri Peyre, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.Y., 1962), p. 170. "Different as Baudelaire may be from Pascal," says Prévost, "aesthetic impressions akin to those produced by the Pensées are frequently experienced by those who reread the Fleurs du mal. Each of them in his own realm probes our feelings and our thoughts with a very acute knife, cutting narrow and deep furrows into the quick. Both are anatomists rather than contemplators of life; in a few words, they reach straight to the bone, and strip it of all flesh."

into gulfs unfathomed leap" ("Lesbos"), "... to drown in the abyss -- heaven or hell / Who cares? Through the unknown, we'll find the new." ("The Voyage"); and:

> How should we read dense gulfs which know not dawn
> Nor eve, nor any star?
> How pierce with light skies which abyss-like yawn
> When black as pitch they are?
> How should we read dense gulfs which know not dawn?
> ("The Irreparable") 42

One may discern from this potpourri of quotations that Baudelaire was acutely aware of the external and the internal Void. Indeed, for Baude-

42 "Que tu viennes du ciel ou de l'enfer... De Satan ou de Dieu" ("Hymne à la beauté," XXI.21.25), "Rien ne me vaut l'abîme de ta couche" ("Le Léthé," CXXVIII.13-14), "Des Cieux Spirituels l'inaccessible azur, / Pour l'homme terrassé qui rêve encore et souffre / S'ouvre et s'enfonce avec l'attirance du gouffre" ("L'Aube spirituelle," XLVI.5-7), "La Vengeance éperdue aux bras rouges et forts / A beau précipiter dans ses ténèbres vides / De grands seaux pleins du sang et des larmes des morts," et "Le Démon fait des trous secrets à ces abîmes" ("Le Tonneau de la haine," LXXII.2-5), "Comme tu me plairais, ô nuit! sans ces étoiles / Dont la lumière parle un langage connu! / Car je cherche le vide, et le noir, et le nu!" ("Obsession," LXXIX.9-11); "Le jour décroît; la nuit augmente; souviens-toi! / Le gouffre a toujours soif; la clepsydre se vide." ("L'Horloge," LXXXV.19-20); "Du fond du gouffre obscur où mon coeur est tombé. / C'est un univers morne à l'horizon plombé," ("De Profundis clamavi," XXX.2-3); "La sombre Nuit les prend à la gorge; ils finissent / Leur destinée et vont vers le gouffre commun" ("Le Crépuscule du soir," XCV.23-24); "Et qui, soûl de son sang, préférerait en somme / La douleur à la mort et l'enfer au néant!" ("Le Jeu," XCVI.23-24); "Lesbos où les baisers sont comme les cascades / Qui se jettent sans peur dans les gouffres sans fonds." ("Lesbos," CXXX.6-7), "Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe? / Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau! ("Le Voyage," CXXVI.viii.143-144); et "Peut-on illuminer un ciel bourbeux et noir? / Peut-on déchirer des ténèbres / Plus denses que la poix, sans matin et sans soir, / Sans astres, sans éclairs funèbres? / Peut-on illuminer un ciel bourbeux et noir?" ("L'Irréparable," LIV.21-25).

Cf. Childe Harold, IV.lxxx: "Chaos of ruins! who shall trace the void."

laire "Everything's an abyss! Desire, acts, dreams, / Words! ..."

Four key words in Baudelaire's poetry are "néant," "vide," "abîme," and "gouffre." The Nothingness of the Voids, abysses, and gulfs which lie beneath the external world of metal and stone are matched by the Nothingness of the Voids, abysses, and gulfs which lie within the internal psyche.[43] As Turnell points out, however, Baudelaire uses these key words in different senses. In "Lesbians (Delphine and Hippolyta)," for instance, where her heart is the abyss ("I feel my inmost being rent, as though / A gulf had yawned--the gulf that is my heart"), and in the poem "The Abyss," the Void is a symbol of frustration and of negation; "the nightmare sensation of futility and despair which paralyses 'action, désir, rêve.'" In "Lethe," on the other hand, Baudelaire writes: "To swallow my abated sobs / Nothing equals your bed's abyss." In this passage the "abyss" represents "a refuge" as Turnell notes, "and the poet is driven on by a desire to blot out the horror of the present by plunging into the purely instinctual life, into an orgasm of such violence that consciousness itself is temporarily obliterated."[44]

[43] See Turnell, Baudelaire, p. 226; and Robert T. Cargo, A Concordance To Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du mal (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1956), pp. 7,144,223,339,404,409,412,417: In The Flowers Of Evil alone, the words "néant," "vide(s)," "abîme(s)" and "gouffre(s)" are used six, eleven, thirteen, and twenty-three times respectively. See also Adams, Nil, p. 11. Adams points out that in English, we have "no word which corresponds precisely to French 'néant': 'void,' 'vacancy,' and 'non-being' won't do, 'nought' means 'zero' which doesn't fit, and nothing is too expansive, indefinite, and unpsychological."

[44] Turnell, Baudelaire, p. 226.

"... Je sens s'élargir dans mon être / Un abîme béant; cet abîme est mon coeur!" ("Femmes damnées [Delphine et Hippolyte]" CXXXI.75-76).

"Pour engloutir mes sanglots apaisés / Rien ne me vaut l'abîme de ta couche" ("Le Léthé," CXXVIII.13-14).

Byron's Manfred longs for a permanent obliteration of consciousness, for complete annihilation of life. He longs for "Forgetfulness" (I.i.135), for "Oblivion, self-oblivion" (I.i.145), "For madness as a blessing" and for death (II.ii.228-29). "I plunged deep," he tells the Witch of the Alps:

> But like an ebbing wave, it dash'd me back
> Into the gulf of my unfathom'd thought.
> I plunged amidst mankind -- Forgetfulness
> I sought in all, save where 't is to be found,
> And that I have to learn -- my sciences,
> My long pursued and superhuman art,
> Is mortal here; I dwell in my despair --
> And live -- and live for ever. (II.ii.236-44)

Since Byron died at thirty-six, he dwelt in his despair for a relatively short time. In his attempt to blot out, what Turnell calls above "the horror of the present" -- the horror of the Nothingness of life -- Byron plunged into both the "purely" physical and the "purely" mental life, "into an orgasm of such violence" that his physical and mental being were prematurely "obliterated," Byron's "natural atmosphere," says Mario Praz, became "paroxysm."[45] Paul West further points out that: "Many writers have observed that Byron had to intensify life in order to know he was living at all. He could live at only the highest frequencies; all the rest, which we ourselves might find strenuous, was torpor to him. He made his blood boil and turned the overflow into poetry. No wonder the brain sutures were gone and the heart ossified"

[45]Mario Praz, "Metamorphoses of Satan," Byron: A Collection Of Critical Essays, ed. Paul West, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963), p. 45.

when he died.[46] Byron literally burned himself up in his fervid desire to give meaning and direction to his life; to feel that he was indeed living at all. In a wasteland world emptied of God, of love, and of meaningful experiences, one cannot be certain of anything, not even of one's existence. As Byron writes in Don Juan:

> If from great nature's or our own abyss,
> Of thought we could but snatch a certainty,
> Perhaps mankind might find the path they miss -- (XIV.i)

One has only to read Byron's poetry and plays to discern that he was keenly aware of the external and internal Void, and of the meaninglessness of life. As Byron advises his critics, one of his explicit purposes in writing Don Juan is to hold up the Nothingness of mortal life for all to perceive:

> Ecclesiastes said, 'that all is vanity' --
> Most modern preachers say the same, or show it
> By their examples of true Christianity:
> In short, all know, or very soon may know it;
> And in this scene of all-confess'd inanity,
> By saint, by sage, by preacher, and by poet,
> Must I restrain me, through the fear of strife,
> From holding up the nothingness of life? (VII.vi)[47]

[46]Paul West, "Introduction," Byron: A Collection Of Critical Essays, ed. Paul West, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963), p. 7. Cf. Praz, p. 45: Byron "had to key up his life to such a high state of tension in order to make it yield him anything, that when it came to the post-mortem it was found that both brain and heart showed signs of very advanced age: the sutures of the brain were entirely obliterated and the heart bore signs of incipient ossification. Yet Byron was only thirty-six. His blood had to boil like lava for him to feel it beating in his pulses."

[47]Cf. Melville's statement in Moby-Dick: "... Ecclesiastes is the fine hammered steel of woe. 'All is vanity.' All. This wilful world hath not got hold of unchristian Solomon's wisdom yet." Herman Melville,

Manfred standing on the precipice of the Jungfrau, contemplates the Nothingness of his life, and conceives a desire to plunge into the yawning abyss of rocks below, or to be crushed by an avalanche--anything to escape from the suffocating sense of existence as an interminable living-death.

> And hours -- all tortured into ages -- hours
> Which I outlive! -- Ye toppling crags of ice!
> Ye avalanches, whom a breath draws down
> In mountainous o'erwhelming, come and crush me! (I.ii.334-37)[48]

Byron too experienced periods in which he wished to plunge into the Void and negate self. "You look o'er the precipice, and drear," he writes, "The gulf of rock yawns, -- you can't gaze a minute / Without an awful wish to plunge within it" (Don Juan XIV.v.).

Melville, likewise, suffered periods of agonizing despair when he had the "awful wish" to plunge into the annihilating gulf or Void. The complex problem of "Melville's will to self-annihilation"[49] is raised by Henry A. Murray who concludes that while writing Moby-Dick, Melville was "facing annihilation,"[50] and while writing Pierre, he "was fighting for spiritual survival."[51] Murray suggests that:

Moby-Dick Or, The Whale, ed. Luther S. Mansfield and Howard P. Vincent (New York, 1952), p. 422. All quotations from Moby-Dick, in the text, are from this Hendricks House edition.

[48] Cf. Baudelaire's "The Thirst for Extinction": "Avalanche, take me with your slide!" ("Avalanche, veux-tu m'emporter dans ta chute?" ["Le Goût du néant," LXXX. 15]).

[49] Murray, Pierre, p. xvii.

[50] Ibid., p. xiii.

[51] Ibid., p. xvii.

> Melville's position in Mardi might be defined in these words: 'If I fail to reach my golden haven, may my annihilation be complete!'; in Moby-Dick: 'I see that I am to be annihilated, but against this verdict I shall hurl an everlasting protest!'; in Pierre: 'I must make up my mind, if possible, to the inevitability of my annihilation'; in 1856, at Liverpool, with Hawthorne: 'I have pretty much made up my mind to be annihilated'; and in 1891 in Billy Budd: 'I accept my annihilation.'[52]

I would add, however, that since Melville lived to the age of seventy-two, his will to live, even with the Void, was undoubtedly stronger than his "will to self-annihilation," at least in the physical if not in the mental sense.

As Murray points out, Melville's "mind had come of age in 1845."[53] In a famous revelatory passage in a letter to Hawthorne (June 1(?) 1851), Melville compares his own "development" to that of a seed lying dormant for three thousand years in an Egyptian pyramid. When planted in "English soil," it developed, matured, and moulded: "So I," writes Melville, "Until I was twenty-five I had no development at all. From my twenty-fifth year I date my life. Three weeks have scarcely passed, at any time between then and now, that I have not unfolded within myself. But I feel that I am now come to the inmost leaf of the bulb, and that shortly the flower must fall to the mould."[54] Melville had "come to the inmost leaf" in scarcely seven years[55](a period in which

[52]Murray, Pierre, pp. xiv-xv.

[53]Ibid., p. xiii.

[54]Davis and Gilman, Letters, p. 130.

[55]The letter to Hawthorne was written two months prior to Melville's thirty-second birthday.

he had published five novels), and while he was composing his masterpiece Moby-Dick. If there were no other extant works, such as Mardi, Pierre, The Confidence Man, "Bartleby," The Encantadas, and Clarel, one could still perceive Melville's obsession with inner and outer Nothingness, by a perusal of this tourist guidebook through the Void. Moby-Dick is probably the most awesome, most sustained confrontation with the Great Void in nineteenth century literature. Ahab and Ishmael are confronted with a Void above and below, before and behind, without and within, and around and around.

Both Ahab and Ishmael are projections, in varying degrees, of Melville's own psyche, his own personality. Ishmael is generally identified with Melville to a greater and Ahab to a lesser degree, i.e., although Ishmael usually serves as a mouthpiece for Melville's views, some of Ahab's rebellious defiance is also indicative of Melville's own spirit. It is generally agreed that the works of Melville, Byron, and Baudelaire are autobiographical or quasi-autobiographical. Each, like Pierre, "seems to have directly plagiarised from his own experiences" (Pierre, p. 356).[56] Like his author-hero, Melville "dropped his angle into the well of his childhood [adolescence and manhood] to find what fish might be there" (Pierre, p. 335).[57] With Byron, it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the poet himself and

[56]Herman Melville, Pierre Or, The Ambiguities, ed. Henry A. Murray (New York, 1962). All quotations from Pierre in the text are from this Hendricks House edition.

[57]Melville's first biographer, Raymond Weaver, concludes that aside from its artistic achievement, Pierre is of the greatest importance as an autobiographical document. See Raymond M. Weaver, Herman Melville, Mariner And Mystic (New York, 1921), p. 158.

his Byronic hero. John Wain maintains that: "Byron was a poet who worked through, by means of, self-consciousness. That is to say, he projected an image of himself and then let the image do the writing."[58] Similarly, Baudelaire conjured "up emotions and experiences similar to those he had undergone or imagined," says Henri Peyre, and he "strove all his life after that literary sincerity which might enable him to 'lay his heart bare,' while resorting to diverse masks and occasionally to the antics of a tragic comedian."[59] Through "masks," mirror-images, mouthpieces, and thinly disguised personae, Melville, Byron, and Baudelaire are continually projecting "symbolic versions" of "the self" in their poetic and prose works.

It is the contention of Charles I. Glicksberg, that:

> the self in literature mirrors the author's conception of himself and of his world; he is present behind all his imaginary beings, who reflect the conflicts he suffers from, the split in his own personality, and his vision of existence. Whatever mask the writer may assume, in his writings he is presenting in effect a symbolic version of himself in different disguises, though this version represents a 'second self' rather than a strictly autobiographical self.[60]

With this in mind, I will now turn to a more specific discussion of the "vision of existence" in the external Void, as presented by the three Romantics, and particularly as experienced and expressed by their

[58]John Wain, "The Search For Identity," Byron: A Collection Of Critical Essays, ed. Paul West, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963), p. 158.

[59]Peyre, "Baudelaire, Romantic And Classic," pp. 5 and 3.

[60]Glicksberg, The Self, p. xiv.

personae or "second" selves: Childe Harold, Manfred, Cain, the poet-hero of The Flowers Of Evil, Ahab, and Ishmael.

CHAPTER III

EXPLORATION INTO INFINITY: CHARTING THE EXTERNAL VOID

> Most ancient or primitive people have at one time or another identified certain breaks in the earth's surface or marine depths with the abyss. Among the Celts and other peoples, the abyss was inside mountains; in Ireland, Japan and the South Sea islands, it was at the bottom of seas and lakes; among Mediterranean peoples it was just beyond the horizon; for the Australian aborigines, the Milky Way is the abyss par excellence. The abyss is usually identified with the 'land of the dead,' the underworld ... [1]

For Western man in the early and mid-nineteenth century, and for Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville, in particular, the external Void (or abyss) may be charted as: (1) the Void above: infinity, space, the universe, the mountain-top; (2) the Void below: the depths or abysses of the ocean, seas, gulfs, lakes; (3) the Void within: the inside of mountains, caves, caverns, pits (subterranean regions of the earth); and (4) the Void without: the cities, deserts, wilderness, islands--the visible world delineated by Baudelaire as "the mighty pot":[2]

> Wherever he be, on water or on land
> Under pale suns or climes that flames enfold;
> One of Christ's own, or of Cythera's band,
> Shadowy beggar or Croesus rich with gold;

[1] J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, trans. Jack Sage (New York, 1962), pp. 2-3.

[2] In this chapter I will touch upon most of the areas listed above though not necessarily in the order listed.

Citizen, peasant, student, tramp, whatever
His little brain may be, alive or dead;
Man knows the fear of mystery everywhere,
And peeps, with trembling glances, overhead.

The heaven above? A strangling cavern wall;
The lighted ceiling of a music-hall
Where every actor treads a bloody soil;

The hermit's hope; the terror of the sot;
The sky: the black lid of the mighty pot
Where the vast human generations boil!
("The Lid")[3]

"The heavens above" or the universe of the early and mid-nineteenth century was not the ordered, finite cosmos of the Greeks or the Neo-Platonist, but rather a Pascalean universe of frightful, soundless, empty space--an infinity of Nothingness.[4]

> Silence is the general consecration of the universe [Melville writes] . Silence is the invisible laying on of the Divine Pontiff's hands upon the world. Silence is at once the most harmless and the most awful thing in nature. It speaks of the Reserved Forces of Fate. Silence is the only Voice of our God.[5] (Pierre, p. 239)

God has disappeared from the Melvillean universe and consequently His Voice is "Silence" and his hand is "Hollow": "for doth not Scripture

[3]See Appendix for the original version of the poem in French.

[4]See Pascal, Pensées, p. 211 (#206): "The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me," ("Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie," Oeuvres, XIII, 127.)

[5]Cf. Pierre, p. 244: "... that profound Silence, that only Voice of our God, which before I spoke of; from that divine thing without a name, those impostor philosophers pretend somehow to have got an answer; which is as absurd, as though they should say they had got water out of stone; for how can a man get a Voice out of Silence?"

intimate," says Melville, "that He holdeth all of us in the hollow of His hand?--a Hollow, truly" (Pierre, p. 164)! The universe for Melville is a silent, hollow (empty), colorless, "heartless" Void. "Pure" nature without man or God is the Void, and in Moby-Dick, it is symbolized by the whiteness of the whale,[6] the whiteness that is "a colorless, all-color of atheism." Melville asks:

> Is it that by its indefiniteness it shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation, when beholding the white depths of the milky way? Or is it, that as in essence whiteness is not so much a color as the visible absence of color, and at the same time the concrete of all colors; is it for these reasons that there is such a dumb blankness, full of meaning, in a wide landscape of snows--a colorless, all-color of atheism from which we shrink?
> (Moby-Dick, p. 193)

Melville "kept up his disquisition about 'whiteness,'" says D. H. Lawrence. "The great abstract fascinated him. The abstract where we end, and cease to be."[7] Melville indeed continues "his disquisition," about the abstract, paradoxical "whiteness," by next pondering a theory of the natural philosophers that all colorful earthly hues "are but subtile deceits," not being inherent in the substances, but applied externally; "so that all deified Nature absolutely paints like the harlot," he says, "whose allurements cover nothing but the charnel-house within." Proceeding further, Melville then considers that "the

[6]See Alfred Kazin, "Introduction," Moby-Dick or, The Whale, ed. Alfred Kazin (Boston, 1956), p. xii.

[7]D. H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature (New York, 1961), p. 151.

great principle of light," which cosmetically produces all of the hues, "for ever remains white or colorless in itself," and if it operated "without medium upon matter," it would touch all objects "with its own blank tinge." After "pondering all this," Melville concludes that:

> The palsied universe lies before us a leper; and like willful travellers in Lapland, who refuse to wear colored and coloring glasses upon their eyes, so the wretched infidel gazes himself blind at the monumental white shroud that wraps all the prospect around him. And of all these things the Albino whale was the symbol. (Moby-Dick, pp. 193-94)

For Ishmael, who profoundly symbolizes the homeless, shelterless man,[8] the most terrifying facet of this abstract blankness--this whiteness of the albino whale--is "the ever-present possibility of cosmic nothingness, in which 'the palsied universe lies before us a leper,'" says Daniel Hoffman.[9] For Melville's "palsied universe," as Milton R. Stern points out, "is ethically blind, perceptually dumb, whitely indifferent, intellectually blank, morally patternless."[10]

Byron, too, according to Peter L. Thorslev, Jr., envisions the universe as "naturalistic, as morally indifferent," and "as alien to all our dearest hopes and ideals." It is in this sense that Byron is closer to us than any of the other English Romantics. "Byron's sceptical vision of an alienated universe which takes no reckoning of

[8]See Howard P. Vincent, The Trying-Out of Moby-Dick (Boston, 1949), p. 58.

[9]Daniel Hoffman, Form and Fable in American Fiction (New York, 1965), p. 271.

[10]Stern, Fine Hammered Steel, p. 16.

man or of his hopes and infirmities" is distinctly modern, and it is a universe in which we can today "feel quite uncomfortably at home."[11] Byron's Godless universe as depicted in the poem "Darkness" is blind, dumb, blank, patternless, like Melville's, but blackly indifferent:

> I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
> The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
> Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
> Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
> Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
> (11. 1-5)

Byron's universe, in this poem, is colorless, for the color black, like white, represents "a visible absence of color": "... and all was black," says Byron, "And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need / Of aid from them--She was the Universe" (11. 81-82). After the last two men, enemies, met, looked into each other's face, "shriek'd and died" (l. 67), all was silent and Void:

> ... The world was void,
> The populous and powerful was a lump,
> Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless--
> A lump of death--a chaos of hard clay. (11. 69-72)

[11] Peter L. Thorslev, Jr., The Byronic Hero: Types And Protypes (Minneapolis, Minn., 1962), p. 123.

I would point out that Cain, for example, was exceedingly "uncomfortable" in his alien and indifferent universe. As he tells Adah:

> I have toiled, and tilled, and sweaten in the sun
> According to the curse:--must I do more?
> For what should I be gentle? for a war
> With all the elements ere they will yield
> The bread we eat? If I am nothing--
> For nothing shall I be an hypocrite,
> And seem well-pleased with pain? ..
> (Cain, III,i.109-17)

"Darkness" is Byron's "dream, which was not all a dream,"--his vision of the end of the world, or of life on earth.[12]

Baudelaire's dream landscape, in "Parisian Dream," is similar to Byron's in many respects. It is silent:

> A silence like eternity
> Prevailed, there was no sound to hear;
> These marvels all were for the eye,
> And there was nothing for the ear.[13]

It is also "Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless--," for the poet confesses that: "A strange caprice had urged my hand / To banish, as irregular, / All vegatation from that land;" and as in Byron's dream, "There was no moon, there was no sun,--" in the "Parisian Dream."[14] Byron's appalling landscape, however, is the colorless blank of blackness, while in that of Baudelaire, "every colour, even black," has been applied to the "Intoxicating monotone / Of marble, water, steel and slate." But when the poet awakens"... a grey sky [or dark sky] was drizzling down / Upon this sad, lethargic world."[15] Baudelaire's universe is often qualified as a colorless grey, which

[12] See Gleckner, Ruins Of Paradise, p. 258: "We see in the opening of [Manfred] that Manfred's world is initially a world of darkness (the same darkness that pervades the poem 'Darkness')."

[13] "Et sur ces mouvantes merveilles / Planait (terrible nouveauté! / Tout pour l'oeil, rien pour les oreilles!) / Un silence d'éternité" ("Rêve parisien," I, 49-52).

[14] "Par un caprice singulier, / J'avais banni de ces spectacles / Le végétal irrégulier," and "Nul astre d'ailleurs, nuls vestiges / De soleil ..." ("Rêve parisien," I, 6-8, 45-46).

[15] "Et tout, même la couleur noire"; "L'enivrante monotonie / Du métal, du marbre et de l'eau"; and "Et le ciel versait des ténèbres / Sur le triste monde engourdi" ("Rêve parisien," II, 41, I, 11-12, II, 59-60).

like black and white is also visibly devoid of color. Byron's dark universe, and Melville's "palsied universe," is, for Baudelaire, "a sombre universe ringed round with lead"("De Profundis Clamavi").[16] It is a grey world of fog, rain, and "the thickening granite [wall] of ... mist" ("The Swan").[17]

Martin Turnell distinguishes two processes at work in the poetry of Baudelaire. In the first place, Baudelaire's world is given its nightmare quality by "the domination of metal and stone, the sense of the human becoming part of the soulless machine," and secondly, "this quality is heightened by the reverse process," says Turnell, "by the disconcerting way in which cracks and fissures suddenly appear and the surface disintegrates to reveal the 'gulf' which threatens to swallow him up."[18]

"The skewer seems loosening out of the middle of the world" (Moby-Dick, p. 514), and "cracks and fissures suddenly appear" in Moby-Dick also, revealing the "gulf" or Void. W. E. Sedgwick notes that there is, in Moby-Dick, a crowded, solid foreground of both material things and of human actions and character. "Yet this solid ground will suddenly seem to give way under our feet," he says, "so that we feel ourselves hung momentarily over the abyss."[19] For Ahab, however, there is

[16]"C'est un univers morne à l'horizon plombé," ("De Profundis clamavi," l.3).

[17]"Derrière la muraille immense du brouillard," ("Le Cygne," II, 44).

[18]Turnell, Baudelaire, p. 226.

[19]William Ellery Sedgwick, Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind (New York, 1962), p. 86.

no solid ground beneath his feet, only the deck of the Pequod where he walks unsteadily "on life and death"[20] and feels himself suspended perpetually over the abyss. For Ahab "the pure emptiness behind the mask"--the "naught beyond"--is symbolically the Void: As he tells Starbuck:

> 'All visible objects man, are but as pasteboard masks ... If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond!'
> (pp. 161-62)

Moby-Dick presents a blank, wall-like appearance to his assailants. The sickle-jawed whale is faceless: "The front of the Sperm Whale's head," says Melville, "is a dead, blind wall, without a single organ or tender prominence of any sort whatsoever" (p. 335). He is reputed to be "not only ubiquitous, but immortal" (p. 179), and "indomitable" (p. 348); and he is inexplicable. In the cetological chapters, Melville attempts "the classification of the constituents of a chaos" (p. 129), of a sperm whale like Moby-Dick, and we learn that the "grand hooded phantom" (p. 6) is as unfathomable and immeasurable as the great Void he symbolizes. Ahab would strike through "the wall" into the great illimitable Void--"the naught beyond."

For the "young Platonist" (i.e., the "Childe Harold" who "not unfrequently perches upon the mast-head of some luckless disappointed whale-ship," and who loses his identity in "an opium-like listlessness of vacant unconscious reverie" induced "by the blending cadence of waves

20"While his one live leg made lively echoes along the deck, every stroke of his dead limb sounded like a coffin-tap. On life and death this old man walked" (Moby-Dick, p. 231).

with thought," the mast-head of the ship, e.g., of the Pequod becomes symbolically the narrow plank suspended over the Void. As Melville cautions:

> But while this sleep, this dream is on ye, move your foot or hand an inch; slip your hold at all; and your identity comes back in horror. Over Descartian vortices you hover. And perhaps, at mid-day in the fairest weather, with one half-throttled shriek you drop through that transparent air into the summer sea, no more to rise for ever. Heed it well, ye Pantheists!
> (Moby-Dick, pp. 156-57)[21]

Byron's Cain feared the long "drop through that transparent air" at the beginning of his journey through outer space: "I tread on air, and sink not; yet I fear / To sink," he tells Lucifer (Cain II,i,1). But with Lucifer as his guide, Cain travels through the abyss of space--the great Void above--and sees "the immortal, the unbounded, the omnipotent / The overpowering mysteries of space-- / The innumerable worlds that were and are--" (III,i,178-80). On the journey Lucifer demoralizes Cain by successively flattering his intellectual pride with knowledge unattained by ordinary men, and by deflating his ego in making him feel little and insignificant (feel as nothing) in relation to the infinity of space and time:

> Lucifer. Didst thou not require
> Knowledge? And have I not, in what I showed,
> Taught thee to know thyself?

[21]See Charles Feidelson, Jr., Symbolism and American Literature (Chicago, 1953), p. 29: "As your foot slips on the masthead," says Feidelson, "external things become alien, the empty spaces between man and nature spread to infinity, 'and your identity comes back in horror.' To submerge in the sea is to drown; the self and the world are two, not one ... the ocean is annihilative once we dive into it."

Cain. Alas! I seem nothing.
Lucifer. And this should be the human sum of
knowledge, to know mortal nature's nothingness.
(II,ii,624-26)

Add the "nothingness" of man's "mortal nature" to the Nothingness of the voided, meaningless universe, and the sum derived will be zero which equals the sum of the Void which is also zero.[22] Like Hemingway's café waiter, Cain learns, on his journey, that "it was all a nothing and a man was nothing too"[23]--all is zero and Nothingness in the external Void.

Cain travels through the Void of outer space, Ahab and Ishmael journey across the "unsounded ocean" (Moby-Dick, p. 254); Childe Harold wanders around the world by land and sea on his pilgrimage, and the poet-hero of The Flowers of Evil journeys around the modern city. The journey or voyage motif is immensely popular with nineteenth century writers, with Chateaubriand, Coleridge, Byron, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Melville and others. Turnell points out, for example, that "Baudelaire's poetry is filled with voyages and plans for voyages. There are voyages round the world, voyages to fabulous islands, voyages round Paris, and even the 'voyage' of a bored monk pacing ceaselessly round and round his narrow cell."[24] Melville's literary voyages include Typee, Omoo, Mardi,

[22]Cf. Gleckner, Ruins Of Paradise, p. 58: At the conclusion to Childe Harold's "Good Night" (I,xiii,1-10), there is nothing left, according to Gleckner, but a voided "world with no love, no home, no land, no God, a wasteland of ocean, deserts, caves, comparable to that of Coleridge's Mariner"--what is left is Nothingness or zero.

[23]Hemingway, "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," p. 383.

[24]Turnell, Baudelaire, p. 88. Baudelaire went on a voyage in 1841 to the Cape of Good Hope and the Mauritius Island. Memories of this

Redburn, White Jacket, Moby-Dick, The Confidence Man (on the Mississippi), and Billy Budd.[25] Pierre records the self-exile of the hero from the country and a journey to the city (New York City). Israel Potter describes the wanderings of Israel by land and sea in his fifty years of exile, and Clarel, Melville's long, philosophical, narrative poem, depicts a pilgrimage in the Holy Land.[26] Byron's travels in Portugal, Spain, Greece, and the Near East, and his exile in Belgium, Switzerland, and Italy, are recorded in Childe Harold, Don Juan, and other works. Byron, indeed, becomes a wanderer like his "second self," Childe Harold,--"a man," says Gleckner, "who like all men, walks in darkness across arid wastes, chasing time, or who is flung crazily on ocean's tide."[27] "Still must I on;" says Byron, "for I am a weed, / Flung from the rock on Ocean's foam to sail / Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail" (Childe Harold III,ii).

Like Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville themselves, their personae or "second selves" journey across oceans or seas, over desert or wilderness around the modern cities, down into caves, up the sides of mountains, through ancient cities and civilizations, and even into the

voyage can be found in a number of his poems. For the list of poems inspired by his voyage, see M.A. Ruff, Baudelaire, pp. 15-16. Baudelaire also lived in Belgium in 1864-66 in "voluntary exile." See Ruff, p. 161.

[25]For his literary voyages, Melville, of course, drew upon his own experiences as an ordinary seaman on the merchantman St. Lawrence to Liverpool (at eighteen), as a seaman on three whalers: the Acushnet, the Lucy Ann, and the Charles and Henry; and finally as a sailor on the U.S.S. United States. See Davis and Gilman, Letters, p. 3.

[26]Melville made a pilgrimage in the Holy Lands in 1856-57.

[27]Gleckner, Ruins Of Paradise, p. 248.

primitive Island civilizations in the tropics, e.g. Typee. As we shall see, on each voyage or journey, they are graphically charting the features of the nineteenth century wasteland: the external Void. In this chapter, therefore, I will concentrate primarily upon these "features" rather than upon an account of the actual voyages and journeys as recorded in the poetry and prose of these exiled or alienated Romantics.

The ocean, for instance, is an "immeasurable liquid space" (Cain, II.ii.382), which covers "two-thirds" of our physical world (Moby-Dick, p. 422), and in the immensity of its unfathomable depths, and in its timelessness, it is analogous to the unfathomableness and timelessness of infinite space; of the external universe.[28] Insignificant man may be swallowed up in the great abyss or gulf of water as in the great abyss of space.[29] For as Melville reminds us that:

> We know the sea to be an everlasting terra incognita. So that Columbus sailed over numberless unknown worlds to discover his one superficial western one ... [and] but a moment's consideration

[28]Cf. Charles Baudelaire, Intimate Journals, trans. by Christopher Isherwood, Intro. by W.H. Auden (Hollywood, Calif., 1947), p. 90 (LXXVIII): "The sea presents at once the idea of immensity and of movement. An infinite in little. What matter, if it suffices to suggest the idea of all infinity?" See also Charles Baudelaire, Juvénilia Oeuvres Posthumes Reliquiae ed. Jacques Crépet et Claude Pichois (Paris, 1952), II, 108,xxx: "la mer offre à la fois l'idée de l'immensité et du mouvement. Six ou sept lieues représentent pour l'homme le rayon de l'infini. Voilà un infini diminutif. Qu'importe s'il suffit à suggérer l'idée de l'infini total?" All quotations in French from the Intimate Journals, in the footnotes, are from this edition.

[29]Cf. Pascal, Pensées, p. 234 (#348): "By space the universe encompasses and swallows me up like an atom ..." ("par l'espace, l'univers me comprend et m'engloutit comme un point ..."), Oeuvres, XIII, 263 (#348).

> will teach, that however baby man may brag
> of his science and skill, and however much,
> in a flattering future, that science and
> skill may augment; yet for ever and for ever,
> to the crack of doom, the sea will insult
> and murder him, and pulverize the state-
> liest frigate he can make ... (Moby-Dick, p. 273)

It is small wonder then that man may recognize and intensely feel his own Nothingness and his finitude "in the middle of such a heartless immensity,"[30] and that "the great shroud of the sea" (Moby-Dick, p. 566), should become a meaningful symbol for the Nothingness in the external physical world--a symbol for the external Void.

In the nineteenth century there are, according to W. H. Auden, two "distinctive new notes" in the attitude of the Romantics: (1) "To leave the land and the city is the desire of every man of sensibility and honor," and (2) "The sea is the real situation and the voyage is the true condition of man."[31] Ishmael-Melville sounds this new note in his following contemplation in Moby-Dick:

> Well, well my dear comrade and twin-brother,
> thought I, as I drew in and then slacked off
> the rope to every swell of the sea--what
> matters it, after all? Are you not the

[30]"Now in calm weather," says Melville, to swim in the open ocean is as easy to the practised swimmer as to ride a spring-carriage ashore. But the awful lonesomeness is intolerable. The intense concentration of self in the middle of such a heartless immensity, my God! who can tell it" (Moby-Dick, p. 412)? Pip in confrontation with this "heartless immensity" becomes mad: "The sea had jeeringly kept his finite body up, but drowned the infinite of his soul. Not drowned entirely, though" (p. 413).

[31]W.H. Auden, The Enchafèd Flood: or The Romantic Iconography of the Sea (New York, 1950), p. 13. I am greatly indebted to Auden in my discussion of the symbolism of the sea and desert.

> precious image of each and all of us men in this whaling world? That unsounded ocean you gasp in, is Life; those sharks, your foes; those spades, your friends; and what between sharks and spades you are in a sad pickle and peril, poor lad. (p. 320)

The circumnavigating cruise of the microcosmic Pequod signifies the exploration of "this whaling world,"[32] and especially of this vast, "unsounded," sharkish, "masterless ocean which overruns the globe" (Moby-Dick, p. 274). For Melville, says D. H. Lawrence, the sea "was both outside and inside: the universal experience."[33] For the Persians, the sea was holy, and the Greeks gave it a separate deity. "Surely all this is not without meaning," says Ishmael-Melville:

> And still deeper [is] the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all. (p. 3)[34]

Turnell describes The Flowers of Evil as"the autobiography of the modern man, peering at his reflection ... in the sea and trying to

[32]Auden, Flood, p. 122.

[33]Lawrence, Studies, p. 141.

[34]See Kazin, "Introduction," p. ix: "So man, watching the sea heaving around him," says Kazin, "sees it as a mad steed that has lost its rider, and looking at his own image in the water, is tortured by the thought that man himself may be an accident, of no more importance in this vast oceanic emptiness than one of Ahab's rare tears dropped into the Pacific."

decide what manner of man he is."[35] In Baudelaire's poem, "Man and The Sea," the sea is metaphorically the mirror of man's psyche:

> Always, unfettered man, you will cherish the sea!
> The sea your mirror, you look into your mind
> In its eternal billows surging without end,
> And as its gulfs are bitter, so must your spirit be.[36]

The ocean for Byron, too, is a "glorious mirror," and "the image of Eternity the throne / of the Invisible ..." (Childe Harold IV,clxxxiii),[37] but it also serves, as in "Darkness," as an image of the abyss. In this

[35]Turnell, Baudelaire, p. 101.

[36]"Homme libre, toujours tu chériras la mer! / La mer est ton miroir; tu contemples ton âme / Dans le déroulement infini de sa lame, / Et ton esprit n'est pas un gouffre moins amer,"("L'Homme et la Mer," XIV, 1-4). See also "Music" (LXXXII): "On the enormous sea / Rock me, and level calms come silvering sea and air, / A glass for my despair." ("Sur l'immense gouffre / me bercent. D'autres fois,calme plat, grand miroir / De mon désespoir!"), "La Musique," LXIX,12-14.

The ambiguity of Baudelaire's feelings about the sea is noted by Turnell: "The sea is a symbol of liberation in his poetry, but it is also a symbol of ceaseless, exhausting movement which brings no rest and no relief" (p. 90), and "the sea, though so often a symbol of liberation is the greatest barrier between the exile and home" (p. 183). The simultaneous attraction and repulsion of the sea for Baudelaire is perhaps best expressed in "Artist's Confiteor" in Paris Spleen: "What bliss to plunge the eyes into the immensity of sky and sea! Solitude, silence, incomparable chastity of the blue!" and: "And now the profound depth of the sky dismays me; its purity irritates me. The insensibility of the sea, the immutability of the whole spectacle revolt me ... " Charles Baudelaire, Paris Spleen, trans. Louise Varèse (New York, 1947), p. 3. ("Grand délice que celui de noyer son regard dans l'Immensité du ciel et de la mer! Solitude, silence, incomparable chasteté de l'azur!" et: "Et maintenant la profondeur du ciel me consterne; sa limpidité m'exaspère. L'insensibilité de la mer, l'immutabilité du spectacle, me révoltent ..."), Charles Baudelaire, Petits Poëmes en prose (Le Spleen de Paris), ed. Jacques Crépet (Paris, 1926), pp. 7-8. All quotations from Paris Spleen, in the text, and from Petits Poëmes en prose, in the footnotes, are from these editions.

[37]Cf. Don Juan,X,iv: "But at least I have shunn'd the common shore / And leaving land far out of sight, would skim / The ocean of eternity..."

poem sailorless ships "slept on the abyss without a surge-- / The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave" (11.77-78).[38] In Childe Harold, also, the ocean becomes symbolic of the Void. Robert F. Gleckner contends that, in this poem, Byron has equated "the sterility of a wasteland, streaked with the traces of dried-up tears, with the ocean upon which his poet is tossed crazily, like a drifting weed torn from its rocky home," and "thus the conventional image of ocean as the source of life is transformed into ocean as an endless sterile desert."[39]

Although water is conventionally a symbol of life, salt water is "a symbol of sterility," says J. E. Cirlot, in that it has the power "to destroy the higher forms of land-life." The ocean "denotes an ambivalent situation. As the begetter of monsters, it is the abysmal abode par excellence..."[40] And W. H. Auden concludes that:

> The sea, in fact, is that state of barbaric vagueness and disorder out of which civilization has emerged and into which, unless saved by the effort of gods and men, it is always liable to relapse. It is so little of a friendly symbol that the first thing which the author of the Book of Revelation notices in his vision of the new heaven and earth at the end of time is that 'there was no more sea.'[41]

The desert is likewise symbolic of sterility, and it is, "in a way,"

[38]See also Childe Harold, IV,lxix-lxx.

[39]Gleckner, Ruins Of Paradise, p. 232. He notes in a footnote to this passage that Bostetter also "sees the equatability of the images of ocean and desert."

[40]Cirlot, Symbols, p. 230.

[41]Auden, Flood, pp. 7-8.

says Cirlot, "a negative landscape"[42]--a fitting symbol for the Nothingness of the Void. Auden qualified the desert as "the place where the water of life is lacking, the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel's vision. It may be so by nature," he says, "i.e., the wilderness which lies outside the fertile place or city. As such, it is the place where nobody desires to be. Either one is compelled by others to go there because one is a criminal or a scapegoat[e.g., Cain, Ishmael] , or one chooses to withdraw from the city in order to be alone"[43] (e.g., Childe Harold, Manfred).

The Romantic sea and desert are symbolically similar, says Auden, in that: (1) "both are the wilderness, i.e.,the place where there is no community, just or unjust, and no historical change for better or for worse;" (2) "therefore the individual in either is free from both the evils and the responsibilities of communal life;" (3) "but precisely because they are free places, they are also lonely places of alienation..."[44] On the one hand, "as places of freedom and solitude the sea and the desert are symbolically the same," but on the other hand, they are opposite in many respects. The desert is "the Omega of temporal existence," says Auden. It is the desiccated place where life has terminated. Its most obvious characteristics are its immobility and surface exposure. In contrast, the sea "is the Alpha of existence, the symbol of potentiality." Its characteristics are perpetual mobility and

[42]Cirlot, Symbols, p. 76.

[43]Auden, Flood, p. 14.

[44]Ibid., pp. 16-18.

the teeming unexposed life beneath the surface, "which, however, dreadful," says Auden, "is greater than the visible." In the final analysis, then, the sea "is the symbol of primitive potential power as contrasted with the desert of actualised triviality, of living barbarism versus lifeless decadence."[45]

The desert-like Encantadas, as Melville describes them, are exemplars of "lifeless decadence," as one may discern from the following abbreviated but still lengthy passage:

> Take five-and-twenty heaps of cinders dumped here and there in an outside city lot; imagine some of them magnified into mountains, and the vacant lot the sea; and you will have a fit idea of the general aspect of the Encantadas, or Enchanted Isles. A group rather of extinct volcanoes than of isles; looking much as the world at large might, after a penal conflagration.
>
> It is to be doubted whether any spot of earth can, in desolateness, furnish a parallel to this group. Abandoned cemeteries of long ago, old cities by piecemeal tumbling to their ruin.
>
> ... But the special curse, as one may call it, of the Encantadas, that which exalts them in desolation above Idumea and the Pole, is that to them change never comes; neither the change of seasons nor of sorrows... The showers refresh the deserts; but in these isles, rain never falls. Like split Syrian gourds left withering in the sun, they are cracked by an everlasting drought beneath a torrid sky, 'Have mercy on me,' the wailing spirit of the Encantadas seems to cry, 'and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.'
>
> Another feature in these isles is their emphatic uninhabitableness... the Encantadas refuse to harbor even the outcasts of the beasts. Man and wolf alike disown them. Little but reptile life is here found... No voice, no low, no howl is heard; the chief sound of life here is a

[45] Auden, Flood, pp. 19-20

hiss.

> On most of the isles where vegetation is found at all, it is more ungrateful than the blankness of Atacama. Tangled thickets of wiry bushes, without fruit and without a name, springing up among deep fissures of calcinated rock, and treacherously masking them; or a parched growth of distorted cactus trees.
> ... In no world but a fallen one could such lands exist.[46]

Only in a sterile, voided, God-forsaken wasteland "could such lands exist." One would be hard pressed to find a more graphic depiction of Nothingness in the external world in the nineteenth century, or in the twentieth century for that matter, as that of the Encantadas.

The desert serves as a metaphor for the twentieth century wasteland as well. In Eliot's poem, the wasteland is a place of death-in-life, and of complete sterility: a dry parched land: "A heap of broken images where the sun beats, / And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief, / And the dry stone no sound of water..."[47] Although the desert is a vast parched, and barren waste of sand, or a vast sterile Void, the isolated or self-exiled Romantics often preferred the Nothingness of the desert to the Nothingness of the city. "Oh that the desert were my dwelling-place / ... That I might all forget the human race," exclaims the poet of Childe Harold (IV,clxxvii), and in his "Good Night" (I,xiii), he says:

[46] Herman Melville, "Sketch First: The Isles At Large," The Encantadas Or Enchanted Isles in Selected Writings of Herman Melville (New York, 1952), pp. 49-51.

[47] Eliot, The Waste Land, I,22-24.

'With thee, my bark, I'll swiftly go
Athwart the foaming brine;
Nor care what land thou bear'st me to,
So not again to mine.
Welcome, welcome, ye dark blue waves!
And when you fail my sight,
Welcome, ye deserts, and ye caves!
My native land -- Good Night!'

In the desert, as on the sea, one can isolate oneself from the dull, vulgar "herd" dwelling in the modern industrialized city.[48]

Urban society, like the desert, is "a place without limits," says Auden, because "the city walls of tradition, mythos and cultus have crumbled."[49] The sprawling, overpopulated, industrialized city of the nineteenth century--Byron's London, Baudelaire's Paris, and Melville's New York City--have become "the mechanized desert,"[50] or wasteland.[51] "The old Paris is gone," says Baudelaire ("The Swan"), and in The Flowers of Evil (and Paris Spleen) he journeys "Through Paris's immense ant-swarming Babel" ("The Little Old Women"),[52] through modern

[48]See, for example, Childe Harold III,xii, and especially Manfred III,i,121-34.

[49]Auden, Flood, p. 37. See also Miller, Disappearance, p. 5: "The city is the literal representation of the progressive humanization of the world. And where is there room for God in the city? ... Life in the city is the way in which many men have experienced most directly what it means to live without God in the world."

[50]See Auden, p. 29.

[51]See Paul Ginestier, The Poet And The Machine, trans., by Martin B. Friedman (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1961), p. 49: "The creation of the city has engendered a void," because "of the value which disappears," and "the feeling of a loss which may be irremediable."

[52]"Le vieux Paris n'est plus..." ("Le Cygne," I,7), and"Traversant de Paris le fourmillant tableau,"("Les Petites Vieilles," I,26).
Cf. Davis and Gilman Letters, p. 132: In a letter to Hawthorne (June 29, 1851), Melville expresses his disgust "with the heat and dust of the babylonish brick-kiln of New York."

Paris.[53] The poet leaves his garret, goes down into the streets and records his panoramic impressions of the atmosphere, landscape, and inhabitants: e.g., a beggar girl, seven old wretches, the blind, and strange, feeble, old women. According to Turnell, Baudelaire observes after sunset, "the sinister procession of beggars, murderers, drunkards, prostitutes, and rag-pickers slinking through the twilight."[54]

He walks alone through the city taking the backstreets ("The Seven Old Men"), following crooked old freaks in obedience to his whim ("The Little Old Women"), and observing "The jumbled vomit of enormous Paris" in an old neighborhood:

> In the muddy maze of some old neighborhood
> Often, where the street lamp gleams like blood,
> As the wind whips the flame, rattles the glass,
> Where human beings ferment in a stormy mass.
> ("The Ragpicker's Wine")[55]

"Finding his way into palaces, poor-houses, and hospitals,"[56] says Turnell,

[53]Turnell suggests that the eighteen poems in "Parisian Scenes," ("Tableaux Parisiens") record a twenty-four hour circular tour of Paris. See Turnell, Baudelaire, p. 176.

[54]Ibid.

[55]"Vomissement confus de l'énorme Paris," and "Souvent, à la clarté rouge d'un réverbère / Dont le vent bat la flamme et tourmente le verre, / Au coeur d'un vieux faubourg, labyrinthe fangeux / Où l'humanité grouille en ferments orageux," ("Le Vin des chiffonniers," 11.16,1-4). This poem is in the section "Wine" ("Le Vin") of The Flowers Of Evil.

[56]Turnell, p. 176. See also the "Epilogue" to Paris Spleen: "Happy of heart I climbed the hill / To contemplate the town in its enormity, Brothel and hospital, prison, purgatory, hell," ("Le coeur content, je suis monté sur la montagne / D'où l'on peut contempler la ville en son ampleur, / Hôpital, Lupanars, purgatoire, enfer, bagne,"), "Epilogue," Petits Poëmes en prose, 11.1-3.

Baudelaire transforms "what he sees into something unique. For he has succeeded better than any other poet in conveying the atmosphere of the great city."[57]

Baudelaire's Paris is his "Unreal City";[58] his microcosm of the wasteland world. There is a striking similarity between T.S. Eliot's London as depicted in The Waste Land, and in Baudelaire's Paris, especially as portrayed in "Parisian Scenes," The significance of his Paris (as with Eliot's London) is its universality,[59] for it is not just Paris, but the modern world and the modern city which Baudelaire portrays. Like Eliot's London, Baudelaire's Paris is a dry, dusty, sterile Void. This aspect is succinctly conveyed in the following stanzas from "The Swan":

> And bathing his wings in the shifting city dust,
> His heart full of some cool, remembered lake,
> Said, 'Water, when will you rain? Where is your thunder?'
> I can see him now, straining his twitching neck
>
> Skyward again and again, like the man in Ovid,
> Toward an ironic heaven as blank as slate,
> And trapped in a ruinous myth, he lifts his head
> As if God were the object of his hate.[60]

[57] Turnell, Baudelaire, p. 176.

[58] The Waste Land, I,60.

[59] See Turnell, pp. 89-90.

[60] "Baignait nerveusement ses ailes dans la poudre, / Et disait, le coeur plein de son beau lac natal: / 'Eau, quand donc pleuvras-tu? quand tonneras-tu, foudre?' / Je vois ce malheureux, mythe étrange et fatal,
Vers le ciel quelquefois, comme l'homme d'Ovide, / Vers le ciel ironique et cruellement bleu, / Sur son cou convulsif tendant sa tête avide, / Comme s'il addressait des reproches à Dieu!" (Le Cygne,"I,21-28).
Turnell notes that Joseph D. Bennett "suggests that there is a parallel between these verses and the fifth section of The Waste Land," See Turnell, p. 181.

Probably the most striking thing in all the poems of "Parisian Scenes" is the absence of reciprocity between individuals. "It is a world of stagnation and confusion," says Turnell, "a world of 'memories', 'dreams', 'shadows', and 'ghosts'."[61] The inhabitants of Baudelaire's Paris "are completely rootless." They stumble and stagger blindly through the mud, the fog, and the confusion of his dehumanized "ant-like" urban metropolis.[62] The people of this "unreal City" are emotionally starved and spiritually stunted beings clinging desperately to illusions and dreams of beauty. Yet Baudelaire's Parisian takes this sterile kind of existence and squeezes it like an old orange:

> Like an exhausted rake who mouths and chews
> The martyrized breast of an old withered whore
> We steal, in passing, whatever joys we can,
> Squeezing the driest orange all the more.[63]

His Parisian is, in a sense, a prefiguration of Eliot's J. Alfred Prufrock who has "measured out [his] life with coffee spoons."[64]

The mechanization and dehumanization of Baudelaire's wasteland world is poignantly expressed in "The Little Old Women":

[61]Turnell, Baudelaire, p. 193.

[62]Ibid.

[63]"Ainsi qu'un débauché pauvre qui baise et mange / Le sein martyrisé d'une antique catin, / Nous volons au passage un plaisir clandestin / Que nous pressons bien fort comme une vieille orange" ("Au Lecteur," 11.17-20). Although Baudelaire is concerned with man in general, in "To The Reader" ("Au Lecteur"), I think that his observation can apply equally well to the Parisian.

[64]T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," 1.51.

They crawl; a vicious wind their carrion rides;
From the deep roar of traffic see them cower,
Pressing like precious relics to their sides
Some satchel stitched with mottoes or a flower.

They trot like marionettes along the level,
Or drag themselves like wounded deer, poor crones!
Or, dance, against their will, as if the devil
Were swinging in the belfry of their bones.[65]

Society has reduced these alienated old women (these superannuated "Eves") to inhuman, mindless "marionettes" or mechanized robots moving like somnambulists through the "Unreal City."[66] Yet, "who but the Devil pulls our waking-strings!" exclaims Baudelaire in "To The Reader": "Abominations lure us to their side; / Each day we take another step to hell, / Descending through the stench, unhorrified."[67] Baudelaire sees

[65]"Ils rampent, flagellés par les bises iniques, / Frémissant au fracas roulant des omnibus. / Et serrant sur leur flanc, ainsi que des reliques, / Un petit sac brodé de fleurs ou de rébus;
Ils trottent, tout pareils à des marionnettes; / Se traînent, comme font les animaux blessés, / Ou dansent, sans vouloir danser, pauvres sonnettes / Où se prend un Démon sans pitié! Tout cassés," ("Les Petites vieilles," I, 9-16).

[66]Cf. Turnell, Baudelaire, p. 191. In Moby-Dick, Melville describes "the mechanism of the universe," and portrays the men of the Pequod as machines. For an excellent discussion of this subject see Chase, Melville, p. 53.
It is also interesting to note that Ahab posing as a Prometheus would order a robot-like man instead of a human being. As he tells the carpenter: "Hold; while Prometheus is about it, I'll order a complete man after a desirable pattern. Imprintis, fifty feet high in his socks; then, chest modelled after the Thames Tunnel; then legs with roots to 'em, to stay in one place; then, arms three feet through the wrist; no heart at all, brass forehead, and about a quarter of an acre of fine brains; and let me see--shall I order eyes to see outwards? No, but put a sky-light on top of his head to illuminate inwards. There, take the order, and away." (Moby-Dick, p. 360).

[67]"C'est le Diable qui tient les fils qui nous remuent! / Aux objets répugnants nous trouvons des appas; / Chaque jour vers l'Enfer nous descendons d'un pas, / Sans horreur, à travers des ténèbres qui puent," ("Au Lecteur," 11.13-16).

life as full of remorse, sin, weak repentance, folly, and error. The Devil holds the thread of life and each day we descend one more step into Hell, not with horror, but proceeding unafraid toward the darkness which stinks. Baudelaire seems to suggest to his reader that all men are puppets who descend each day another step closer to the Great Void.

The descent into a cave, cavern, or pit is yet another step toward the Void. As a yawning abyss in the subterranean regions of the earth, or inside a mountain or hill, the cave is a significant symbol for the Void. The cave becomes a metaphor for the grave in Baudelaire's poem "The Remorse Of The Dead":

> O shadowy Beauty mine, when thou shalt sleep
> In the deep heart of a black marble tomb;
> When thou for mansion and for bower shalt keep
> Only one rainy cave of hollow gloom;[68]

Bernard Blackstone points out that Byron, also, employs the cave symbolically in such poems as The Island and in the Haidée episode in Don Juan. "The cave is indeed focal in The Island," Blackstone maintains, and "'Womb' and 'refuge' meanings run together, for the poem's theme is precisely that of an escape to the womb."[69] The desire to return to the

[68] "Lorsque tu dormiras, ma belle ténébreuse, / Au fond d'un monument construit en marbre noir, / Et lorsque tu n'auras pour alcôve et manoir / Qu'un caveau pluvieux et qu'une fosse creuse;" ("Remords posthume," ll.1-4).

[69] Bernard Blackstone, "Guilt and Retribution in Byron's Sea Poems," Byron: A Collection Of Critical Essays, ed. Paul West, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963), p. 34.

womb, or a "Uterine Flight,"[70] represents the desire to escape from the Nothingness of the world or a complete withdrawal from reality or life; the desire for annihilation or non-being.

The subterranean cave and the mountain-top may be charted as the nadir and the zenith, respectively, in the topography of the earth. From the dark, hot, suffocating atmosphere of Nothing at the nadir, one can climb to the heights of the mountain peak and the light, cold "rarified atmosphere of Nothing."[71] Like Napoleon:

> He who ascends to mountain-tops, shall find
> The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow;
> He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
> Must look down on the hate of those below.
> Though high above the sun of glory glow,
> And far beneath the earth and ocean spread,
> Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
> Contending tempests on his naked head,
> And thus reward the toils which to those summits led.
> (Childe Harold III,xlv)

On the precipice or summit of a mountain-top, man is poised between the Void "above" and the Void "beneath." The Void surrounds him ("Round him") without, and lies in wait within (inside the mountain).

Manfred stands alone upon the cliffs of the Jungfrau watching an eagle soar into the heavens. Spiritually and intellectually, he aspires

[70] Nathanael West describes Homer Simpson's "Uterine Flight," in The Day Of The Locust, as a complete withdrawal from life, "What a perfect escape the return to the womb was. Everything perfect in that hotel. No wonder the memory of those accomodations lingered in the blood and nerves of everyone. It was dark, yes, but what a warm, rich darkness. The grave wasn't in it. No wonder one fought so desperately against being evicted when the nine months' lease was up." Nathanael West, The Day Of The Locust (New York, 1957), pp. 124-25.

[71] See Adams, Nil, p. 28. I have used Adam's phrase "rarified atmosphere of Nothing" to express my own idea.

to soar like the eagle toward sun glory, but man is "Half dust, half deity, alike unfit / To sink or soar..." (Manfred I.ii.301-2). "There is something ever egotistical in mountain-tops and towers, and all other grand and lofty things," says Ahab as he observes "the white whale's talisman," the doubloon (p. 428). The mountain-top and the tower (e.g., ivory tower) are places of complete isolation and alienation, like the desert, and the snow of the mountain is as sterile as the sand of the desert. In Pierre even the hillside pastures, in the Edenic Saddle Meadows, "were thickly sown with a small white amaranthine flower ... The terraced pastures grow glittering white, and in warm June still show like banks of snow:--fit token of the sterileness the amaranth begets" (p. 403)! "There can be no hearts above the snow-line," says Ahab (p. 514), for there is little if any human warmth at this frigid, sterile altitude.

Manfred climbs to the cold, sterile altitude of the Jungfrau to meditate on his condition. "Spirits, spells, and superhuman aid have failed to obliterate the past," says Andrew Rutherford, "and though all around him he sees the beauty of nature, it provides no cure--unless the opportunity for suicide."[72] Nature provides no lasting cure or panacea for Byron, Baudelaire, or Melville. In this, they are unlike other Romantics such as Wordsworth and the "Lakers." In the "Dedication" to Don Juan, Byron expresses the wish that this "nest of tuneful persons" would change their "lakes for ocean" (I and V). The country which is

[72] Andrew Rutherford, Byron: A Critical Study (Stanford, Calif., 1961), p. 82.

the last refuge, of the nature-worshipers, from the nineteenth century wasteland, ultimately holds little charm or appeal for the three Void-haunted Romantics. Byron's attitude toward nature is ambivalent, for as E. J. Lovell notes, "Byron was drawn to nature and repulsed by it at different periods in his life."[73] Lovell places Byron's "early 'romantic' non-Wordsworthian treatment of nature ... squarely within the picturesque tradition," while his "later concept of a nature indifferent or hostile to man [is] often found in the plays."[74] and in Don Juan as well, particularly in the shipwreck episode in Canto Two. Don Juan's harrowing adventures on the hostile sea are somewhat Melvillean in tone. Nature for Melville is both blind and indifferent to the plight of man, and hostile and cannibalistic: "Oh, horrible vultureism of earth! from which not the mightiest whale is free," he exclaims, and "Consider, once more, the universal cannibalism of the sea; all whose creatures prey upon each other, carrying on eternal war since the world began" (Moby-Dick, pp. 307,274). There can be little doubt that Baudelaire had similar feelings about nature when one reads the following animadversion in one of his essays:

> Nature teaches us nothing, or practically nothing. I admit that she compels men to sleep, to eat, to think, and to arm himself as well as he may against the inclemencies of the weather: but it is she too who incites man to murder his brother, to eat him, to lock him up and to torture him; for no sooner do we take leave of the domain of needs and necessi-

[73] Lovell, Byron, p. 21.

[74] Ibid., p. 23.

> ties to enter that of pleasure and luxury than we see that Nature can counsel nothing but crime. It is this infallible Mother Nature who has created patricide and cannibalism, and a thousand other abominations that both shame and modesty prevent us from naming.[75]

Nature, then, for these Romantics, is no antidote for the soul yearning for an escape from the omnipresent Nothingness in the external world.[76] There is no avenue of escape in the physical world or in modern civilization, nor in the ancient civilizations of the past (e.g., Rome) or in the primitive civilizations of the present (e.g., Typee).

Byron and Childe Harold, like René, search "among the graveyards" of civilization, and meditate on the ancient ruins and monuments of

[75]Charles Baudelaire, "In Praise of Cosmetics," The Painter of Modern Life And Other Essays, ed. and trans. by Jonathan Mayne (Greenwich, Conn., 1964), pp. 31-32.

"la nature m'enseigne rien, ou presque rien, c'est-à-dire qu'elle contraint l'homme à dormir, à boire, à manger, et à se garantir, tant bien que mal, contre les hostilités de l'atmosphere. C'est elle aussi qui pousse l'homme à tuer son semblable, à le manger, à le séquestrer, à le torturer; car, sitôt que nous sortons de l'ordre des nécessités et des besoins pour entrer dans celui du luxe et des plaisirs, nous voyons que la nature ne peut conseiller que le crime. C'est cette infaillible nature qui a créé le parricide et l'antropophagie, et mille autres abominations que la pudeur et la délicatesse nous empêchent de nommer," Charles Baudelaire, "Éloge du Maquillage," Le Peintre de la vie moderne, XI, in L'Art romantique, ed. M. Jacques Crépet (Paris, 1925), p. 96.

See also Turnell, Baudelaire, p. 196: "We know that Baudelaire detested nature--wild, untamed nature--and that one of his aims was to banish what he calls contemptuously 'le végétal irrégulier'..."

[76]Lovell, Byron, p. 128: Lovell maintains that the character of Childe Harold, for example, "is in no way essentially changed by the many beauties of nature he has contemplated on his travels. He returns the same melancholy, misanthropic, lonely, and guilt-laden pilgrim who originally embarked, without having found in any way the balm and cure for his soul which he sought."

the past:[77] "To meditate amongst decay, and stand / A ruin amidst ruins; there to track / Fall'n states and buried greatness" (Childe Harold, IV,xxv); but "Chaos of ruins! who shall trace the void" (IV,lxxx):

> The ocean hath his chart, the stars their map,
> And Knowledge spreads them on her ample lap;
> But Rome is as the desert where we steer
> Stumbling o'er recollections ... (IV,lxxi)

In viewing Rome, the "marble wilderness" (IV,lxxix), the poet can only conclude that "A World is at our feet as fragile as our clay" (IV,lxxviii), or as fragile and empty as Ahab's "pasteboard masks" beyond which there is only 'haught" and Nothingness.

Melville-Tomo also wished to escape from the Nothingness inherent in the modern civilized world which he hated by returning to the Edenic Paradise of the past. "So he finds himself in the middle of the Pacific" says D. H. Lawrence. "Truly over a horizon. In another world. In another epoch. Back, far back, in the days of palm trees and lizards and stone implements. The sunny Stone Age"--Paradise.

> But Paradise, He insists on it. Paradise. He could even go stark naked, as before the Apple episode. And his Fayaway, a laughing little Eve, naked with him, and hankering after no apple of knowledge, so long as he would just love her

[77]See Francois-René de Chateaubriand, Atala & René, trans. by Walter J. Cobb (New York, 1961), p. 99: "I set out alone on the tempestuous ocean of the world," says René, "whose ports and reefs I knew not. First I visited the people who exist no more; I went and sat among the ruins of Rome and Greece: countries of strong and productive memory, where palaces are buried in the dust and the tombs of kings are hidden under the brambles. O strength of nature, and weakness of men! A blade of grass can pierce the hardest marble of these tombs, while all the dead, so powerful, shall never raise their weight!"

> when he felt like it. Plenty to eat, needing no clothes to wear, sunny, happy people, sweet water to swim in: everything a man can want. Then why wasn't he happy along with the savages?
>
> Because he wasn't.
>
> ... Well it's hard to make a man happy.
>
> But I should not have been happy either. One's soul seems under a vacuum, in the South Seas.[78]

One's soul is in the Void, in the South Seas. "If you prostitute your psyche by returning to the savages," says Lawrence, "you gradually go to pieces..."[79] Melville's psyche had been informed by Western thought and knowledge, so it is not surprising that as an introspective, reflective being, he grew increasingly restive and bored with the mindless, unratiocinative, animalistic pursuit of happiness in Typee; with a life which is, according to William Ellery Sedgwick, the antithesis of "intellectual reflection," and "the anxieties of moral and spiritual self-consciousness."[80]

There was "plenty moee-moee (sleep)--plenty ki-ki (eat)--and plenty whihenee (young girls)" in Typee,[81] but civilized man cannot "live by bread-fruit alone," says Newton Arvin,[82] or by sex, and he cannot endure a life of endless "moee-moee" or sleep. Typee is a sub-human

[78] Lawrence, Studies, pp. 134-36.

[79] Ibid., p. 138.

[80] Sedgwick, Melville, p. 27.

[81] Herman Melville, Typee, in Selected Writings of Herman Melville (New York, 1952), p. 762.

[82] Newton Arvin, Herman Melville, The American Men of Letters Series (New York, 1950), p. 58.

culture where almost everyone is a well-adjusted conformist, and life is a round of "soma" (Arva)[83] holidays or luxurious naps, and a series of sensual gratifications and hedonistic pleasures. Melville-Tomo cannot live in the stifling vacuum of this mindless, soulless Utopia, and he escapes. He flees the prehistoric Void and returns to the modern civilized Void.

"When you have run a long way from Home and Mother," writes Lawrence, "then you realize that the earth is round, and if you keep on running you'll be back on the same old doorstep,--like a fatality."[84] Melville, Byron, and Baudelaire, all found that one cannot run away from the Nothingness of the external Void even if one runs "a long way from Home and Mother." And, as Lawrence says, "the earth is round" and unless you die away from home like Byron, "you'll be back on the same old doorstep" in America or Paris--back in the same old Void after your journey or voyage.

As previously mentioned, the journey or voyage for the nineteenth century Romantics is away from the land and especially the wasteland of the city. "To leave the land and the city," says Auden, "is the desire of every man of sensibility and honor."[85] Baudelaire journeys

[83]The "Arva" root which exerts a narcotic influence and "produces a luxurious sleep" is "very generally dispensed over the South Seas" (Typee, p. 670), as "soma," the drug of forgetfulness, is dispersed in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World. Huxley's utopia of the future is similar, in fact, in many respects to Melville's utopia of the past; Typee.

[84]Lawrence, Studies, p. 141.

[85]See p. 43 of this thesis.

into and around the mechanized city, but away from it through imaginative or dream trips to strange, exotic places. Melville journeys away from the city and into the tropics. Byron journeys away from the modern city, and into the ancient cities and civilizations in ruins, and to places of alienation and solitude: the desert or wilderness, the mountain-top, and the ocean. In each and almost every case, it is a journey or voyage "into nothingness and despair;"[86] a journey into the nineteenth century wasteland.

For Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville, there is no escape from the omnipresent Nothingness in the external world--the Nothingness which permeates space, ocean, desert, city, cave, mountain-top, ancient ruins, and primitive paradises. Wherever they "run" or travel, they cannot find a refuge or escape from the external Void nor from the internal, as we shall discover as we "follow the endless, winding way, --the flowing river in the cave of man" (Pierre, p. 126), or descend the spiral staircase in a black shaft, in an exploration of the internal Void, or the Nothingness in the heart or center of man himself.

[86]Gleckner concludes, for instance, that Childe Harold, and particularly Canto IV, "cannot be considered as anything less than an extraordinary imaginative journey into nothingness and despair and a remarkable feat of mental strength and endurance in the teeth of that stormy and sterile landscape." See Gleckner, Ruins Of Paradise, p. 297. See also P. 230 and p. 237.

CHAPTER IV

DOWN THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE: THE DESCENT INTO THE INTERNAL VOID

The surface features of the external physical world may be charted with varying degrees of accuracy, but the hidden features or the depths, such as that of the ocean and the interior of the earth, remain largely unsounded in the nineteenth century.[1] Furthermore, the hidden features of the internal world, or psyche of man, remain even more unfathomable than those of the ocean or the subterranean regions of the external world.

In their poetry and prose, Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville descend into the abysses of the human psyche, both their own and of man in general, and discover that the internal Void is both incomprehensible and infinite. "Man," says Baudelaire, "No one has mapped your chasm's hidden floor,"[2] for as Melville suggests:

[1]Although the floor of the ocean has now been mapped, in the twentieth century, the ocean is still a relatively unexplored element, and the underground regions of the earth and the interior of mountains, for instance, are still largely unplumbed.

[2]In "Man And The Sea," Baudelaire compares the unfathomable chasms of man's psyche with those of the sea:

> In your own ways, you both are brooding and discreet:
> Man, no one has mapped your chasm's hidden floor,
> Oh, sea, no one knows your inmost riches, for
> Your jealousy hides secrets none can repeat.

"Vous êtes tous les deux ténébreux et discrets: / Homme nul n'a sondé le fond de tes abîmes; / O mer, nul ne connaît tes richesses intimes, / Tant vous êtes jaloux de garder vos secrets!" ("L'Homme et la mer," XIV.11.9-12).

> Deep, deep, and still deep and deeper must we go, if we would find out the heart of a man; descending into which is as descending a spiral stair in a shaft, without any end, and where that endlessness is only concealed by the spiralness of the stair, and the blackness of the shaft. (Pierre, p. 340)[3]

Melville's Pierre and Moby-Dick suggest, according to Milton R. Stern, that "man's soul is more frighteningly vacant and vast than the physical universe."[4] This distinction is important, I think, because it saliently points up the fact that the internal Void exceeds the external Void in both vastness and vacuity. For Melville's most graphic delineation of the infinite breadth and the unplumbed depths of man's psyche, a rather long quotation must be introduced:

[3]A comparison of quotations, i.e., the passage quoted in the text from Melville's Pierre, and the following quotation from Baudelaire's "The Irremediable" will illustrate, I think, a similitude in their depiction of the concept of infinite unfathomable depths, and a striking similarity in imagery, although the former describes a descent into the soul, and the latter, a soul's descent:

> A lost and lampless soul descending,
> Within a gulf whose foetid scent
> Betrays its damp and deep extent,
> A railless staircase never ending.

"un damné descendant sans lampe, / Au bord d'un gouffre dont l'odeur / Trahit l'humide profondeur, / D'éternels escaliers sans rampe." ("L'Irremédiable," LXXXIV.17-20).

See also Baudelaire's "On Delacroix's Picture of Tasso In Prison":

> The poet, sick and with his chest half bare
> Tramples a manuscript in his dark stall,
> Gazing with terror at the yawning stair
> Down which his spirit finally must fall.

"Le poëte au cachot, débraillé, maladif. / Roulant un manuscrit sous son pied convulsif, / Mesure d'un regard que la terreur enflamme / L'escalier de vertige où s'abîme son âme," ("Sur le Tasse en prison d'Eugène Delacroix," CLIII.1-4).

> But as to the resolute traveler in Switzerland, the Alps do never in one wide and comprehensive sweep, instantaneously reveal their full awfulness of amplitude -- their overawing extent of peak crowded on peak, and spur sloping on spur, and chain jammed behind the chain, and all their wonderful battalionings of might; so hath heaven wisely ordained that on first entering into the Switzerland of his soul, man shall not at once perceive its tremendous immensity; lest illy prepared for such an encounter, his spirit shall sink and perish in the lowermost snows. Only by judicious degrees, appointed of God, does man come at last to gain his Mont Blanc and take an overtopping view of these Alps; and even then, the tithe is not shown; and far over the invisible Atlantic, the Rocky Mountains and the Andes are yet unbeheld. Appalling is the soul of man! Better might one be pushed off into the material spaces beyond the uttermost orbit of our sun, than once feel himself fairly afloat in himself! (Pierre, pp. 334-35)

In "the Switzerland" of some souls "there is a Catskill eagle," says Melville, "that can alike dive down into the blackest gorges, and soar out of them again and become invisible in the sunny spaces. And even if he for ever flies within the gorge, that gorge is in the mountains; so that even in his lowest swoop the mountain eagle is still higher than other birds upon the plain even though they soar" (Moby-Dick, p. 423). Howard P. Vincent states that "only Catskill eagles like Shakespeare and Melville" dive "down into these blackest gorges of life ... to explore the depths of tragic horror, then soar to the heights of human -- individual and social -- experience, recorded for us in ambiguous symbol."[4]

Melville, indeed, probes into the "blackest gorges" and into the bottomless abysses of the internal Void in both Pierre and Moby-Dick.

[4]Vincent, Trying-Out, p. 336.

In Pierre, says James Miller, Jr., Melville "made uncharted journeys into the human psyche, and the discoveries still startle."[5] The psychologist, Henry Murray, feels that Melville "deserves to be commemorated as the literary discoverer of ... the Darkest Africa of the mind, the mythological unconscious." "This claim," he says, "could not easily be supported without Pierre."[6] Indeed, "the center of Melville is Pierre," says E. L. Grant Watson, and "if one would understand him, one must understand this book above all others."[7] Unfortunately no one really understands the full import of this difficult book. This would probably not surprise Melville, who once wrote Hawthorne: "Why, ever since Adam, who has got to the meaning of this great allegory--the world? Then we pygmies must be content to have our paper allegories but ill comprehended."[8] Perhaps if "we pygmies" could fully comprehand the allegory of Melville's greatest failure, Pierre, we could better under-

[5]James E. Miller, Jr., Quests Surd And Absurd: Essays in American Literature (Chicago, 1967), p. 163.

See Murray, "Introduction," p. xciii. Murray concludes that Pierre "is compounded of incongruities and inconsistencies that is shocking to a nicely regulated intellect. Most readers instinctively protect their health from it by judicious revulsions or by unconsciously holding their minds back from the comprehension of its most devastating matter."

[6]Murray, p. xxvi. As the author of Pierre, Melville is further accounted "a forerunner of Henry James, Proust, and the whole school of psychological novelists," p. xcvi.

Geoffrey Stone points out that Pierre "has been accounted a forerunner of Freudian psychology, or at least an anticipatory demonstration of its dogmas," and it has been cited as one more proof that Melville was far in advance of his age. See Geoffrey Stone, Melville (New York, 1949), pp. 188-89.

[7]E.L. Grant Watson, "Melville's Pierre," NEQ III (1930), p. 233.

[8]Davis and Gilman, Letters, pp. 141-42.

stand its author both as a man and as a writer, for Pierre is Melville's "second self." Ishmael, according to Vincent, is also Melville's surrogate self. "Ishmael is Everyman," he declares, "Ishmael is Melville; Ishmael is any man, anywhere, confronted with the flux of circumstance and with the chaos of his own being."[9]

Perhaps the most awesome account of a man's confrontation with "the chaos of his own being" is that experienced by Ahab who often feels himself on the verge of the great internal Void which threatens to engulf him:

> Often, when forced from his hammock by exhausting and intolerably vivid dreams of the night, which, resuming his own intense thoughts through the day, carried them on amid a clashing of phrensies, and whirled them round and round in his blazing brain, till the very throbbing of his life-spot became insufferable anguish; and when, as was sometimes the case, these spiritual throes in him heaved his being up from its base, and a chasm seemed opening in him, from which forked flames and lightnings shot up, and accursed fiends beckoned him to leap down among them; and when this hell in himself yawned beneath him, a wild cry would be heard through the ship; and with glaring eyes Ahab would burst from his state room, as though escaping from a bed that was on fire. (p. 199)[10]

Ahab's brain is a "burnt-out crater" (p. 533), and Pierre gazes "upon the charred landscape within him" (p. 101). The "vernal landscape" of both men has been seared in their confrontation with the arid Nothingness of life. "Oh grassy glades!" says Melville, "oh, ever vernal land-

[9]Vincent, Trying-Out, p. 56.

[10]See James E. Miller,Jr., A Reader's Guide To Herman Melville (New York, 1962), p. 75: "Ahab's 'flaw,'" says Miller, "is finally a chasm in his soul that all the waters of the ocean cannot fill."

scapes in the soul; in ye, -- though long parched by the dead drought of the earthly life ..." (Moby-Dick, p. 486).[11]

There are "two different worlds," says Melville, "that within, and that without," (Pierre, p. 160). In surveying the landscape of the world within--the psyche--or in plumbing the depths of what Murray calls "man's sinister and tragic shadow self, the repressed side of his nature,"[12] Melville and Byron utilize descriptive topographical or geographical metaphors, as in Byron's comment in Don Juan:

> If some Columbus of the moral seas
> Would show mankind their soul's antipodes.
>
> What 'antres vast and deserts idle' then
> Would be discover'd in the human soul!
> What icebergs in the hearts of mighty men,
> With self-love in the center as their pole! (XIV.ci-cii)

Melville, a "Columbus of the moral seas" in the internal Tropics, reveals to "mankind" that there is "one insular Tahiti" in a milieu of Nothingness:

> Consider them both, the sea and the land; and do you not find a strange analogy to something in yourself? For as this appalling ocean surrounds the verdant land, so in the soul of man there lies one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy, but encompassed by the horrors of the half known life. God keep thee! Push not off from that isle, thou canst never return! (Moby-Dick, pp. 274-75)

Ahab and Ishmael, like nearly all of the personae of Melville, Byron,

[11] Cf. Manfred II.i.72-73: "... and then I look within --." Manfred tells the Chamois Hunter, "It matters not -- my soul was scorch'd already!"; and Childe Harold IV.cxxxv: "Have I not had my brain sear'd, my heart riven, / hopes sapp'd, name blighted, Life's life lied away?"

[12] Murray, "Introduction," p. xxviii.

and Baudelaire, have pushed off from this isle. They have launched out into the "appalling ocean" or great internal Void, lured ever onward by the "Spirit Spout" (Moby-Dick, pp. 230-31), "to some unknown goal" ("The Seven Old Men").[13]

Baudelaire, another "Columbus of the moral seas," has discovered many of the vast caves and idle deserts "in the human soul," and has portrayed them for the discerning reader in The Flowers Of Evil, Paris Spleen, and the Intimate Journals. Baudelaire is perceptively aware of the absolute Nothingness--the Void--in the moral world, or internal self. As he admits in his Intimate Journals: "In the moral as in the physical world, I have been conscious always of an abyss, not only the abyss of sleep, but the abyss of action, of day-dreaming, of recollection, of desire, of regret, of remorse, of the beautiful, of number ... etc." (p. 106).[14]

Baudelaire reveals his own troubled consciousness and personality in his poetry and prose, for he is acutely aware of the abysses in the soul of man. He probes into the innermost corners and crevices of the tortured soul revealing the yawning gulf within, as in "Lesbians (Delphine and Hippolyta)" the child answers: "... I am torn apart, / I feel my inmost being rent, as though / A gulf had yawned -- the gulf

[13]"Marchaient du meme pas vers un but inconnu" ("Les Sept vieillards," XC.32).

[14]"Au moral comme au physique, j'ai toujours eu la sensation du gouffre, non seulement du gouffre du sommeil, mais du gouffre de l'action, du rêve, du souvenir, du désir, du regret, du remords, du beau, du nomber, etc."(["Notes figurant dans le recueil manuscrit de Mon Coeur mis à nu et qui doivent être rendues à Fusées"] Fuseés, XVI, Oeuvres Posthumes, II.78).

that is my heart.'" In "The Cracked Bell," the poet-hero reveals the fissure within his own soul: "For me," he laments, "my soul is cracked."[15] Moreover, he often describes the psyche in funereal images: "My soul's a tomb which, wicked cenobite, / I wander in for all eternity; / Nothing embellishes these odious walls;" ("The Wicked Monk");

> And hearses, without drum or instrument,
> File slowly through my soul; crushed, sorrowful,
> Weeps Hope, and Grief, fierce and omnipotent,
> Plants his black banner on my drooping skull.
> ("Spleen," LXXXI)

In "Spleen" (LXXIX), he confesses that his brain is "like a tomb, a corpse-filled Potter's Field, / A pyramid where the dead lie down by scores."[16]

In the descent into the psyche in Pierre, Melville mines "into the pyramid" itself in search of the "sarcophagus":

> But far as any geologist has yet gone down into the world [he declares], it is found to consist of nothing but superinduced superficies. By vast pains we mine into the pyramid; by horrible gropings we come to the central room; with joy we espy the sarcophagus; but we lift the lid -- and no body is

[15] "... Je sens s'elargir dans mon être / Un abîme béant; cet abîme est mon coeur!" ("Femmes damnées [Delphine et Hippolyte]," CXXXI.75-76).
"Moi, mon âme est fêlée ..." ("La Cloche fêlée," LXXIV.9).

[16] " -- Mon âme est un tombeau que, mauvais cénobite, / Depuis l'éternité je parcours et j'habite; / Rien n'embellit les murs de ce cloître odieux." ("Le Mauvais moine," IX.9-11).
" -- Et de longs corbillards, sans tambours ni musique, / Défilent lentement dans mon âme; l'Espoir, / Vaincu, pleure, et l'Angoisse atroce, despotique, / Sur mon crâne incliné plante son drapeau noir," ("Spleen," LXXVIII.17-20).
"... que mon triste cerveau. / C'est une pyramide, un immense caveau, / Qui contient plus de morts que la fosse commune," ("Spleen," LXXVI.5-7).

there! -- appallingly vacant as vast is the soul of
a man! (P.335)

When we come to the central room--the soul's sepulcher--we are confronted with the appalling and terrifying chaos and Nothingness in the center of our being. Such an exploration of the psyche could lead only to nihilism, and Byron, in "To Inez," warns against exposing the psyche to such scrutiny: "...[Do not] venture to unmask / Man's heart and view the Hell that's there" (Childe Harold I.LXXXIV.).

"Modern man's heart [is] his own sepulcher," says Gleckner,[17] and indeed it proves to be so for Manfred who says:

There is a power upon me which withholds,
And makes it my fatality to live;
If it be life to wear within myself
This barreness of spirit, and to be
My own soul's sepulcher, for I have ceased
To justify my deeds unto myself --
The last infirmity of evil. (Manfred i.ii.284-90);

and likewise for Childe Harold who has grown insensible to both joy and sorrow:

He, who grown aged in this world of woe,
In deeds, not years, piercing the depths of life,
So that no wonder waits him; nor below
Can love, or sorrow, fame, ambition, strife,
Cut to his heart again with the keen knife
Of silent, sharp endurance: he can tell
Why thought seeks refuge in lone caves, yet rife
With airy images, and shapes which dwell
Still unimpair'd though old, in the soul's haunted cell.
(Childe Harold III.v.)

Childe Harold, "the wandering outlaw of his own dark mind" (III.iii),

[17]Gleckner, Ruins Of Paradise, p. 63.

"is in a sense modern man," says Gleckner, "cast out of his Eden ... doomed to wander the universe, between two eternities, as it were, not seeking the good of fulfillment usually inherent in the romantic quest but rather the nothingness that is the relief from the world"[18]--the Nothingness that is the relief from the meaninglessness of life. As Byron writes:

> Self-exiled Harold wanders froth again,
> With nought of hope, but with less of gloom;[and with]
> The very knowledge that he lived in vain,
> That all was over on this side the tomb, (III.xvi)

In the "Addition To The Preface" of the first and second cantos of Childe Harold, Byron informs his reader that Harold was intended "to show that early perversion of mind and morals leads to satiety of past pleasures and disappointment in new ones, and that even the beauties of nature and the stimulus of travel (except ambition, the most powerful of all excitements) are lost on a soul so constituted, or rather misdirected," (p. 2). Childe Harold (and Byron himself, for that matter) "had buried long his hopes, no more to rise: / Pleasure's pall'd victim! life-abhorring gloom / Wrote on his faded brow curst Cain's unresting doom" (I.lxxxiii); and "With pleasure drugg'd, he almost long'd for woe, / And e'en for change of scene would seek the shades below" (i.vi).[19] In a world emptied of God and a life emptied of

[18]Gleckner, Ruins Of Paradise, p. 43.

[19]Cf. "My springs of life were poisoned" (Childe Harold III.vii), "The thorns which I have reap'd are of the tree / I planted, -- they have torn me -- and I bleed" (Iv.x); and "I have outlived myself by many a day" ("Epistle To Augusta," 1.107).

meaning,[20] Byron and his hero, like the poet-hero of The Flowers Of Evil, would "almost" prefer "Deep pain to death and Hell to nothingness" ("The Gaming Table").[21]

Life in the nineteenth century wasteland, as in the twentieth century, has become a kind of sterile dead end; a "rat's alley."[22] Even "high life," as Byron notes"

> ... is oft a dreary void,
> A rack of pleasures, where we must invent
> A something wherewithal to be annoy'd.
> Bards may sing what they please about Content:
> Contented, when translated, means but cloy'd;
> (Don Juan XIV.xviii);

and consequently, "There's little left but to be bored or bore" (XIV.xviii). Thus, "For me," he confesses, "I sometimes think that life is death, / Rather than life a mere affair of breath" (IX.xvi). Life in the wasteland is a hell on earth, and the hell in the wasteland is the smothering sense of boredom; the ennui of the living dead. It is the contention of William Barrett, that "Romantic melancholy was no mere matter of languour or the vapors; nor was it an outbreak of personal neurosis, impotence, or sickness among a few individuals; rather it was a revelation to modern man of the human condition into which he

[20] Cf. Kazin, "Introduction," p. x: "Behind Ahab's cry ['Who's to doom when the judge is dragged to the bar.'] is the fear that man's covenant with God has been broken, that there is no purpose to our existence."

[21] "... préférerait en somme / La douleur à la mort et l'enfer au néant!"("Le Jeu," XCVI.23-24).

[22] As Eliot writes in The Waste Land II.115: "I think we are in rat's alley."

had fallen, a condition that is nothing less than the estrangement from being itself."[23]

The stories of such Romantic heroes as Ahab, Ishmael, Cain, Manfred, and Childe Harold illustrate typical Romantic themes, delineated by Peter L. Thorslev, Jr., as "eternal remorse, wanderlust, ennui, and Weltschmerz"[24] (called mal du siècle by the French). That even Byron in his adolescence "dramatized himself in these terms," says Edward Bostetter, "is evident from the poem 'Childish Recollestions'":

> Weary of love, of life, devour'd with spleen,
> I rest, a perfect Timon, not nineteen;
> World! I renounce thee! All my hope's o'ercast!
> One sigh I give thee, but that sigh's the last.[25]

"One of Byron's most powerfully compelling moods," says Northrop Frye, is "boredom, the sense of the inner emptiness of life," and this mood "has haunted literature ever since, from the ennui of Baudelaire to the Angst, and nausée of our own day."[26]

Baudelaire "is often presented to us, says Morris Bishop, "as the spokesman for modern man, caught in the machine of civilization,

[23]Barrett, Irrational Man, pp. 132-33. See also p.93 of this chapter.

[24]Thorslev, Byronic Hero, p. 123. See also Bostetter, "Introduction," p. xi: Bostetter lists "the chief characteristics of the Byronic Hero" as "melancholy, and ennui; misanthropy, defiant pride, and remorse."

[25]Bostetter, p. xi.

[26]Northrop Frye, "George Gordon, Lord Byron," Major British Writers, II (New York, 1959), p. 158.

deprived of faith, tortured by spiritual apathy or ennui."[27] Baudelaire enters into life and relates himself to his environment of the urban age. He sees man as a victim to this "spiritual apathy": boredom, ennui, or "spleen." Baudelaire views ennui as an insatiable "fastidious monster" who would "willingly make rubble of the earth / And swallow up creation in a yawn." He perceives this boredom and deadness of spirit as the malady of modern man; as his own malady and as that of his " -- Hypocrite reader, you -- my double! my brother" ("To The Reader").[28]

This "spiritual apathy" or "spleen" eats away at the soul of man until it becomes insensible and insensitive: "I am a graveyard that the moon abhors," the poet writes in "Spleen" LXXIX); "My spirit is like a tower whose crumbling walls / The tireless battering-ram brings to the ground," he declares in "Song of Autumn"; and in "Heauton-timoroumenos," he confesses: "I am my own heart's vampire -- / One of the vast abandoned host."[29] In Moby-Dick, Ahab's scar, "a slen-

[27]Morris Bishop, ed., A Survey Of French Literature Volume Two: The Nineteenth And Twentieth Centuries, rev. ed. (New York, Chicago, 1965), p. 209.

[28]"... ce monstre délicat"; "Il ferait volontiers de la terre un débris / Et dans un bâillement avalerait le monde"; -- Hypocrite lecteur, -- mon semblable, -- mon frère!" ("Au Lecteur," 11,39,35-36, 40). T.S. Eliot employs this line in The Waste Land. Cf. I.76: "You! hypocrite lecteur! -- mon semblable, -- mon frère!"
See Wallace Fowlie, Clowns and Angels: Studies In Modern French Literature (New York, 1943), p. 99: Fowlie points out that Baudelaire names his malady as "spleen." "This spleen was a spiritual debauchery," says Fowlie, "graver than carnal sin. It was the tragic element in Baudelaire's drama because it seemed to grow stronger as he became more conscious of it."

[29]"-- Je suis un cimetière abhorré de la lune," ("Spleen," LXXVI.8);

der rod-like mark," reputedly running "from crown to sole" (p. 121) is "the visible symbol of his soul sundered in his encounter with the universe," says James Miller, Jr.[30] But for Baudelaire, the scar is internal and the invisible symbol of his soul sundered in his encounter with "spleen" and with the Void in self.

"Time and nature [also] sluice away our lives, / A virus eats the heart out of our sides, / digs in and multiplies on our lost blood." ("The Ruined Garden")[31] Turnell points out that for Baudelaire destruction is seldom violent. Rather it is "Stealthy, undermining and rotting away the very fibers of being until we suddenly find ourselves gazing into an abyss."[32] In Moby-Dick, alienated men battle against the hostile, indifferent forces in the external world and are destroyed by them (excluding Ishmael), but Baudelaire sees man's own soul as the

"Mon esprit est pareil à la tour qui succombe / Sous les coups du bélier infatigable et lourd." ("Chant d'automne," LVI.11-12); "Je suis de mon coeur le vampire, / -- Un de ces grands abandonnés" ("L'Héautontimorouménos," LXXXIII.25-26).

Cf. Pierre, p. 111: "Pierre went forth all redolent; but alas! his body only the embalming cerements of his buried dead within."

[30]Miller, Reader's Guide, p. 92.

[31]" -- O douleur! ô douleur! Le Temps mange la vie, / Et l'obscur Ennemi qui nous ronge le coeur / Du sang que nous perdons croît et se fortifie!" ("L'Ennemi," X.12-14).

Cf. Manfred II.ii.258-60: "We are the fools of time and terror," says Manfred, "Days / Steal on us and steal from us; yet we live, / Loathing our life, and dreading still to die."

[32]Turnell, Baudelaire, p. 141. Cf. Childe Harold IV.cxxiv:

We wither from our youth, we gasp away --
Sick -- sick; unfound the boon -- unslaked the thirst,
Though to the last, in verge of our decay,
Some phantom lures, such as we sought at first --
But all too late, -- so we are doubly curst.

battlefield where his allegiance is divided between two opposing forces, and in the long ensuing struggle he ultimately becomes his own destroyer.

Baudelaire believes that in every man at every moment there are two simultaneous attractions or "allegiances": one toward God, the other toward Satan. The "Invocation of God, or Spirituality," is the desire for ascent (the desire to ascend toward the ideal), and that of "Satan, or animality" is the joy in descent (the desire to descend toward bestiality).[33] In other words, he sees man as a homo duplex, a divided and fragmented being, drawn always in contrary directions toward both God and Satan like Siamese twins striving to go their opposite ways. Joseph M. Bernstein suggests that Baudelaire was himself a homo duplex, and the ambivalence of his feelings is indeed everywhere apparent in The Flowers Of Evil. "This mixture of love and hate," says Bernstein, in Baudelaire himself and in his poetry, "of attraction and repulsion; this antithesis of the sublime and mean, the radiant and banal; this intermingling and interpenetration of good and evil, heaven and hell, mark Baudelaire out as a homo duplex, striving to fuse these conflicting elements into a poetic synthesis. This ambivalence is one

[33]Baudelaire writes in his Intimate Journals that "there is in every man, always, two simultaneous allegiances, one to God, the other to Satan. Invocation of God, or Spirituality, is a desire to climb higher; that of Satan, or animality, is delight in descent," p. 73.

"Il y a dans tout homme, à toute heure, deux postulations simultanées, l'une vers Dieu, l'autre vers Satan. L'invocation à Dieu, ou spiritualité est un désir de monter en grade; celle de Satan, ou animalité, est une joie de descendre." (Mon Coeur mis à nu, XI, Oeuvres Posthumes, II, 93).

of the familiar hallmarks of the poet in our century."[34]

Man, the homo duplex, is an enigma in the realm of nature, for he is an incongruent combination of greatness and wretchedness, an incomprehensible mixture of spirit and "clay," and a mean in the world of nature between two infinitely distant extremities: nothing and everything.[35] "What a chimera, then, is man [says Pascal] ! What a novelty! What a chaos, what a contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, imbecile worm of the earth; depository of truth, a sink of uncertainty and error; the pride and refuse of the universe!"[36]

Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville are also acutely aware of the enigmatical nature of man, and of the human condition in the nineteenth century. "We are all somehow dreadfully cracked about the head," says Ishmael-Melville, "and sadly need mending" (Moby-Dick, p. 81); "Man -- all mankind, that is to say -- is so naturally depraved," says Baudelaire, "that he suffers less from universal degradation than from the

[34]Joseph M. Bernstein, ed., Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine: Selected Verse and Prose Poems (New York, 1947), p. xiii.
See Baudelaire, Intimate Journals, p. 98: "Even when quite a child I felt two conflicting sensations in my heart: the horror of life and the ecstasy of life."
"Tout enfant, j'ai senti dans mon coeur deux sentiments contradictoires, l'horreur de la vie et l'extase de la vie ..." (Mon Coeur mis à nu, XL, Oeuvres Posthumes, II, 116).

[35]See Pascal, Pensées, pp. 181-84 (#72), and Pascal, Oeuvres, XII, 70-92.

[36]Pascal, Pensées, p. 249 (#434): "Quelle chimère est-ce donc que l'homme? Quelle nouveauté, quel monstre, quel chaos, quel sujet de contradiction, quel prodige! Juge de toutes choses, imbécile ver de terre; dépositaire du vrai, cloaque d'incertitude et d'erreur; gloire et rebut de l'univers." (Pascal, Oeuvres, XIII, 346).

establishment of a reasonable hierarchy" (Intimate Journals, p. 55);[37] and "Man," writes Byron, "Thou pendulum betwixt a smile and tear," (Childe Harold IV.cix) -- "a strange animal," "a phenomenon, one knows not what," (Don Juan I.cxviii,cxxxiii). For like Manfred, man is "an awful chaos -- light and darkness -- / And mind and dust -- and passion and pure thoughts / Mix'd and often contending without end or order" (Manfred III.i.164-66).

Byron believed that man came from a spiritual source which is poured into this muddy "clay," the body. As he says in "Prometheus": "Like thee, man is in part divine, / A troubled stream from a pure source;" (11.47-48). There is, in other words, a dichotomy between spirit and "clay," resulting from the eighteenth century division of body and mind.[38] Consequently, in the nineteenth century there is an unbridgeable gulf between mind and body or spirit and "clay,"[39] and the poetry of the Romantics is permeated with the idea of the superiority of the spirit over the flesh. The conception that man's spiritual desires and aspirations are frustrated because of his physical limita-

[37]"L'homme, c'est-à-dire chacun, est si naturellement dépravé qu'il souffre moins de l'abaissement universel que de l'établissement d'une hiérarchie raisonnable." (Fusées, XV, Oeuvres Posthumes, II.74).

[38]See Auden, Flood, p. 59: Auden relates that "Cartesian metaphysics, Newtonian physics and eighteenth-century theories of perception divided the body from the mind ..."

[39]See Baudelaire, Intimate Journals, p. 97: "The more a man cultivates the arts the less he fornicates. A more and more apparent cleavage occurs between the spirit and the brute."
"Plus l'homme cultive les arts, moins il bande. Il se fait un divorce de plus en plus sensible entre l'esprit et la brute." (Mon Coeur mis à nu, XXXIX, Oeuvres Posthumes, II.115)

tions is a theme developed in Byron's poetry and drama. Manfred hated his body and wished to be pure spirit, but he was "dust" and "a child of clay." Shelley's Alastor seeks to transcend the mundane--to escape the world of everyday reality in search of the Platonic Spirit of Beauty, beyond the confines of the world. Melville's Pierre becomes a seeker after "absolute Truth" (p. 333). "But Pierre," says Melville, "though charged with the fire of all divineness, his containing thing was made of clay. Ah, muskets the gods have made to carry infinite combustions, and yet made them of clay" (p. 126). In Moby-Dick, Ishmael declares: "Methinks that what they call my shadow here on earth is my true substance ... Methinks my body is but the lees of my better being. In fact take my body who will, take it I say, it is not me" (p. 36); and of Childe Harold, Byron reveals that:

> Like the Chaldean he could watch the stars,
> Till he had peopled them with beings bright
> As their own beams; and earth, and earth-born jars,
> And human frailties, were forgotten quite.
> Could he have kept his spirit to that flight
> He had been happy; but this clay will sink
> Its spark immortal, envying it the light
> To which it mounts, as if to break the link
> That keeps us from yon heaven which woos us to its brink.
> (III.xiv)

Man is a peculiar mixture of the spiritual and the physical, and Byron was unable to reconcile the two. In this he was much like Baudelaire, of whom Marcel Ruff maintains: "No one was more conscious than he of the duality of human nature," and he "never ceased to be tortured by this conflict."[40] Byron was also incessantly tortured by this con-

[40]Ruff, Baudelaire, pp. 10-11.

flict, for it was undoubtedly his greatest obsession. He felt that

> ... There is a fire
> And motion of the soul which will not dwell
> In its own narrow being, but aspire
> Beyond the fitting medium of desire;
> And, but once kindled, quenchless evermore,
> Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire
> Of aught but rest; a fever at the core,
> Fatal to him who bears, to him who ever bore.
> (Childe Harold III.xlii.)

Byron felt that life was a hell for people who have spiritual desires or aspirations. This desire to burst out beyond the bonds ("the fitting medium of desire"), or to go beyond what one is capable of doing is "Fatal," and can lead to madness, despair, or anxiety[41]-- to a confrontation with Nothingness.

According to Adams, "Nothing" is characteristically "encountered either far out, after an immense enterprise of spiritual or physical effort, or else in an act of intimate introspection at the bottom of one's heart." It can be "cosmic or contemplative," but "rarely either one exclusively, more often both in resonant tandem."[42] The personae of Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville are spiritual aspirers and introspective by nature, and consequently they are often subject to an encounter with Nothingness. Furthermore, their penchant for introspection, their characteristic ennui, and their fatal pride has culminated in their alienation from the human race. For as the Romantic

[41]From lecture notes of Dr. A.W. Dixon's discussion of Childe Harold in English 344, The Later Romanticists.

[42]Adams, Nil, p. 217.

poets "considered themselves alienated, isolated from society because of their greater sensibilities," states Thorslev, "so also they alienated and isolated their heroes."[43] They are "Isolatoes," as Melville calls such men, "not acknowledging the common continent of men, but each Isolato living on a separate continent of his own" (Moby-Dick p. 118); the isolated continent of the inner world. Pierre, "in his deepest, highest part," for example, "was utterly without sympathy from any thing divine, human, brute or vegetable. One in a city of hundreds of thousands of human beings, Pierre was solitary as at the Pole" (p. 398). The crowded, impersonal city has engendered this distinctly modern feeling of alienation. Indeed, Pierre walks through "the greatest thoroughfare" of New York City in order to actually increase his sense of god-like isolation--so that "the utter isolation of his soul, might feel itself the more intensely from the incessant joggling of his body against the bodies of the hurrying thousands" (p. 400).[44] Bartleby's "dead-wall" reveries in a busy Wall Street office present one of the most poignant depictions of human isolation in literature. Bartleby "seemed alone," his employer comments, "absolutely alone in the universe. A bit of wreck in the mid-Atlantic."[45]

Conversely, Baudelaire's poet-hero seeks his solitude in the isolated privacy of a garret, away from the bustle of human activity:

[43]Thorslev, Byronic Hero, p. 18.

[44]Cf. Childe Harold II.xxvi.: "But 'midst the crowd, the hum, the shock of men / ... This is to be alone, this is solitude!"

[45]Herman Melville, "Bartleby," Selected Writings of Herman Melville (New York, 1952), pp. 24 and 29.

> At last [he exclaims] : I am alone! Nothing can be heard but the rumbling of a few belated and weary cabs. For a few hours at least silence will be ours, if not sleep. At last! the tyranny of the human face has disappeared, and now there will be no one but myself to make me suffer.
>
> At last! I am allowed to relax in a bath of darkness! First a double turn of the key in the lock. This turn of the key will, it seems to me, increase my solitude and strengthen me from the world.
>
> Horrible life! Horrible city!
>
> ("One O'Clock In The Morning," Paris Spleen, p. 15) 46.

The sea, like the city, is also a desolate place of isolation and solitude. On the sea, Ahab is ensconced in "the masoned, walled-town of a Captain's exclusiveness" (p. 534), and he "stands alone among the millions of the peopled earth, nor gods nor men his neighbors" (p. 545). For Childe Harold who soon "knew himself the most unfit / Of men to herd with Man, with whom he held / Little in common ..." (III.xii.), the sea, deserts, and mountains offer the isolation and solitude for which he eagerly yearns. Manfred too seeks exile from the common "herd" in an exalted isolation in elevated places, i.e., his Gothic tower and the summit of the Jungfrau. In Harold and Manfred, Byron has projected mirror-images, so to speak, of his own feelings of isolation and alienation experienced in his self-exile from his native land.

46"Enfin! seul! On n'entend plus que le roulement de quelques fiacres attardés et éreintés. Pendant quelques heures, nous posséderons le silence, sinon le repos. Enfin! la tyrannie de la face humaine a disparu, et je ne souffrirai plus que par moi-même.

Enfin! Il m'est donc permis de me délasser dans un bain de ténèbres! D'abord, un double tour à la serrure. Il me semble que ce tour de clef augmentera my solitude et fortifiera les barricades qui me séparent actuellement du monde.

Horrible vie! Horrible ville!"("À une Heure du matin," Petits Poëmes en prose, X.25).

Morse Peckham reports that "by the time Byron started growing up ... in the first decade of the new century, the collapse of the Christian and Enlightenment orientations had been felt by enough people and recorded by enough men of talent and genius to make it possible for him to grasp the implications of total negation, of total loss of value." Peckham believes that Childe Harold and Manfred are Byron's "greatest figures;" Harold "symbolizing alienation from nature and society," and Manfred, "the alienation from the self.

> Harold is the wanderer, Manfred the criminal, although both themes are present in each, for each is, metaphorically, an outlaw, self-outlawed.
>
> Henceforth the primary symbolic figure of the post-Enlightenment negation is the wanderer; whether he is called the Wandering Jew ... or Ishmael or Ahab, the rest of the century is full of Harold-descended wanderers. They survive even today in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man or Jack Kerouac's On the Road. The imagination of the last century and a half has found in Harold, through his inability to establish permanent relations, to stay anywhere, even to fall in love, an enduring symbol of the man no longer comfortable in the web of social circumstances, no longer able to play a socially structured role.[47]

As Peckham maintains in the important quotation above, the alienated wanderer is unable "to establish permanent relations, to stay anywhere, even to fall in love ..." Homeless, rootless, and friendless, the Childe Harold figure is incapable of love, and a lasting meaningful relationship with a woman. Pierre, for instance, is utterly incapable

[47]Peckham, Beyond The Tragic Vision, p. 102. "If man has to search for a conception of himself," says Peckham, "something has happened to the cultural tradition in which he is living; for normally our cultural tradition teaches us quite unconsciously how to conceive of ourselves, how to define our own limits," pp. 37-38.

of loving a real flesh-and-blood woman: His immaculate mother is a saint, Lucy is a "holy angel" (p. 45) and "the most celestial of all innocents" (p. 66), and Isabel is a "divine girl" (p. 181) and a "saint enshrined" (p. 139) in "some awful shrine" (p. 176). On his second visit to Isabel, Pierre, in a "warm god-like majesty of love and tenderness" vows that they will "love with the pure and perfect love of angel to angel" (p. 181).

Byron believes that "the noblest kind of love is love Platonical" (Don Juan IX.lxxvi.). "Platonical" love, in Plato's Symposium, is described as the ladder-like progress through ever ascending gradations from the physical idea of beauty up to the Supreme Spiritual Idea of Beauty itself. Byron wants to ascend to the spiritual ideal without leaving the physical behind, yet he feels that man cannot physically love the one, or the thing he spiritually loves. The spiritual ideal may appear in a physical form (as in Manfred), but it vanishes or is destroyed because it cannot exist on earth. Man inevitably kills or destroys the ideal by attempting to have a physical affair with it. His hope, however, is the illusion that the ideal can live on earth, but his hope will eventually turn "to dust":[48] "Oh love!" says Byron, "What is in this world of ours / Which makes it fatal to be loved" (Don Juan III.ii.)? Love is a necessity for Byron although he feels that it is temporal in nature--a momentary illusion which contains the seeds of its own destruction:[49]

[48]From lecture notes of Dr. A.W. Dixon's discussion of Manfred in English 344, The Later Romanticists.

[49]From Dr. A.W. Dixon's discussion of Byron's view of love in the

> Few -- none -- find what they love or could have
> loved
> Though accident, blind contact, and the strong
> Necessity of loving, have removed
> Antipathies -- but to recur, ere long,
> Envenom'd with irrevocable wrong;
> And Circumstance, that unspiritual god
> And miscreator, makes and helps along
> Our coming evils with a crutch-like rod,
> Whose touch turns Hope to dust, -- the dust we all
> have trod. (Childe Harold IV.cxxv.)

Baudelaire expresses similar sentiments in "The Confession":

> That if one build on hearts, ill shall befall it,
> That all things crack, and love and beauty flee,
> Until oblivion flings them in his wallet,
> Spoil of eternity.[50]

"Love in Byron," as Paul Elmer More suggests, "is commonly the beast that enslaves and degrades, or it is the instinctive attraction uncorrupted by the world"[51] (e.g., the love of Don Juan and Haidée before the entrance of outside encroachments in the guise of Lambro). Similarly again, with Baudelaire love "is commonly the beast that enslaves and degrades," devours and consumes. There are a number of poems in The Flowers Of Evil in which the poet seems to be devoured either by his cruel mistress or by his own passion, and at times the woman is metaphorically a skeleton or a vampire:

> When she had sucked the marrow from every bone,
> I turned to her as languid as a stone

Romanticism seminar, English 621.

[50]"Que bâtir sur les coeurs est une chose sotte; / Que tout craque, amour et beauté, / Jusqu'à ce que l'Oubli les jette dans sa hotte / Pour les rendre à l'Eternité!" ("Confession," XLV,33-36).

[51]More, "Introduction," p. xviii.

To give her one last kiss ... and saw her thus:
A slimy rotten wineskin, full of pus!
I shut my eyes, transfixed in a chill of fright,
And when I opened them to the living light ...
Beside me there, that powerful robot
That fed its fill out of my blood ... was not!
Instead, the cold ruins of a skeleton
Shivered, creaking like a weather vane
Or like a sign hung out on an iron arm
Swinging through long winter nights in the storm.
("The Metamorphoses Of A Vampire");

and "I have sought in love," he admits, "for an oblivious / Slumber -- it's only a bed of needles whence pours / My blood to be drunken by the cruel whores" ("The Fountain Of Blood")! Love itself "is seated on the skull / Of humanity," says the poet, spitting "its little spray of soul / Out and is not," and he concludes that the "stuff" which Love, the "blind murderer," scatters from his mouth "in the air like rain" is in reality "the matter / Of my blood and my brain" ("Love And The Skull: An old cul-de-lampe")![52]

[52]"Quand elle eut de mes os sucé toute la moelle, / Et que languissamment je me tournai vers elle / Pour lui rendre un baiser d'amour, je ne vis plus / Qu'une outre aux flancs gluants, toute pleine de pus! / Je fermai les deux yeux, dans ma froide épouvante, / Et quand je les rouvris à la clarté vivante, / A mes côtés, au lieu de mannequin puissant / Qui semblait avoir fait provision de sang, / Tremblaient confusément des débris de squelette, / Qui d'eux-mêmes rendaient le cri d'une girouette / Ou d'une enseigne, au bout d'une tringle de fer, / Que balance le vent pendant les nuits d'hiver." ("Les Métamorphoses du vampire," CXXXII, 17-28).

"J'ai cherché dans l'amour un sommeil oublieux; / Mais l'amour n'est pour moi qu'un matelas d'aiguilles / Fait pour donner à boire à ces cruelles filles!" ("La Fontaine de sang," CXIII, 12-14).

"L'amour est assis sur le crâne / De l'Humanité, ... Crève et crache son âme grêle / Comme un songe d'or ... Car ce qu ta bouche cruelle / Éparpille en l'air, / Monstre assassin, c'est ma cervelle, / Mon sang et ma chair!" ("L'Amour et le crâne: Vieux cul-de-lampe," CXVII.1-2, 11-12, 17-20).

Baudelaire writes, in the Intimate Journals, that "there is, in the act of love, a great resemblance to torture or to a surgical operation" (p. 46), and that "all Love is prostitution" (p. 84).[53] Indeed, love in the wasteland is impossible for there is only sex, animal lust, and erotic passion; only the bought love of the prostitute or mistress. In Baudelaire's "Unreal City" "Prostitution spreads its light and life in the streets: / Like an anthill opening its issues it penetrates / Mysteriously everywhere by its own occult route" ("Comes The Charming Evening").[54] Such love is sterile, meaningless, and at most only a momentary escape from ennui. "Indeed, so false is love in the modern world," says Gleckner, "that because of it youth is 'wasted -- minds degraded -- Honor lost.'"[55] The latter phrase from Byron sums up the outcome of Pierre's fatal passion for Isabel. His youth is "wasted," his mind is "degraded," and his "Honor" is "lost."

Pierre and Isabel believe that their love is pure and immaculate; that they will "both reach up alike to a glorious ideal" (p. 226), or a spiritualized Platonic love. While embracing Isabel, however, Pierre achieves in a moment of "terrible self-revelation," an intimation of the true nature of his soaring desire (p. 226). All along he has been

[53]"Il y a dans l'acte de l'amour une grande ressemblance avec la torture ou avec une opération chirurgicale," (Fusées, XI); "Aussi tout amour est-il prostitution." (Mon Coeur mis à nu, XXV, Oeuvres Posthumes, II,66,104).

[54]"La Prostitution s'allume dans les rues; / Comme une fourmilière elle ouvre ses issues; / Partout elle se fraye un occulte chemin," ("Le Crépuscule du soir," XCV,15-17).

[55]Gleckner, Ruins Of Paradise, p. 78.

motivated by a latent incestuous desire for his supposed half-sister.[56] In his erotic passion for Isabel, he has become "Narcissus," says Murray, "plunging to embrace his own image,"[57] although it is unlikely that Pierre realizes that his passion is a form of self-love. Pierre is like Alastor, Shelley's visionary young poet, who has spurned the physical love of a woman in his search for the ideal--a narcissistic mirror image of himself, with whom he passionately desires union. Narcissism and incest are egocentric in nature, and in this sense the desired mate is the sister, because she is most like oneself -- a mirror image or "a sister-soul."[58] As Manfred says of Astarte: "She was like me in lineaments ... She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings ..." (Manfred II.ii.199-203). The Romantics were fascinated by the topic of incest, Goethe, Byron, Chateaubriand, and Melville, for instance, dealt with it. And of course, Byron's incestuous love for his half-sister Augusta is too well-known to need introduction. She seems to be, in fact, the only person for whom Byron felt a genuine and lasting love. Bostetter states that "above all, Byron was the true narcissistic romantic, dreaming of the perfect woman who would complement his own ego. He portrayed her in the heroines of his tales and dreams," and "the search for her, combined with what Du Bos called the 'need of fatality,' led to the affair with ... Augusta."[59]

[56]The incest motif appears also when Pierre envisions himself as the mutilated Enceladas. See Pierre, pp. 402-09.

[57]Murray, "Introduction," p. lxxxiii.

[58]René, p. 113.

[59]Bostetter, "Introduction," pp. viii-ix.

Brother-sister incest, one of the most ancient taboos, "comes to stand in Romantic symbology," for rebellion, as Leslie Fiedler points out. Besides the desire to revolt it also projects, because of its Oedipal significance, the desire to die; that is to say, beneath the rebellious yearning lies the hidden wish to be punished for it.[60] The sister, the forbidden, the tabooed bride "becomes the indeterminate, the Impossible itself," says Fiedler, "and it becomes difficult to know whether the lover is pursuing his sister or the horizon."[61]

In Pierre's passion for his half-sister, he is pursuing "a zero" or Nothingness. His incestuous desire for Isabel ends in non-desire, and in the negation of his selfhood: "For Pierre is neuter now" (p. 425) -- that is, he becomes neutral," says Stern, "a zero like the thing he has pursued."[62] Ahab, too, becomes "neuter" in the sense that the loss of his leg is a symbolic castration. "That this is a castration symbol," says Auden, "is emphasized by the story of how shortly before the present voyage he was found insensible in the street 'by some unknown, and seemingly inexplicable, unimaginable casualty, his ivory limb

[60]Leslie A. Fiedler, Love And Death In The American Novel (New York, 1960), pp. 398-99.

[61]Ibid., p. 23.

[62]Stern, Fine Hammered Steel, p. 26. Cf. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, The Sorrows Of Young Werther And Selected Writings, trans. Catherine Hutter, ed. Herman J. Weigand (New York, 1962), p. 94. Werther approaches this stage -- the negation of self -- at times as when he writes: "I tremble between being and not-being, when the past shines like a flash of lightning above the dark abyss of the future and everything around me sinks down, and the world comes to an end? Is mine not the voice of a man cowering within himself, a man who has lost himself, hurtling inexorably downhill, who must cry out from the innermost depths of his vainly struggling forces, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me.'"

having been so violently displaced that it had stake-wise smitten, and all but pierced his groin.'"[63] To become "neuter" is symbolically a loss of selfhood or identity, and in Ahab's case, his selfhood has been lost through his monomania or madness.

Pierre begins to perceive the "burden" of his identity[64] when he hears Isabel's story, and subsequently believes that his god (i.e., his father) had clay feet.[65] After conceiving his "two grand resolutions--the public acknowledgment of Isabel [as his pretended wife], and the charitable withholding of her existence" (as his half-sister) from his mother, Pierre feels suffocated by "all the fiery floods in the Inferno ... The cheeks of his soul collapsed in him; he dashed himself in blind fury and swift madness against the wall, and fell dabbling in the vomit of his loathed identity" (p. 201).

In order to champion Isabel's cause, Pierre rejects his inheritance (the ancestral Saddle Meadows) and forsakes "his hereditary duty to his mother" and his pledge of "worldly faith and honour" to Lucy. He "resigns his noble birthright to a cunning kinsman for a mess of pottage, which [later] proved all but ashes in his mouth" (p.341).

[63] Auden, Flood, p. 138. See Moby-Dick, p. 460. Cf. Baudelaire's "A Voyage To Cythera." The hanged man has been emasculated by the vultures: "and crammed with hideous pleasures, peck by peck, his butchers had quite stripped him of his sex." He has become both "neuter" and annihilated through death.

"Et ses bourreaux, gorgés de hideuses délices, / L'avaient à coups de bec absolument châtré." ("Un Voyage à Cythère," CXVI.35-36).

[64] See Peckham, Beyond The Tragic Vision, p. 102.

[65] "Not to God had Pierre ever gone in his heart unless by ascending the steps of [his father's] shrine, and so making it the vestibule of his abstract religion." (Pierre, p.79).

After Pierre is "cast-out" of the Paradisiacal Saddle Meadows, he disowns his paternity, and his past: "Henceforth, cast-out Pierre hath no paternity, and no past; and since Future is one blank to all; therefore twice-disinherited Pierre stands untrammelledly his ever-present self!--free to do his own self-will and present fancy to whatever end" (pp. 233-34)! Following his "present fancy" Pierre leaves the country with Isabel and the servant girl Delly Ulver, in a self-exile to the "Unreal City" of New York. And following his "self-will" leads to his nihilistic negation: "That a nothing should torment a nothing," he ponders, "for I am a nothing. It is all a dream -- we dream that we dreamed we dream" (p. 322); and ultimately to his self-annihilation in a Wertherian suicide.[66]

"Before the Wertherian negation," says Peckham, "identity was maintained only in terms [of] a socially structured role." For "Harold and his brothers," however, "identity has become a burden. Yet--and this is a step forward from Werther--they do not commit suicide [except Pierre] ; they endure. Here is the enormous power of the Harold figure," Peckham suggests, for he has "the capacity to survive in the waste land. Werther could not."[67] Identity has indeed become a "burden" for "Harold and his brothers," because they have suffered an estrangement from Being itself,"[68] as the consequence of such factors as: (1) the absence of God in the world, and the absence of meaning in

[66] Pierre dies by self-inflicted poison, and Werther shoots himself.

[67] Peckham, Beyond The Tragic Vision, p. 102.

[68] See fn. 23 above in this chapter.

life; (2) their proclivity to the psychically debilitating malady of boredom, ennui, or "spleen"; (3) their acute recognition of the duality of man, and their inability to reconcile the split between spirit and "clay"; (4) their isolation and alienation from humanity, and the concomitant loss of love; and (5) their incestuous or narcissistic love and their symbolic emasculation which terminates in negation or a repressed longing for self-annihilation.

Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville and/or their personae often long for oblivion, negation, annihilation, or death as an escape or release from the Nothingness of the internal (as well as the external) Void. Nevertheless, as Peckham points out, and as we shall see in the following chapter, these Romantics have proceeded a step beyond the Wertherian suicidal "negation" of spirit and "clay." "Harold and his brothers" indeed have the capacity to endure--the capacity to face the Void and "to survive in the waste land" or the capacity to say "No! in thunder,"[69] like Melville, and to go down heroically fighting with their heads bloody but unbowed.

[69] Davis and Gilman, Letters, p. 125.

CHAPTER V

FACING THE VOID: THE CAPACITY TO ENDURE

> A personal distinction, a personal disaster, a personal test, a personal escape--Nothing relates to the figure of the writer in all these ways, and in multiple combinations. He succumbs to void in shuddering horror, he embraces it ecstatically, he submits reluctantly to it in order to learn something about himself, he reaches out for it as a presumed alternative to the ennui of everyday. More often than not, the perspective of Nothing diminishes; but the author's command over it may add to his stature or to that of his characters--manipulation is all.[1]

"Manipulation is all," according to Adams, and indeed there are numerous ways, both negative and positive, in which Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville, or their "second selves," attempt to handle the Great Void in the nineteenth century wasteland. For these Romantics, there seem to be two negative, but antithetical solutions in facing the Void: (1) to attempt to escape from the Nothingness without and within, or (2) to plunge headlong into the abyss and become immersed or to drown, i.e., to negate or annihilate self.

That Baudelaire longs for negation or annihilation is obvious from his poignant exclamation in "The Abyss":

> My spirit, haunted now by vertigo
> Yearns for extinction, insensibility
> --Ah! never to be free of Being, Ego![2]

[1]Adams, Nil, p. 241.

[2]See Appendix for the original French version of this last stanza in "The Abyss."

Baudelaire's spirit was "haunted" by "Acedia, the malady of monks," or what he calls "Taedium Vitae."[3] This Acedia, which is "always the terrible affliction of those who live according to the spirit, fastened itself more fixedly on Baudelaire than on anyone I can think of," says Charles du Bos.[4] Furthermore, Baudelaire experienced every variety of idleness and laziness, but he was still unable to attain rest or repose, for as du Bos confirms, Baudelaire's disposition could not bear the very repose he longed for."[5] "But quiet to quick bosoms is a hell," as Byron affirms in Childe Harold (III,xliii), and like Byron, Baudelaire could not endure this "quiet." In repose he experienced an asphyxiating sense of boredom, ennui, or "spleen." "At my side the Demon writhes forever," he confesses.

> Swimming around me like impalpable air;
> ...He leads me thus, far from the sight of God,
> Panting and broken with fatigue into
> The wilderness of Ennui, deserted and broad. ("Destruction")[6]

[3]Intimate Journals, p. 42. "L'acedia, maladie des moines. Le Taedium vitae," (Fusées, IX, Oeuvres Posthumes, II, 62). See also Christopher Isherwood, "Translator's Preface," Intimate Journals, p. 7. "Like many lesser writers before and after him, Baudelaire suffered constantly from Acedia, 'the malady of monks,' that deadly weakness of will which is the root of all evil;" and see P. Mansell Jones, Baudelaire (New Haven, Conn., 1952) p. 26. Jones delineates Acedia as "that connivance in despair which saps resistance and frustrates energy."

[4]Charles du Bos, "Meditation on the Life of Baudelaire," Baudelaire: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Henri Peyre, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962), p. 54.

[5]Ibid., p. 40.

[6]"Sans cesse à mes côtés s'agite le Démon' / Il nage autour de moi comme un air impalpable; / ...Il me conduit ainsi, loin du regard de Dieu, / Haletant et brisé de fatigue, au milieu / Des plaines de l'Ennui, profondes et désertes," ("La Destruction," CIX. 1-2, 9-11).

"The Generous Gambler," the devil, diagnoses the poet's malady as boredom and offers him a permanent escape from this "strange disease":

> To compensate you for the irremediable loss of your soul [the Devil advises him], I shall give you the same stake you would have won if chance had been with you, that is the possibility of alleviating and overcoming for your entire life that strange disease of Boredom which is the source of all your ills and all your miserable progress.[7]

When the poet leaves this "generous gambler," he begins to doubt, for he scarcely dares "to believe in such prodigious good fortune. And when I went to bed that night," he confesses, "idiotically saying my prayers out of habit and half asleep, I murmured: 'Oh God! Lord, my God! make the devil keep his promise!'"[8]

To escape from this "strange disease" he seeks forgetfulness in drunkenness, opium, and hashish; in sex, travel, and art; and finally in death, where he hopes to find liberation from the despair

[7]"The Generous Gambler," Paris Spleen, p. 62. "Afin de compenser la perte irrémédiable que vous avez faite de votre âme, je vous donne l'enjeu que vous auriez gagné si le sort avait été pour vous, c'est-à-dire la possibilité de soulager et de vaincre, pendant toute votre vie, cette bizarre affection de l'Ennui, qui est la source de toutes vos maladies et de tous vos misérables progrès." ("Le Joueur généreux," xxix, Petits Poëmes en prose p. 105.

[8]"je n'osais plus croire à un si prodigieux bonheur, et, en me couchant, faisant encore ma prière par un reste d'habitude imbécile, je répétais dans un demi-sommeil: 'Mon Dieu! Seigneur, mon Dieu! faites que le diable me tienne sa parole!'." Ibid., p. 106.

and anxiety inherent in the human condition.[9] "The poignant notes in his Journal, 'Immediate work, even if bad, is preferable to revery,' his repeated references to the 'sentiment of the abyss,' give us," as John Middleton Murry submits, "an inkling of what he endured."[10]

The "horror" of The Flowers of Evil, suggests Erich Auerbach, is that "it is a book of gruesome hopelessness of futile and absurd attempts to escape by inebriation and narcosis."[11] Indeed, the poet counsels in Paris Spleen:

> One should always be drunk. That's the great thing; the only question. Not to feel the horrible burden of Time weighing on your shoulders and bowing you to the earth, you should be drunk without respite. Drunk with what? With wine, with poetry, or with virtue, as you please. But get drunk. ("Get Drunk," p. 74.)[12]

[9]See D. J. Mossop, Baudelaire's Tragic Hero: A Study of the Architecture of Les Fleurs du mal (London, 1961,) p. 235: "In turn," says Mossop, "Baudelaire seeks his ideal in God, art, beauty, woman, Paris, drug, evil, the author of evil, before turning to death and beyond. Nothing in life can provide a lasting form of the excitement craved by his insatiable soul--insatiable because more energetic and harder to satiate than the mediocre soul of the 'hypocrite lecteur'."

[10]John Middleton Murry, "Baudelaire," Baudelaire: A Collection of Critical Essays ed., Henri Peyre. Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962), p. 108.

[11]Erich Auerbach, "The Aesthetic Dignity of the Fleurs du mal," Baudelaire: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed., Henri Peyre. Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962), p. 168.

[12]"Il faut être toujours ivre. Tout est là: c'est l'unique question. Pour ne pas sentir l'horrible fardeau du Temps qui brise vos épaules et vous penche vers la terre, il faut vous enivrer sans trêve. Main de quoi? De vin, de poésie, ou de vertu, à votre guise. Mais enivrez-vous."("Enivrez-vous," Petits Poëmes en prose, XXXIII, 123).

Baudelaire "was one of the first writers of 'the poetry of departure,'" says Isherwood. "He longed for escape from the nineteenth century and from himself."[13] He longed for escape from the Nothingness of his wasteland world without and from his Acedia and his ennui within--to escape "Anywhere Out Of The World." The poet discusses with himself (his "dear soul") the possible avenues of escape: the warm city of Lisbon, the blissful land of Holland, or Batavia where "the spirit of Europe[is]married with tropical beauty." His soul remains mute, however, to each suggestion, and finally the exasperated poet asks:

> 'Have you then reached that point of numbness that you find pleasure in your suffering? If that is the case, let us hasten toward countries which are the analogues of Death. I have found the right thing, poor soul! We will pack our bags for Torneo. Let us go still farther, to the extreme end of the Baltic; farther away still from life, if it is possible; let us settle down at the pole. There the sun grazes the earth only obliquely, and the slow alternations of light and night suppress all variety and increase monotony, the bitter half of the void. There, we can take long baths of darkness, while for our diversion, the aurora borealis sends us from time to time their rose sheaths, like reflections of firewood from Hell!"
>
> Finally my soul explodes, and cries out to me in great

[13] Isherwood, "Translator's Preface," Intimate Journals, p. 6.

Cf. Baudelaire's "The Voyage"; "We want to break the boredom of our jails / and cross the oceans without oars or steam -- / give us visions to stretch our minds like sails, / the blue, exotic shoreline of your dream!"

"Nous voulons voyager sans vapeur et sans voile! / Faites, pour égayer l'ennui de nos prisons, / Passer sur nos esprits, tendus comme une toile, / Vos souvenirs avec leurs cadres d'horizons." ("Le Voyage," CXXVI.iii.53-56).

See Turnell, Baudelaire, pp. 226-27: "The desire to break out of prison, which is apparent in the general construction of the Fleurs du mal, is also reflected in the imagery of the individual poems," e.g., we "find images expressing constriction and frustration like 'prison,' 'tomb,' and 'abyss' ..."

> wisdom; 'Anywhere at all! Provided it is outside of this world!'[14]

There is no escape "outside of the world," however, and consequently the poet has reached a terminus. Standing on the brink of the abyss one can either withdraw, and in this case escape in another direction, or he can plunge into the Void and become immersed in the Nothingness of negation and annihilation.

What the poet of The Flowers Of Evil "is looking for," Auerbach maintains, "is not grace and eternal beatitude but either nothingness, le Néant, or a kind of sensory fulfillment, the vision of a sterile but sensuous artificiality...His spiritualization of memory and his synesthetic symbolism are also sensory, and behind them stands not any hope of redemption through God's grace, but nothingness, the

[14]For the quotations above from "Any Where Out Of The World," I have chosen the translation of Wallace Fowlie, because I feel that it is closer in spirit to the original than the one by Louise Varèse in Paris Spleen. See Wallace Fowlie, ed., Flowers Of Evil And Other Works By Charles Baudelaire (New York, 1964), p. 153.

"l'esprit de l'Europe marié à la beauté tropicale."

"'En es-tu donc venue à ce point d'engourdissement que tu ne te plaises que dans ton mal? S'il en est ainsi, fuyons vers les pays qui sont les analogies de la Mort.--Je tiens notre affaire, pauvre âme! Nous ferons nos malles pour Tornéo. Allons plus loin encore, à l'extrême bout de la Baltique; encore plus loin de la vie, si c'est possible; installons-nous au pôle. Là le soleil ne frise qu'obliquement la terre, et les lentes alternatives de la lumière et de la nuit suppriment la variété et augmentent la monotonie, cette moitié du néant. Là, nous pourrons prendre de longs bains de ténèbres, cependant que, pour nous divertir, les aurores boréales nous enverront de temps en temps leurs gerbes roses, comme des reflets d'un feu d'artifice de l'Enfer!'

Enfin, mon âme fait explosion, et sagement elle me crie: 'N'importe où! n'importe où! pourvu que ce soit hors de ce monde!" ("Anywhere Out Of The World: N'importe où hors du monde," XLVIII, Petits Poëmes en prose, pp. 166-67).

absolute Somewhere-Else."[15] In "Spleen," "Obsession," "The Thirst for Extinction," and "Sympathetic Horror," the predominant images, as Turnell notes, "are death by drowning, by suffocation under avalanches, or by being 'engulfed' in the void."[16] As the poet exclaims in the last line of "The Thirst For Extinction"; "Avalanche, take me with your slide!", and in "The Possessed," he says: "Be silent and be dim, / And in the gulf of boredom plunge entire." In "The Voyage," the concluding poem in The Flowers Of Evil, the poet-hero expresses his longing to plunge into the abyss--the Void--no matter whether heaven or hell, to find at the bottom of the unknown, something different: "to drown in the abyss--heaven or hell, / Who cares? Through the unknown, we'll find the new."[17] But Baudelaire, Peckham maintains, "did not commit suicide and had no wish to

[15]Auerbach, "The Aesthetic Dignity of the Fleurs du mal," p. 163. Auerbach's statement above refers solely to The Flowers of Evil. "We have no wish to speak of the salvation of Baudelaire's soul," he says, "and it would be beyond our means to do so," p. 164.

[16]Turnell, Baudelaire, pp. 168-171.

[17]"Avalanche, veux-tu m'emporter dans ta chute?" ("Le Goût Du Néant, LXXX. 15); "...sois muette, sois sombre, / Et plonge tout entière au gouffre de l'Ennui;" ("Le Possédé," XXXVII. 3-4); "Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe / Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau!" ("Le Voyage," CXXVI.viii.143-144).
Cf. Moby-Dick, p. 481: "Death is only a launching into the region of the strange Untried' it is but the first salutation to the possibilities of the immense Remote, the Wild, the Watery, the Unshared."

die."[18] He was planning work for the future, and therefore, "this last poem symbolizes his acceptance of death, without any consolation of a paradise hereafter. When a man accepts his own death, which he bears with him in blood and flesh and in his desires, then he can truly begin to live, then he can truly hope for something new, for some relief from boredom." Baudelaire thus "converts his tragic pessimism into triumph," Peckham suggests, "by looking at it, by enduring it."[19]

"Death as personal annihilation," says Adams, "is an ancient and available variety of Nothing."[20] The Byronic hero, like the poet-hero of The Flowers Of Evil, often longs for death, or self-annihilation, as a release from a meaningless life in a meaningless universe. Yet, he instinctively clings to life, as one may observe in Cain's confession to Lucifer:

[18] Baudelaire had attempted suicide, however, earlier in his life, "by stabbing himself with a knife on June 30, 1845." As Ruff, relates: "He was then only twenty-four years old. But his spiritual destiny, the only one that mattered to him, had already been resolved. His bodily wound was of no consequence, but the wound to his soul was never to heal again." See Ruff, Baudelaire, pp. 34-35.

[19] Peckham, Beyond the Tragic Vision, pp. 178-179. See also J. Crépet, "L'Architecture et les thèmes," Les Fleurs du mal, p. 265. Crépet notes that Baudelaire had no wish to close his book on a cry of despair, for to die is to escape "any where out of the world," to swish through the air at full sail toward an unknown that he conceives as a new life. "Mais Baudelaire n'a pas voulu clore son livre sur un cri de désespoir: mourir, c'est s'évader any where out of the world, cingler à toutes voiles vers un inconnu qu'on conçoit comme une vie nouvelle."

[20] Adams, Nil., p. 63.

I live
But live to die: and, living, see no thing
To make death hateful, save an innate clinging.
A loathsome, and yet invincible
Instinct of life, which I abhor, as I
Despise myself, yet cannot overcome--
And so I live. Would I had never lived!
(Cain I.i.110-115)

Childe Harold seems also to be afflicted with a form of Acedia, which he distinguishes as the "secret woe" he bears which corrodes "joy and youth," and provides no rest or repose:

It is not love, it is not hate,
Nor low Ambition's honours lost,
That bids me loathe my present state,
And fly from all I prized the most:
It is that weariness which springs
From all I meet, or hear, or see;
To me no pleasure Beauty brings,
Thine eyes have scarce a charm for me.

It is that settled, ceaseless gloom
The fabled Hebrew wanderer bore;
That will not look beyond the tomb,
But cannot hope for rest before.
(Childe Harold "To Inez," I.lxxxiv)

In Don Juan, Byron like Baudelaire's poet-hero, contemplates a plunge into the abyss--the unknown.":

You look down o'er the precipice, and drear
The gulf of rock yawns,--you can't gaze a minute
Without an awful wish to plunge within it.
...To the unknown; a secret prepossession,
To plunge with all your fears--but where? You know not,
And that's the reason why you do--or do not.
(Don Juan XIV.v-vi)

At times Byron and his hero experience alternating periods of despair and defiance; periods in which they long for escape from "the fearful hopelessness and empty void that hangs about man's

ultimate destiny," as S. F. Gingerich proposes, and periods in which they face up to the Nothingness without and within through "the power of defiance and endurance."[21] Although Manfred, for example, longs for "forgetfulness," for "oblivion, self-oblivion!" (I.i)[22] (a form of escape from the Void), he also desires to plunge into the Void (as when he prepares to leap from the cliff of the Jungfrau (I.ii). Furthermore, he illustrates yet another way of facing the Void, i.e., to recognize the "reality of its presence,"[23] and to battle against it with courage and defiance.

Melville also experiences periods of depression and acute despair when he longs for escape from the "irrational horrors of the world" (Moby Dick, p. 104), or longs to plunge into the Void and annihilate self. In Pierre, says Henry Murray, "Melville's greatness of range is confined to one dimension, that of depth, the distance he went down into himself; and this, in turn, is a measure of his antipathy to the human environment. He and his hero are one in their complete repudiation of the world, in their desire to get out of it."[24] D. H. Lawrence also concludes that Melville, at times, wished to escape from the wasteland world of the nineteenth century

[21]Solomon Francis Gingerich, Essays In The Romantic Poets (New York, 1924), pp. 257-258.

[22]Cain also longs for "oblivion" at times as when he says: "I rather would remain [in the Abyss of Space, i.e.,Hades] ; I am sick of all / That dust has shown me--let me dwell in shadows" (Cain II.ii.108-109).

[23]See Headnote by Barrett, to Chapter I of this thesis.

[24]Murray, "Introduction," p. xcvi.

into the innocent, sunny, and "glamorous Stone Age" world of the Edenic Typee:

> To this phantom Melville returned. Back, back away from life. Never man instinctively hated human life, our human life, as we have it, more than Melville did. And never was a man so passionately filled with the sense of the vastness and mystery of life which is non-human. He was mad to look over our horizons. Anywhere, anywhere out of our world. To get away. To get away, out!
>
> To get away, out of our life. To cross a horizon into another life. No matter what life, so long as it is another life.[25]

Ishmael desires "to get away" from the stifling vacuum of life on land; to escape his feeling of "spleen" by going to sea. As he informs his reader: "It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating the circulation." And whenever Ishmael is assailed by symptoms of his form of Acedia, he escapes to "the watery part of the world" over the horizon:

> Whenever I feel 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. (Moby-Dick, p. 1.)

Ishmael's quiet leave-taking is, in actuality, a more positive step in facing the Void than that of merely an escape from "spleen" or a desire to plunge into the annihilating abyss. At sea, as we shall

[25]Lawrence, Studies, pp. 133-34.

see, Ishmael discovers the means whereby he is able to reject the Nothingness of the Void.

Indeed, Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville also go beyond the two negative positions in positing more affirmative solutions in which to deal with the Void. All in all, Baudelaire, and especially Byron and Melville, in my opinion, are much akin in what I believe to be their more positive solutions in respect to facing both the external and the internal Void. I believe that their positions can be divided into three categories: (1) to reject or deny the Void, (2) to learn to accept the Void, and face it affirmatively through both physical and mental action, and (3) to rebel, and heroically fight against the Nothingness of the Void with courage and defiance--by saying "No! in thunder."

(i)

Religion is one way of denying the Void, and another is through a compassionate, selfless Love and the recognition that man lives in "a mutual, joint-stock world" (Moby-Dick, p. 61).

Baudelaire, for instance, was keenly conscious of the intrinsic value of the individual human soul.[26] But as man observes the loss of values in the dehumanized wasteland, he begins to lose his feeling or his illusion of personal worth in the mechanized scheme of things. It was Baudelaire's consciousness of this fact, as Turnell suggests,

[26]Through his art, Baudelaire pleads the cause of mankind "in the anguish of its predicament," and this is "the positive implication of his task as an artist. See Jones, Baudelaire, p. 31.

"that makes his view of the modern world a tragic one."[27] Despite Baudelaire's innate feelings of superiority, and his almost misanthropic disgust with the common "herd," he had, at bottom, a compassionate heart for individual man. In The Flowers of Evil, and Paris Spleen, in fact, "his only sympathetic figures," as Peckham points out, "are those outcasts, the artist, the poor, and the prostitutes."[28] Baudelaire felt a compassion for and a kinship with the rejects and outcasts of society, as one may discern from his tender concern for the feeble freaks, the alienated little old women of Paris:

> Ashamed of living, shrivelled shapes, who creep
> Timidly sidling by the walls, bent double;
> Nobody greets you, ripe for endless sleep,
> Strange destinies, and shards of human rubble!
>
> But I who watch you tenderly: and measure
> With anxious eye, your weak unsteady gait
> As would a father -- get a secret pleasure
> On your account, as on your steps I wait.
>
> I see your passionate and virgin crazes;
> Sombre or bright, I see your vanished prime;
> My soul, resplendent with your virtue, blazes,
> And revels in your vices and your crimes.
>
> Poor wrecks! My family! Kindred in mind, you
> Receive from me each day my last addresses.
> Eighty-year Eves, will yet tomorrow find you
> On whom the claw of God so fiercely presses?
> ("The Little Old Women," IV)[29]

[27] Turnell, Baudelaire, p. 192.

[28] Peckham, Beyond The Tragic Vision, p. 276.

[29] See Appendix for the original French version of these stanzas.

I would suggest that Byron and Melville also loved man in the particular though not in the general. Beneath the sometimes real and sometimes feigned misanthropic exterior of Childe Harold or Manfred, there is a compassionate heart, and a "cautious feeling for another's pain." (Manfred II.i.80). Byron's championship of subject people in their fight for independence is well-known; indeed, he gave his life in the cause of Greek independence. His compassion for the underdog, the poor, and the oppressed is also a matter of record; for example, his first speech in the House of Lords, on February 27, 1812, was in support of the "Luddites," or poor weavers in the vicinity of his ancestral seat in Nottinghamshire. His compassionate concern for these oppressed people is best illustrated, I think, in the following excerpts from his poem "An Ode To The Framers of The Frame Bill":

Those villains, the Weavers are all grown refractory
  Asking some succor for Charity's sake--
So hang them in clusters round each Manufactory
  That will at once put an end to mistake.

The rascals, perhaps may betake them to robbing,
  The dogs to be sure have got nothing to eat--
So if we can hang them for breaking a bobbin,
  T'will save all the Government's money and meat:

Men are more easily made than machinery--
  Stockings fetch better prices than lives--
Gibbets on Sherwood will heighten the scenery,
  Showing how commerce on Liberty thrives!

...Some folks for certain have thought it was shocking,
  When Famine appeals and when Poverty groans,
That life should be valued at less than a stocking,
  And breaking of frames lead to breaking of bones.
If it should prove so, I trust, by this token
  (And who will refuse to partake in the hope?),
That the frames of the fools may be first to be broken,
  Who, when asked for a remedy, sent them a rope.

Byron scathingly castigates his own materialistic society for its abuses, and for its exploitation of the poor laborer.

Melville deplored what he considered to be exploitation of the natives by the missionaries, and by the so-called civilized man, in the Polynesian South Seas. In Honolulu, for example, Melville observed that the small remnant of the natives, i.e., those left after the evils of civilization had induced a depopulation of the island, "had been civilized into draught horses, and even evangelized into beasts of burden." The natives had "been literally broken into the traces," and harnessed to the vehicles of their spiritual instructors like so many dumb brutes" (Typee, p. 710)! At other islands of Polynesia, especially Tahiti (in Omoo), he observed that hunger, disease, and vice were rampant as a result of the encroachments of civilization. Reading Melville's animadversions against the "benefactors" of the natives in Typee and in Omoo (in which he is even more critical), one can hardly mistake his true opinion of the rather heartless "benefits" of civilization which he observed on his voyages in Polynesia and of his compassion for these simple, natural people.

Another voyage, that of the Pequod, results in a deepening of Ishmael's "awareness of the plight of mankind," as in the "Monkey-rope scene," where, as James Miller Jr. notes, Ishmael learns that "human interdependence is inescapable."[30] Furthermore, Ishmael's

[30]Miller, Readers Guide, p. 115. See Moby-Dick, p. 318: "I saw [says Ishmael] this situation of mine the ["monkey-rope"] was the precise situation of every mortal that breathes."

immersion in the sea at the end of the novel, like that experienced by White Jacket is symbolically "a baptism into the human condition, an acceptance of the human burden of guilt."[31] In Ishmael's plunge into the sea, says Miller, he "loses his old splenetic self and gains a human soul." Like White Jacket, who rips off his cursed garment, Ishmael "divests himself of his mask of innocence, the mask he assumes in his solitude on the opening page of Moby-Dick." And on the last page of the book, Ishmael is the sole survivor against the seemingly "Intelligent malignity" of Moby-Dick (p. 180). He is the one who lives to tell the tragic story, and he is, as Miller contends, "the only one in the tale to achieve a balance of intellect and heart, knowledge and love."[32]

The voyage on the Pequod also results in Ishmael's discovery of "the transcendent value of Love."[33] While squeezing sperm on deck, he finds himself squeezing the hands of his shipmates "and looking up into their eyes sentimentally; as much as to say,--Oh! my dear fellow beings, why should we longer cherish any social acerbities, or know the slightest ill-humor or envy! Come; let us squeeze hands all round; nay, let us squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness" (pp. 414-415); and in a similar revelatory passage, he says: "I felt a melting in me. No more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned against the

[31]Miller, p. 10.

[32]Ibid., p. 117.

[33]Ibid., p. 115.

wolfish world. This soothing savage [Queequeg] had redeemed it" (p. 50). Queequeg, the tattooed, cannibal harpooner on the Pequod, personified a selfless "all-fructifying love," according to Daniel Hoffman.[34] "'It's a mutual, joint-stock world, in all meridians [says Queequeg] . We cannibals must help these Christians'" (p. 61). This recognition of "human interdependence," and the acceptance of human solidarity is thus one way of denying or of rejecting the nothingness in the external and internal worlds.

Byron's Cain, like Ishmael, discovers "the primacy of love," and in this "new-found realization" he progresses, as Thorslev points out, beyond Manfred and Lucifer's "negative defiance."[35] Cain rebels and defies both God and man as do Manfred and Lucifer, but he also becomes aware of the need for repentance, self-sacrifice, and love. In his brother's blood which he has shed (rather than in water), Cain is, in a sense, baptized, like Ishmael "into the human condition," and he comes at last to accept "the human burden of guilt." In his spirit of self-sacrifice, as when he offers to give his own life to restore that of his brother Abel, in his concern for the suffering of innocent animals, which is reminiscent of Byron himself, in his concern for the future suffering of his progeny, and in his love for his wife Adah and for their children, Cain progresses from a position of "negative defiance" to a position of positive affirmation, and from a position of

[34]Hoffman, Form and Fable, p. 274.

[35]Thorslev, Byronic Hero, p. 183.

non-being to a position of being. I would suggest that in Cain's progress he achieves an identity or his selfhood. Throughout the play Cain is obsessed with a personal feeling of Nothingness, i.e., as a man he is Nothing: "I look / around a world where I seem nothing," he tells Lucifer in their opening conversation (I.i.172-173); "Alas! I seem Nothing," he exclaims in answer to Lucifer's question: "And have I not, in what I show'd / Taught thee to know thyself?" (II.ii.624-626). When he returns to earth, from his journey through the abyss of space, he says to Adah "...I feel / My littleness again. Well said the spirit, / That I was nothing!" (III.i.67-68); for "he [God] contents him / With making us the nothing which we are." (70-71); and "If I am nothing-- / For nothing shall I be an hypocrite, / And seem well-pleased with pain?" (III.i.115-116). When the Angel appears to him after his murder of Abel, however, Cain asserts his recognition of his own unique individuality: "That which I am," he says, "I am." (II.i.509). Cain's desire is to know who he is. As he tells Lucifer who offers to satiate his thirst for knowledge,: "Let me but / Be taught the mystery of my being" (I.i.318). And in his subsequent acquisition of self-knowledge he progresses from the negative statements: "I seem nothing," "I was nothing" (as the spirit said), "the nothing which we are," and "If I am nothing," to the positive statement, "That which I am, I am," thus employing the first person singular of the present tense of the verb "to be." After his act of fratricide, Cain comes to accept "the human burden of guilt," and this leads to his acceptance of his own identity or selfhood. As Thorslev maintains:

> Cain's final position is best summed up in his own words: 'That which I am, I am; I did not seek / For life, nor did I make myself...' In other words, his view is not very different from that of Manfred: he can see the 'absurdity' of his situation in a world he did not make. But he can see more than Manfred--in the value of his love for Adah, for his son [and daughter] and for all his posterity.[36]

Although Manfred recognizes and acknowledges his connection with humanity when he says to the Abbot: "...Fare thee well! / Give me thy hand / ...Old Man! 'tis not so difficult to die" (III.iv.407-408 and 411), and that he, like Harold, "wears the links of the world's broken chain," i.e., the Great Chain of Being (Childe Harold III.xviii), he has not discovered "the transcendent value of Love" as have Ishmael and Cain. Manfred's only final consolations, at the conclusion of the drama, "are that 'the mind is its own place' and that even death can be an act of defiance," as Thorslev contends, but Cain, on the other hand, is left "with human love as the one sure value in a world of irrational conflict"[37]--with love as a means whereby one may reject or deny the existence of the Void.

(2)

Another way of facing the Void is by learning to accept the reality of its existence, and to deal with it affirmatively through action, i.e., through either mental or physical activity.

Byron, a fascinating and multi-faceted personality, was an incongruent combination of the angelic and the satanic, the Regency

[36] Ibid., p. 183.

[37] Ibid., p. 198.

gentleman and the arch-Romantic, the excessively proud aristocrat and the champion of the poor and down-trodden, the misanthrope and the humanitarian, the animal lover and hater of the common "herd," "the Wandering Outlaw of his own dark mind," and the sociable fellow and prolific correspondent--a personality with decidedly positive and negative sides. Such a person could not only recognize and experience the reality of the wasteland, but could endure in it.

According to Ernest Lovell, Jr., Byron knew "the wasteland of the spirit," but he refused to become a willing victim to depression and despair or to a negative philosophy which irrevocably denied the world. As Lovell maintains:

> The world for him, bitter and brief though he realized life to be, remained for him a place of reasonable wonder and delight, and finally a place of meaningful action among men. It is in this that Byron has earned his place among the most completely civilized of the poets: seeing the world with less illusions than many of his contemporaries, he yet delighted in it, nevertheless; and dedicating himself to the things of the mind, he yet retained unimpaired his power to act.[38]

Lovell's analysis of the more positive side of Byron's philosophy and personality is important, because he points out two ways in which I think Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville deal with the wasteland world of the nineteenth century and subsequently, by extension, with the Void: by dedicating themselves "to the things of the mind," and by retaining unimpaired their "power to act."

"In Byron, the conflict such as a confrontation with the Void is at bottom intellectual," Bostetter states, "and the hero's

[38]Lovell, Record of a Quest, p. 255.

ego is asserted through the independence and the superiority of mind."[39] More also points out that: "On one side of [Byron's] character he was drawn toward the romantic side of the day, but on the other side his sympathies, conscious and unconscious, threw him back upon the more classical models of the past. By classical is meant a certain predominance of the intellect over the emotions, and a reliance on broad effects rather than on subtle impressions."[40] As More points out, however, "the predominance of intellect, which forms so important a factor in classical art, is far from excluding all emotion. On the contrary, the simple elemental passions naturally provoke intense activity of mind."[41]

Cain combined "passion," in his love for Adah and his children, and "intellect" in his insatiable thirst for knowledge. Like Manfred, he refuses to abandon the right to know in his quest for truth. He even aspires to attain the ultimate knowledge beyond the grave, "the mysteries of death." His anxious questionings into the mysteries of life and death, and of good and evil, qualify him as a reflective being, and in sharp contrast to the passive acquiescence of Adam, Eve, Abel, and Zillah.

Lucifer reminds Cain, who is sick of all that "dust" has shown him, that:

[39]Bostetter, "Introduction," p. xviii.

[40]More, "Introduction," p. xii.

[41]Ibid., p. xiii.

> One good gift hath the fatal apple given--
> Your reason: -- let it not be overswayed
> By tyrannous threats to force you into faith
> 'Gainst all external sense and inward feeling;
> Think and endure, -- and form an inner world
> In your own bosom -- Where the outward fails;
> So shall you nearer be the spiritual
> Nature, and war triumphant with your own.
> (Cain II.ii.663-670)

And: "By being yourselves, in your resistance," Lucifer advises, "Nothing can / Quench the mind if the mind, will be itself / And center of surrounding things," (I.i.209-211). In other words, he learns that the Fall in the Garden of Eden was a felix culpa. Lucifer, the "Light Bearer," like Prometheus, brought the fire of intellectual curiosity to man. He brought man out of "A Paradise of Ignorance, from which / Knowledge was barred as poison," (Cain II.ii.305-306).

Similarly Byron himself felt, I think, as well as his heroes, especially Manfred, Cain, Lucifer and Prometheus, that "the mind is its own place," and in an alien, voided universe can "create its own values ('Is its own origin of ill and end'[Manfred, III.iv.131])," and can derive its satisfaction or suffer "its infinite remorse in fulfilling or in failing its own free commitments."[42]

Although Melville confesses to Hawthorne that he stands "for

[42]See Thorslev, Byronic Hero, p. 175. I have used Thorslev's passage in order to express my own opinion.
Cf. also Manfred, III.ii.389-92. "The mind which is immortal makes itself / Requital for its good or evil thoughts -- / Is its own origin of ill and end -- / And its own place and time..."

the heart,"[43] he does not discount the importance of the intellect. As he reveals in a letter to Evert Duyckinck. "I love all men who dive. Any fish can swim near the surface, but it takes a great whale to go down stairs five mile or more; & if he don't attain the bottom, why, all the lead in Galena can't fashion the plummet that will. I'm not talking of Mr. Emerson now--but of the whole corps of thought-divers, that have been diving & coming up again with bloodshot eyes since the world began."[44] Melville was our last great metaphysical novelist to try to arrive at some absolute answer by reason in his novel. Novelists after Melville became more pragmatic and empirical.[45]

Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville are "thought divers," and I would suggest that in dedicating themselves "to the things of the mind," particularly in "the act of creation itself,"[46] they were able to deal affirmatively with the Void. As Byron says:

> The beings of the mind are not of clay;
> Essentially immortal, they create
> And multiply in us a brighter ray
> And more beloved existence. That which Fate

[43]In a letter to Hawthorne (June, 1851), Melville writes: "It is a frightful poetical creed that the cultivation of the brain eats out the heart. But it's my prose opinion that in most cases, in those men who have fine brains and work them well, the heart extends down to hams. And though you smoke them in the fire of tribulation, yet, like veritable hams, the head only gives the richer and the better flavor. I stand for the heart. To the dogs with the head!" See Davis and Gilman, Letters, p. 129.

[44]Ibid., p. 79.

[45]From the discussion of Melville in the Hawthorne, Melville seminar, English 633.

[46]See Gleckner, Ruins Of Paradise, p. 83.

> Prohibits to dull life, in this our state
> Of mortal bondage, by these spirits supplied
> First exiles, then replaces what we hate;
> Watering the heart whose early flowers have died,
> And with a fresher growth replenishing the void.
> (Childe Harold, IV.v.);

and in his famous passage in Canto III (vi), he writes:

> Tis to create, and in creating live
> A being more intense, that we endow
> With form our fancy, gaining as we give
> The life we image, even as I do now.
> What am I? Nothing: but not so art thou,
> Soul of my thought! with whom I traverse earth,
> Invisible but gazing, as I glow
> Mix'd with thy spirit, blending with thy birth,
> And feeling still with thee in my crush'd feelings' dearth.

According to Byron, then the only way to live at all is in the imagination. "What am I? Nothing: but not so art thou, / Soul of my thought!" He seems to be saying that he is nothing, but his creation is something. He has no feelings of his own, but he can feel with the emotions and feelings he creates. Nothing really happens except in the creations of the imagination. Man is a nothing with a shaping imagination. In his imagination man may live more intensely in a world he feels to be more real than the real world.[47] One may discern from a perusal of the above passages that Byron feels that it is the act of creation itself that is the salvation of the artist,[48]

[47] From the discussion of Byron in English 344, The Later Romanticists.

[48] See Bostetter, p. xc., who points out that Byron's mood "was not simply one of hopeless defeat. He found a 'very life,' a 'vitality of poison' in despair which sustained and strengthened him and became the source of his artistic power. He discovered the purpose of art: 'to create, and in creating live a being more intense' than the life he had 'outlived.' Through his poetry, through this 'soul of his thought' he

and his primary panacea in his confrontations with the Void. Indeed, these creations or "beings of the mind" serve as the means for "replenishing the void."

Baudelaire, likewise, "remakes the void" through the "act of creation." As Charles du Bos maintains, "Baudelaire has the sharpness of the double-edged sword whose name he bore, a sharpness never sheathed; let a mist arise" he says, "such as those that the very act of creation give off--dangerous, but also blessed because they give the strength to keep on--and instantly this sword is on it, cuts it off, and remakes the void."[49]

In "A Heroic Death," in Paris Spleen, (p. 56) Baudelaire asserts that:

> The intoxication of Art is more apt than any other to veil the terrors of the eternal abyss; and that genius can play a part, even on the edge of the grave, with such joy that it does not see the grave, lost, as it is, in a paradise that shuts out all thought of death and destruction.[50]

And "shuts out," I would add, the thoughts of the Nothingness within and without, at least temporarily.

In making "any critical estimate," of Baudelaire's "originality," says Peyre, one must inevitably "refer his poetry to his life--not to the chance events of his biography, but to the lack of will power i.e., [his Acedia] abjectly displayed in his heart-rending letters...and to the

could triumph in defeat. He could assert that his mind was an indestructible force like the nature of which it was a part; that he had a force within him 'which shall tire / Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire;' that this power which found expression in his poetry was the same as the revolutionary force in society which, though temporarily eclipsed, would ultimately prevail."

[49] Du Bos, "Meditation on the Life of Baudelaire," p. 43.

[50] "que l'ivresse de l'Art est plus apte que tout à voiler les

firm will power which he reserved for his creation."[51] Through his poetry Baudelaire was enabled to act affirmatively and to find at least transitory relief from Acedia. As Marcel Ruff concludes, poetry, for Baudelaire, as for his heir Rimbaud, "was not a distraction but action, and 'a way of life,' as Tristan Tzara calls it."[52]

When facing the Void, one may also find affirmation in physical action, e.g., to take a stroke as in swimming.[53] Byron was a man of action,[54] as he proved when he swam the Hellespont from Sestos to Abydos on May 3, 1810, a feat of which he was justly proud, and when he went to Missolonghi to fight for Greek independence, Melville, likewise, was a man of action who, like Ishmael, went to sea as a means "of driving off the Spleen, and regulating the circulation" (Moby-Dick,p.23).

> Melville [says D. H. Lawrence] has the strange, uncanny magic of sea-creatures, and some of their repulsiveness.

terreurs du gouffre, que le génie peut jouer la comédie au bord de la tombe avec une joie qui l'empêche de voir la tombe, perdu, comme il est, dans un paradis excluant toute idée de tombe et de destruction." ("Une Mort Héroïque," xxvii, Petits Poëmes en prose,p. 94-95).

[51]Peyre, "Introduction," p. 3.

[52]Ruff, Baudelaire, p. 173. Ruff points out that the "function" of Baudelaire's poetry "consisted not in expressing sadness or gaiety, but in presenting the problems of the human condition and destiny to the reader."

[53]From Dr. A.W. Dixon's discussion of the Void in the Romanticism seminar, English 622.

[54]Cf. Peckham, Beyond the Tragic Vision, p. 101.: "In the popular mind," says Peckham, "Byron has survived as the one who dared to do what others only dream of doing."

> He isn't quite a land animal. There is something slithery about him. Something always half-seas-over. In his life they said he was mad--or crazy. He was neither mad nor crazy. But he was over the border. He was a half a water animal, like those terrible yellow-bearded Vikings who broke out of the waves in beaked ships. He was a modern Viking.[55]

Melville was an individualist in his ideas, opinions, and beliefs. He was, as Willard Thorp points out, no "yes" man, for he possessed "the inclination to say 'no' in an age which demands that all good citizens should say 'yes!'" This "fundamental bias of his nature."[56] is expressed in his letter to Hawthorne dated April 16 (?) 1854:

> There is the grand truth about Nathaniel Hawthorne [and about Melville himself]. He says NO! in thunder; but the Devil himself cannot make him say yes. For all men who say yes, lie; and all men who say no,--why, they are in the happy condition of judicious, unincumbered travellers in Europe; they cross the frontiers into Eternity with nothing but a carpet-bag,--that is to say, the Ego. Whereas those yes-gentry, they travel with heaps of baggage, and damn them! they never get through the Custom House.[57]

The negative "No!", as Melville suggests, and as Carlyle also

[55]Lawrence, Studies, p. 131.

[56]Willard Thorp, ed. Herman Melville: Representative Selections With Introduction, Bibliography, And Notes, American Writers Series (New York, 1938), p. xcvii.

[57]Davis and Gilman, Letters, p. 125. Cf. Baudelaire's "The Rebel": "Then the Angel, cruel as he was kind, / With giant hands twisted him till he whined; / But the damned soul still answered, 'I will not!'"

"Et l'Ange, châtiant autant, ma foi! qu'il aime, / De ses poings de géant torture l'anathème; / Mais le damné répond toujours: 'Je ne veux pas!'"

("Le Rebelle," CXL. 12-14).

indicates in "The Everlasting No,"[58] can thus become a positive affirmation in dealing with the Void.

(3)

The defiant Romantic or Byronic heroes such as Baudelaire's poet-hero, Ahab, Pierre, and Manfred, all possess, like Melville,

[58]Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus. ed. Frederick William Roe (New York, 1927), p. 138. "Thus had the Everlasting No (das ewige Nein) pealed authoritatively through all the recesses of my Being, of my Me [says Carlyle]; and then was it that my whole Me stood up, in native God-created majesty, and with emphasis recorded its Protest. Such a Protest, the most important transaction in Life, may that same Indignation and Defiance in a psychological point of view, be fitly called. The Everlasting No had said: 'Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine (the Devil's);' to which my whole Me now made answer: 'I am not thine, but Free, and forever hate thee!'"

See Leon Howard, Herman Melville, Univ. of Minn. Pamphlets on American Writers, No. XIII (Minneapolis, Minn., 1961), p. 21. Howard points out that "in Carlyle's book Melville found a hero who could live in such a spiritual state of 'starless, Tartarean black' that he could hear the Devil say 'thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine' but who still had the courage and the energy to say 'I am not thine, but Free, and forever hate thee!'"

For one of the most penetrating and terrifying depictions of the nineteenth century wasteland in all literature, see Sartor Resartus, pp. 135-136.

"Now when I look back [says Carlyle], it was a strange isolation I then lived in. The men and women around me, even speaking with me, were but Figures; I had, practically, forgotten that they were alive, that they were not merely automatic. In the midst of their crowded streets and assemblages, I walked solitary; and (except as it was my own heart, not another's that I kept devouring) savage also, as the tiger in his jungle. Some comfort it would have been, could I, like a Faust, have fancied myself tempted and tormented of the Devil; for a Hell, as I imagine, without Life, though only diabolic Life, were more frightful; but in our age of Down-pulling and Disbelief, the very Devil has been pulled down, you cannot so much as believe in a Devil. To me the Universe was all void [underline mine] of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility: it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb. O, the vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha, and Mill of Death! Why was the Living banished thither companionless, conscious? Why, if there is no Devil; nay, unless the Devil is your God?'"

"this fundamental bias" by nature, the inclination to say "No! in thunder" when confronted by the nothingness of the Void--the inclination to do battle courageously and defiantly. Even when their "soul's ship[s] forsaw the inevitable rocks" and the abysses, they nevertheless "resolved to sail on, and make a courageous wreck" (Pierre, p. 398), and to prove that even death itself can be a positive act of victory through defiance.

Instead of saying "yes" and accepting "a virtuous expediency" as advised by Plotinus Plinlimmon in his pamphlet "Chronometricals and Horologicals" (Pierre, p. 247), Pierre chooses a contrary course which leads to his defiance of man and the world: "For now am I hate shod... No longer do I hold terms with aught. World's bread of life, and world's breath of honor, both are snatched from me, but I defy all world's bread and breath" (p. 420); which leads to his ultimate defiance of Fate and the gods: "Now tis merely hell in both worlds. Well, be it hell. I will mold a trumpet of the flames, and, with my breath of flame, breathe back my defiance" (p. 424); which leads to the negation of his selfhood: "For Pierre is neuter now!" (p. 425); and which finally leads to his death almost immediately afterwards presumably by self-inflicted poison.

Baudelaire, like Pierre, chose a contrary course in which he rebelled against his wasteland world. He was a poet "of a decadence," as John M. Murry points out; or "in other words, he was a great modern poet; for the decadence which shaped him by compelling him to revolt against it was the 'civilization of industrial progress' which has

endured from his day to our own."[59] But Baudelaire had the capacity to endure the Nothingness in this voided, godless, civilization. Although, as Isherwood contends,

> his last years were darkened with regrets--for deeds done and undone, for health and vigor lost, for time irretrievably wasted [he] never gave way finally to despair. He struggled with himself to the very end, striving and praying to do better. His life is not the dreary tale of a talented weakling, it is the heroic tragedy of a strong man beset by great failings. Even its horrible closing scenes should not disgust or depress us. They represent a kind of victory. Baudelaire died undefeated--a warning and an inspiration to us all.[60]

Baudelaire's life represents "a warning" and "an inspiration" in that it illustrates so profoundly both the wretchedness and the greatness of man, and of the human condition.

Indeed, besides an awareness of his own misery and his finite nature, Baudelaire perceived the wretchedness of the human condition. As Pascal points out, we find in man two opposing characteristics, greatness and wretchedness. Paradoxically it is man's conceptual awareness of his misery and of his feebleness and finitude which constitutes his grandeur, and this has seldom been more truly illustrated than in the case of Baudelaire.[61]

[59]Murry, "Baudelaire," p. 108.

[60]Isherwood, "Translator's Preface," pp. 9-10.

[61]See Pascal, Pensées, p. 240 (#397): "The greatness of man is great in that he knows himself to be miserable. A tree does not know itself to be miserable. It is then being miserable to know oneself to be miserable; but it is also being great to know that one is miserable."

"La grandeur de l'homme est grande en ce qu'il se connaît miserable. Un arbre ne se connaît pas misérable.

C'est donc être misérable que de [se] connaître misérable; mais c'est être grand que de connaître qu'on est misérable." (Oeuvres, xiii.303).

Melville was keenly interested in the human condition, and he was also "deeply moved," says Robert Spiller, "by the problem of free man confronting his own destiny." Consequently he made the "grand, ungodly, god-like man, Captain Ahab" (p. 79), "one of the company of Titans who defy both God and Nature."[62] It is Moby-Dick, however, the "ubiquitous" and "immortal" (p. 179) leviathan who inspires in Ahab a demonic rage and defiance. As he tells Starbuck:

> 'He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me.' (p. 162).

Moby-Dick's whiteness which both fascinates and appalls Ahab is "but a reflection of the inscrutable whiteness of the entire universe," says James Miller, Jr.;[63] a reflection of the inscrutable Nothingness of the Void. Driven by his monomaniac revenge, Ahab would willingly launch out over gorges, penetrate through the Nothingness in the heart of the physical world, descend under the "torrents' beds," and into the abysses in his mad pursuit of the "grand hooded phantom" (p. 6), for nothing and no one can swerve him from his fixed purpose:

> 'Swerve me? [he asks Starbuck]. The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run. Over unsounded gorges, through the rifled hearts of mountains, under torrents' beds, unerringly I rush! Naught's an obstacle, naught's an angle to the iron way!' (p. 166).

[62]Robert E. Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature: An Essay in Historical Criticism (New York, 1956), p. 81.

[63]Miller, Reader's Guide, p. 96.

The "old Mogul," (p. 168), "the black terrific Ahab" (p. 149), is Titanic in his self-assertion, and in his superhuman courage and defiance. "What I've dared," he declares, "I've willed; and what I've willed, I'll do! They think me mad--Starbuck does; but I'm demoniac, I am madness maddened! That madness that's only calm to comprehend itself" (p. 166)! "The world that tortures Ishmael by its horrid vacancy," Kazin writes," has tempted Ahab into thinking he can make it over,"[64] and although he "claims to be Fate's lieutenant, acting under orders, he challenges Fate and questions the order of the universe," as Harry Levin points out.[65] In the end, Ahab dares to plunge "into the vortex," says Hoffman, where like Narcissus, he "seeks and finds himself and dies."[66] In this annihilating plunge into the vortex of the great Void itself, Ahab carries all but Ishmael to their watery grave, and even the "bird of heaven" shrouded in Ahab's flag and pinned, by Tashtego's hammer, to the mast, goes down with the Pequod, "which, like Satan, would not sink to hell till she had dragged a living part of heaven along with her, and helmeted herself with it" (p. 566). [67]

Ahab, however, is not just the crazed fanatic who leads the crew of the Pequod to their catastrophic destruction; he is also according

[64]Kazin, "Introduction," p. ix.

[65]Harry Levin, The Power of Blackness: Hawthorne, Poe, Melville (New York, 1958), p. 217.

[66]Hoffman, Form and Fable, p. 256.

[67]Richard B. Sewall, The Vision of Tragedy (New Haven, Conn., 1962), p. 100.

to Alfred Kazin, "a hero of thought who is trying, by terrible force to reassert man's place in nature. And it is the struggle that Ahab incarnates that makes him so magnificent a voice, thundering in Shakespearean rhetoric, storming at the gates of the inhuman, silent world. Ahab is trying to give man, in one awful, final assertion that his will does mean something, a feeling of relatedness with his world."[68]

From Childe Harold to Cain, the Byronic heroes, like Ahab, all have a "magnificent...voice" with which to shout "NO! in thunder" against "the inhuman," voided, "silent world."

Rebellion, and the assertion of the independence of will against the tyranny of destiny is a major theme in Manfred and Cain. These Byronic heroes, (Cain and Manfred), are not awed by supernatural powers or spirits. As Manfred declares to the spirits he has summoned up:

> Ye mock me--but the power which brought ye here
> Hath made you mine. Slaves, scoff not at my will!
> The mind, the spirit, the Promethean spark,
> The lightning of my being, is as bright,
> Prevading, and far darting as your own,
> And shall not yield to yours, though coop'd in clay!
> Answer, or I will teach you what I am.
> (Manfred I.i.152-158)

Manfred, and Cain, in fact, will not "yield" to anyone, for each refuses to subordinate his will to anyone, or to humble himself to God or Devil: "But I will bend to neither," Cain declares (I.i.315),

[68]Kazin, "Introduction," p. x.

for Cain, like Manfred, sought "...nothing / which must be won by kneeling" (III.i.269-270). Furthermore, Manfred will not "yield" his soul to the spirits from Hell. "I do defy ye," Manfred exclaims,

> ...though I feel my soul
> Is ebbing from me, yet I do defy ye;
> Nor will I hence, while I have earthly breath
> To breathe my scorn upon ye--earthly strength
> To wrestle, though with spirits; what ye take
> Shall be taken limb by limb.
> ...Back to thy hell!
> Thou hast no power upon me, that I feel;
> Thou never shalt possess me, that I know.
> (III.ii.359-363, 84-86).

That Manfred is echoing the rebelliousness of his creator we know, for Byron became the symbol for, and the incarnation of the Romantic rebel.

Byron, as Bostetter points out, "made the Byronic hero not only the symbol of a lost generation but also the prophetic voice of a revolutionary future; and above all, he made him the expression of the eternally defiant mind of man, unconquerable in its will to freedom."[69] Gleckner maintains that "Byron's technique," and I would add Melville's and Baudelaire's as well, "is that of Eliot and Yeats, Joyce, and Faulkner, the human voice, at the last 'ding dong of doom,' still talking--and saying heroically, with Manfred, "Old man, 'tis not so difficult to die.'"[70] and with Ahab:

> '...death glorious ship! must ye then perish and without me? Am I cut off from the last fond pride of meanest

[69] Bostetter, "Introduction," p. xv.

[70] Gleckner, Ruins of Paradise, p. 271

> shipwrecked captains? Oh, lonely death oh lonely life! Oh, now I feel my topmost greatness lies in my topmost grief. Ho, ho! from all your furthest bounds, pour ye now in, ye bold billows of my whole foregone life, and top this one piled comber of my death! Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and all hearses to one common pool! and since neither can be mine, let me tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, thou damned whale! Thus, I give up the spear!' (p.565).

Ahab gives "up the spear" in his last heroic act of rebellious defiance. Likewise, Pierre, Manfred, and Baudelaire himself give up the spear, drink the poison, wrestle with the fiends from Hell, or struggle against the fiends from one's own internal hell or Void, in making death a positive act of Victory. As Byron affirms in "Prometheus":

> Like thee, Man is in part divine,
> A troubled stream from a pure source;
> And Man in portions can foresee
> His own funereal destiny,
> His wretchedness, and his resistance,
> And his sad unallied existence:
> To which his spirit may oppose
> Itself--an equal to all woes,
> And a firm will, and a deep sense,
> Which even in torture can descry
> Its own concenter'd recompense,
> Triumphant where it dares defy,
> And making Death a Victory.

Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville, and their "second" selves have proved their capacity to endure life in the nineteenth century wasteland, and their capacity to say "No! in thunder," in their confrontations with nothingness in dealing with the Void. They have found negative solutions: (1) to attempt to escape from the nothing-

ness without and within, or (2) to plunge headlong into the annihilating abyss; and furthermore they have posited more positive solutions: (1) to reject or deny the Void, (2) to learn to accept the Void and face it affirmatively through action; and (3) to rebel, and heroically fight against the Nothingness of the Void--to plunge into the great, illimitable Void not as an escape, but as a final heroic assertion.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A journey into the nineteenth century wasteland reveals that the external world is a sterile desert or sea of Nothingness, and the human psyche is an appalling, infinite abyss. And "How sour the knowledge travellers bring away" from their journey, says Baudelaire, for

> The world's monotonous and small; we see
> ourselves today, tomorrow, yesterday,
> an oasis of horror in sands of ennui!
> ("The Voyage," VII)[1]

"Yesterday" in the nineteenth century and "Today" in the twentieth, the "monotonous" world, and its inhabitants are similar in many respects. Yesterday God disappeared from the cosmos, and Today He is still absent for some and dead for others; Yesterday was an "age of rampant industrialization and violent and abortive revolution,"[2] and Today is an era of mechanized automation and hot and cold war; Yesterday, boredom, ennui, or "spleen" was the malady of man, and Today it is boredom, néant, and Angst; and Yesterday man had to face the Nothingness of an irrational world, and Today he must deal with the vacuity of the world of the Absurd. Yesterday and Today the "reactions to the encounter with

[1] "Amer savoir, celui qu'on tire du voyage! / Le monde, monotone et petit, aujourd'hui, / Hier, demain, toujours, nous fait voir notre image: / Une oasis d'horreur dans un désert d'ennui!" ("Le Voyage," CXXVI.109-112).

[2] John Middleton Murry, "Baudelaire," p. 95.

Nothingness"[3] vary not in kind, but only in degree, i.e., the world Today has become even smaller and the "oasis of horror," much larger, and consequently the perception of a Nothingness without and within has intensified, and has been experienced and expressed by more people.

Yesterday, Byron, Baudelaire, Melville, and their personae experienced the Nothingness of the external and the internal Void, and expressed their reactions to the encounters in their poetry and prose. Their perception of the Void was precipitated by the loss of both religious and secular values in the external world, and the subsequent loss of a sense of individual identity in their internal world. The break-up of the old order, and the disappearance of God from the cosmos in the closing years of the eighteenth century was intensely felt by these three sensitive and introspective Romantics. Furthermore, many of their illusions had been shattered[4] by the discoveries of science and by the break-down in the political order. Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville recognized, along with other discerning men in the early and middle nineteenth century, that man had lost his place in the Great Chain of Being. He was no longer the proud center of his universe, but rather a homeless, alienated, isolated, fragmented, and deracinated being who had been cast adrift to float in a rudderless boat within a Godless, meaningless, sterile, silent, and vacuous universe in search of his own

[3] See headnote to the "Introduction" to this thesis.

[4] Cf. Pierre, p. 256: "All round and round does the world lie as in a sharp-shooter's ambush, to pick off the beautiful illusions of youth, by the pitiless cracking rifles of the realities of the age."

identity or selfhood; while faced with the problems of negation, annihilation, nihilism, and Nothingness. Furthermore, between the "sharks" and the "spades," man was indeed "in a sad pickle and peril" (Moby-Dick, p. 320).

Yesterday these three Romantics and their personae journeyed into "the heart of darkness" and Nothingness in the external Void. Baudelaire journeys into and around the sprawling, industrialized city of Paris, but away from it through imaginative or dream trips to strange, exotic places. Melville sailed away from Manhattan and into the Polynesian tropics. Byron traveled away from the "Unreal City" of London, and into ancient cities in ruins and into isolated places of alienation. Their personae journeyed across oceans, over desert or wilderness, around the modern cities, down into the nadir of caves, up to the summit of mountains, through ancient cities and civilizations, and even into primitive island civilizations in the tropical South Seas. On each journey or voyage, Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville were graphically charting the features of the nineteenth century wasteland, or external Void. Reading the logs of their voyages, and the journals of their journeys, i.e., their poetry and prose, one can only conclude that there is no avenue of escape from the omnipresent Nothingness in the external world--the Nothingness which permeates space, ocean, desert, city, cave, mountain-top, ancient ruins, and primitive paradises.

Yesterday, Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville and/or their "second selves" descended the spiral staircase into "the heart of darkness" and Nothingness in the internal Void. In their journeys into the bottomless abysses of the human psyche, they discovered that the internal Void is both incomprehensible and infinite; in fact, it exceeds the external

in both vastness and vacuity. They perceived that Childe "Harold and his brothers"[5] were victims of a deadness of spirit, that they were enigmas in the realm of nature and also divided and fragmented beings, that their spiritual desires and aspirations were frustrated by their physical limitations, that they were "Isolatoes," alienated, rootless, homeless, friendless, and incapable of experiencing a fruitful love (excluding Ishmael) or a lasting and meaningful relationship with a woman (excluding Cain); and finally that they had suffered "an estrangement from Being itself."[6] These Romantic and Byronic heroes had lost their sense of identity as a consequence of such factors as: their propensity to the psychically debilitating malady of boredom, ennui, or "spleen"; their acute recognition of the duality of man, and their inability to reconcile the split between spirit and "clay"; their isolation and alienation from humanity, and the concomitant loss of love; their incestuous or narcissistic love and their symbolic emasculation which terminates in negation or a repressed longing for oblivion or self-annihilation; and most crucially because of the absence of God in the world, and the subsequent absence of meaning in life. Man in the nineteenth century wasteland was indeed "in a sad pickle and peril" for he had lost his "spade," i.e., in this case, his identity or selfhood, and the negating "sharks" had been sighted through the periscope of the vessel in "the appalling ocean" (Moby-Dick, pp. 274-75), or the internal sea.

[5]Peckham, Beyond the Tragic Vision, p. 102.

[6]Barrett, Irrational Man, p. 133.

"Yesterday," Byron, Baudelaire, Melville, and their heroes, battled the "sharks" with the "spades" of rejection, and affirmative action in order to endure in the wasteland, or shouted "No! in thunder," as they plunged into the annihilating sea of the Void to wrestle with the "sharks" in a heroic act of rebellion and defiance. In dealing with the external and internal Void, they posited two negative solutions: (1) to attempt to escape from it, or (2) to plunge into it as a symbolic act of negation or self-annihilation; and three positive solutions: (1) rejection, or denial, (2) affirmative action, and (3) rebellion, or a final heroic assertion of victory over the "sharks." Ishmael and Cain, for instance, learned that one way of denying or rejecting the Void was through a compassionate, selfless love (i.e., Agape), and the recognition of human solidarity and interdependence in "a mutual, joint-stock world" (Moby-Dick, p. 61) --a world in which a Queequeg holds up his "imbecile candle" to illuminate the way for his fellow shipmates in the "almighty forlornness" of the Void. "There, then, he sat," says Melville, "the sign and symbol of a man without faith, hopelessly holding up hope in the midst of despair" (Moby-Dick, p. 224). Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville revealed their own capacity to endure in the "almighty forlornness" of the wasteland by recognizing the existence of the Void without and within, and by attempting to deal with it affirmatively through physical and mental action. Particularly through the act of creation itself, they were able to "remake," or to "replenish" the Void. And finally, the defiant Romantic heroes, such as Ahab, Pierre, and Manfred, possessed the capacity to shout "No! in thunder" when confronted by the Nothingness of the Void. They would use their "spades" not only against the "sharks," but against

the mighty leviathan himself.

Yesterday, though encompassed by a Void above and below, before and behind, without and within, and around and around, Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville, nevertheless, recognized that "man has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance"--a spirit capable of facing this omnipresent Void in the heart of the wasteland world, and in his own heart as well. As William Faulkner declares in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech:

> I decline to accept the end of man. It is easy enough to say that man is immortal simply because he will endure; that when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then there will still be one more sound: that of his puny inexhaustible voice, still talking. I refuse to accept this. I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity, and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.[7]

In the final analysis, Byron, Baudelaire, and Melville recognized, like Faulkner, "that when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded" off into the Great Void, man will "not merely endure," but "will prevail" in his confrontations with both the external and the internal Void. He "will prevail" because he has "a soul, a spirit capable of compassion

[7] Faulkner At West Point, ed. Joseph L. Fant,III, and Robert Ashley (New York, 1964), pp. 131-32.

and sacrifice and endurance." Poets and writers, such as these three Romantics, have endeavored to "help man endure" the Nothingness without and within by reminding him in their poetry and prose of the compassion of an Ishmael, Cain, or the poet-hero of The Flowers Of Evil; the sacrifice of a Queequeg, Cain, or Pierre; the endurance of a Childe Harold, Cain, or Ishmael, the isolated and alienated wanderers; and the heroic courage of a Manfred, Pierre, or Ahab who said "No! in thunder" as they passed "through the Custom House" and crossed "the frontiers into Eternity"--as they crossed the "frontiers" between the nineteenth century wasteland and the Great inscrutable and illimitable Void beyond.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

p. 20

Le Gouffre (CXLVI)

Pascal avait son gouffre, avec lui se mouvant.
-- Hélas! tout est abîme, -- action, désir, rêve,
Parole! et sur mon poil qui tout droit se relève
Mainte fois de la Peur je sens passer le vent.

En haut, en bas, partout, la profondeur, la grève,
Le silence, l'espece affreux et captivant ...
Sur le fond de mes nuits Dieu de son doigt savant
Dessine un cauchemar multiforme et sans trêve.

J'ai peur du sommeil comme on a peur d'un grand trou,
Tout plein de vague horreur, menant on ne sait où;
Je ne vois qu'infini par toutes les fenêtres,

Et mon esprit, toujours du vertige hanté,
Jalouse du néant l'insensibilité.
-- Ah! ne jamais sortir des Nombres et des Êtres!

pp. 31-32

Le Couvercle (CXLIV)

En quelque lieu qu'il aille, ou sur mer ou sur terre,
Sous un climat de flamme ou sous un soleil balnc,
Serviteur de Jésus, courtisan de Cythère,
Mendiant ténébreux ou Crésus rutilant,

Citadin, compagnard, vagabond, sédentaire,
Que son petit cerveau soit actif ou soit lent,
Partout l'homme subit la terreur du mystère,
Et ne regarde en haut qu'avec un oeil tremblant.

En haut, le Ciel! ce mur de caveau qui l'étouffe,
Plafond illuminé par un opéra bouffe
Où chaque histrion foule un sol ensanglanté;

Terreur du libertin, espoir du fol ermite:
Le Ciel! couvercle noir de la grande marmite
Où bout l'imperceptible et vaste Humanité.

p. 107

Les Petites Vieilles

Honteuses d'exister, ombres ratatinées,
Peureuses, le dos bas, vous côtoyez les murs;
Et nul ne vous salue, étranges destinées!
Débris d'humanité pour l'éternité mûrs!

Mais, moi, moi qui de loin tendrement vous surveille,
L'oeil inquiet, fixé sur vos pas incertains,
Tout comme si j'étais votre père, ô merveille!
Je goûte à votre insu des plaisirs clandestins:

Je vois s'épanouir vos passions novices;
Sombres ou lumineux, je vis vos jours perdus;
Mon coeur multiplié jouit de tous vos vices!
Mon âme resplendit de toutes vos vertus!

Ruines! ma famille! ô cerveaux congénères!
Je vous fais chaque soir un solennel adieu!
Où serez-vous demain, Eves octogénaires,
Sur qui pèse la griffe effoyable de Dieu?

(XCI.iv.69-84)