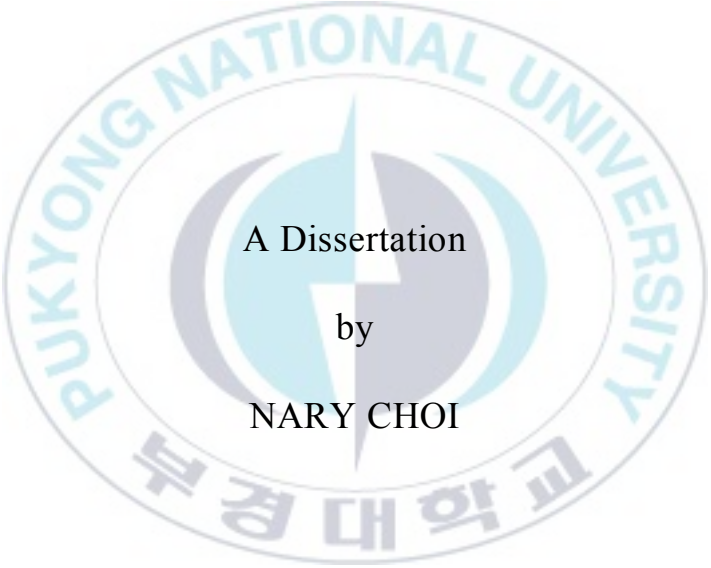
Thesis for the Degree of Master of Arts

Ship on the Ocean: Ambiguity surrounding the Pequod in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*



A Dissertation

by

NARY CHOI

Division of English Language and Literature

The Graduate School

Pukyong National University

February 2020

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

In Division of English Language and Literature, The Graduate Course,

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January 25, 2020

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Abstract

This paper contends that the ambiguity of the Pequod on the ocean in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* is one of the strategic metaphors for the author to criticize the ideas of fixity and centrality infused by the American nationalists towards the public during the antebellum era. Emphasizing an increasing economic and industrial reputation of American sailing vessels during this era, some contemporary American intellectuals used the independent image of the ship on the ocean as a symbol of the nation's self-reliance and its superiority to other nations. In many of literary works of the time, the ship on the ocean was depicted as something fixed and static and the grounded center in the middle of the ocean while its fluid, untraceable and unidentifiable characteristics were neglected. When it came to *Moby-Dick,* however, Melville discloses the hidden aspects of the ship on the ocean, specifically the Pequod on the ocean, by portraying the ambiguity of its space which is hardly defined into any fixed framings. To explore the complex space of the Pequod, this thesis adopts several notable oceanographers' ideas of the ocean's ambiguity and its complicated relationship with the land. Based on the theory of a seashore, I argue that the Pequod on the ocean is a perplexedly conflated space which collaborates the two disparate spatial characteristics of the land and the ocean. In addition, this thesis examines how the coexistence of the two entities affects the sailors'

thoughts of living in the Pequod. Melville divulges the illusion behind the ideas of fixity and centrality with one of the ship's own natures: the incessant motion on the ocean. I read the Pequod's incessant moving as a physical and figurative journey. Throughout the Pequod's ever-lasting journey, Melville also deplores that his contemporary nation's craving for fixing and centralizing its values among others was an unrealistic ideal.

바다 위의 배: 허먼 멜빌의『모비딕』속 피쿼드 호를 둘러싼 모호성

최 나 리

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요　약

본 연구는『모비딕』에서 그려진 바다에 떠 있는 피쿼드 호의 모호성이 멜빌이 의도한 문학적 장치였음을 주장하고자 한다. 이를 통해 본 논문은 멜빌이 19 세기 초 미국 국가주의자들이 대중들에게 주입한 고정성과 중심성을 비판하고자 했음을 말하고자 한다. 바다를 항해하는 배는 19 세기 미국 경제 및 산업을 일으키는 원동력이었다. 이러한 사회배경 하에서 당대 지식인들은 강하고 자생적인 미국 국가 모습에 대한 열망을 독립적 배 이미지를 통해 표출하였다. 당시 다수의 문학 작품에서 바다 위의 배는 마치 바다에 단단한 뿌리를 내린 고정적이고 굳건한 중심점으로 묘사되었다. 이로 인해 바다 위의 배가 가진 유연하고, 추적이 힘든, 명확히 정의 내려 지지 않는 이미지들은 외면되었다. 하지만 멜빌은 바다를 항해하는 피쿼드 호를 통해 당대 국가주의를 지지하던 다수의 문학작가들이 그려내지 않았던 배의 다양한 이미지들을 보여준다. 피쿼드 호의 다양한 모습은 바다 위에 떠있는 배라는 공간이 고정적 틀로 쉽게 정의 내려 지지 않는 모호한 공간임을 보여준다. 배의 모호성의 원인을 규명하기 위해 본 논문은 바다의 모호한 공간성과 바다와 육지 간의 관계를 연구한 기존의 해양학의 이론 중 해변이론을 참고한다. 이를 통해 바다 위의 배는 육지와 바다의 이질적인 공간적 특징들이 복잡하게 융합된 공간임을 주장하고자 한다. 또한 바다와 육지의 특징들이 공존하는 배라는 공간이 그 속에서 삶을 살아가는 선원들의 사고에 어떠한 영향을 미치는지를 분석한다. 멜빌은 배의 근본적 성질 중 하나인 끊임없는 움직임을 통해 고정성과 중심성 뒤에 숨겨진 환상을 파헤친다. 바다 위에서 끊임없이 움직이는 피쿼드 호는 배가 물리적 그리고 비유적으로 지속적 항해 중에 있음을 의미한다. 끊임없이 이어지는 피쿼드 호의 여정을 통해 멜빌은 미국만의 가치를 규명하고 정의 내리려 한 당시 미국사회의 비현실적 이상의 문제점을 고발한다.

1. Introduction

The ship on the sea was one of the themes addressed by the maritime artists during the nineteenth century. Aside from European marine artists like J. M. W. Turner, Ivan Aivazovsky and Montague Dawson, America emigrants such as James E. Buttersworth and Robert Salmon detailed ship portraits and maritime life of the era. The interest in the contemporary ship and its journey on the vast ocean was, to some extent, in line with the increasing reputation of the sailing vessels: they were one of the leading forms of transport for goods and travelers as well as the leading cash cow of the profitable natural resources like a sperm oil. In addition to the various roles, the contemporary ships had enabled the formidable number of people in Europe to across the Atlantic to build a new nation. The settlers' new nation was, then, developed by the profits generated from the sailing vessels. This rapid development inspired the nation enough to grow the nation's desires for controlling over more and more areas under its territory.

Considering the nation's strong aspiration, the ship on the ocean was also a snapshot which directly revealed the nation's cravings for placing the nation's own values upon nature. In this regard, Ralph Waldo Emerson's delineation on the relationship between human and nature explicitly reflects American Nationalism. In his most well-known essay *Nature* (1836), Emerson praises the grandeur of the nature overall, but above all the marvels, he emphasizes a discard of old traditions, past and orthodox views on the relationship between human and nature. By describing the ideal self as the one who

has “a transparent eyeball,” the essay abstractly states Emerson’s desire for placing the value of the self on top with the phrase “I see all” (26). Along with the relationship between nature and humans, the one between a ship and the ocean is also conceptualized into reflecting his lopsided view on the self and its relationship with others. The natural sea, for instance, becomes one of “the parts” which work “for the profit of man”(27) while a ship, a symbol of the “man” (27) in the ocean is no longer waiting for “favoring” gales, but “carries” strong winds in the “boiler” of the ship (28). Encouraged by Emerson’s ideals, some literary writers and painters of the time simplified the scene of the ship on the ocean. In their illustrations, the image of the ship on the ocean is often regarded as a solitary heroin fighting against other elements, such as the hostile environmental conditions of the ocean and the antagonistic sea creatures.

According to their views, the ship on the ocean only represents the meeting of the two irreconcilable and disparate spaces.[1] However, the ship also has other characteristics similar with the sea, such as incessant movement with leaving no mark behind, which makes the ship’s images unfixed, indefinable and elusive. These multi-features embedded in the ship space affected cultures of human society formed in the ship during a journey, which was seen in nineteenth-century American sailing vessels such as merchant vessels and whale ships. Hester Blum’s *The View from the Masthead*: *Maritime Imagination and*

[1] In this paper, the word “space” refers to the three-dimensional extent in which the objects and cultural events are temporarily located and positioned. This definition refers to the anthological view of space in relation to the societal atmosphere and cultural environments and the geological view, in which measurable dimensional extents compose of a space. Later I will discuss, the main theoretical frame works applied in this study is the Anthology and the Oceanography which shares the geographical way of seeing the space, so that the meaning of the word “space” in this study is limited to the two fields of studies’ definitions.

Antebellum American Sea (2008) articulates it in detail. The ship societies during the antebellum era were a mixture of strictness and near unlimited freedom. While the ship's reconciliation with the surrounding environments provided free sailing courses on the ocean, the ship ironically had a strict and limited social system. Although it was to effectively manage the sea crews to inhabit in a physically confined space for long, this strict atmosphere was in contrast to the unlimited openness of the ocean. As experiencing ambivalent situations simultaneously, the ship society cultivated its own cultures, rules and class system. However, this societal system was unconventional to the mainland society. Due to these unmoored forms of the society, nineteenth-century American sailors' social positions were rather blurred. While the "putative freedom" of nautical life led sailors to become an international group unbounded from the land-based specific custom or norms (Blum, "The Prospect of Oceanic Studies" 4), they were inevitably exposed to the barbarous working conditions not to mention the captain's despotism.[2]

Nineteenth-century sea crews' elusive social status accompanied with their unbounded societal system on board made the images of the ship on the ocean more perplexed. This is one of the reasons that I could not simply argue that nineteenth-century vessels on the ocean had dual features of the land and the ocean. The ship had land-based physicality such as solid materiality and at the same time, it had oceanic quality such as fluidity. Affected by these aspects, ship society was comprised of features of both the

[2] Blum contends that the extremity of the captain's power during the nineteenth century is seen in the captain's authority to administer corporal punishment such as a flogging to his sailors (*The Sea Eye* 111).

land and the ocean by showing some features similar to the land while others were analogous with the ocean. Thus, the ship space seems a medium embracing both the land and the ocean on the one hand. On the other hand, because of this embracement, the ship space does not belong to either the land or the ocean. Consequently, the sailors on it feel somewhat alienated from both spaces.

The ambiguity of the ship appealed to some nineteenth-century literary writers, including Herman Melville. In one of his masterpieces, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* published in 1851, Melville shows various types of ambiguous situations in the Pequod, the American whaling ship on a venture as floating on the open sea. Throughout the eyes of Ishmael, the major narrator and protagonist, Melville looks closely into why and how the Pequod space is seen as ironic, and what sorts of conflicts and discrepancies this paradoxical space leads on. One of the reasons for the Pequod's unfixed and thereby indefinable images is that the ship does not seem completely or clearly belonging to, according to the terms in the Oceanic Studies, either the land-based or ocean-based characteristics.[3] The more the dilemma gave rise to the uncertain and unfixed reality, the more the nation became obsessed with the ideas of fixity and centrality. In the process, the images of nineteenth-century American ships on the ocean were simplified and overgeneralized into something stable and fixed. However, the Pequod on the ocean in

[3] My use of terms, "land-based" and "ocean-based," are borrowed from Yamashiro's *American Sea Literature: Seascapes, Beach Narratives, and Underwater Explorations* (2014). He addresses that "land-based" known as "the terrestrial" refers to "values, experiences, expressions, or imagination related to land." Meanwhile, "ocean-based" also called as "the oceanic" pertains to the seas (9). In addition to Yamashiro's definitions, the term "the land-based view" is linked with the images such as "static [and] bordered" (Steinberg 247) while "the ocean-based" view is connected with the images of fluid and unbounded.

Moby-Dick does not have any simple, clear and thereby identifiable concept as nineteenth-century American nationalists illustrated.

In order to rebut this illusion, Melville makes use of a literary strategy in the novel. As a microcosm of nineteenth-century America, the Pequod on the ocean compressively shows how the different ideas could exist in the ship space. With the diversity colliding with each other, Melville reminds that any single idea that Ahab valorizes is as significant as other sailors' views on the ship. Ahab simplifies the images of the Pequod into an independent entity and inseminates his idea into the ship society. According to Ahab's ideals, the Pequod can be or must be fixed as an immovable center in the sea. His monomaniac delusion is, in fact, rooted in fear and anxiety over the whale Moby-Dick. The more he frets about fighting against the whale, the more Ahab boasts about the fixed image of the ship on the ocean and his prurience towards hunting the whale. The Pequod's fixed and stable images generated from Ahab's anxiety had the specific corollaries in the actual scene in nineteenth-century American literary nationalism. The anxiety over vulnerable, provisional and fragile nationality existed during the early nineteenth century, which was partially unveiled through a series of wars and conflicts with England (Baym and Levine 5). In the case of the Pequod space, the Ahab's oversimplification and the force of his ideas towards his sailors end up with the destruction of the Pequod society, not to mention the death of nearly all sailors.

Another literary weapon that Melville applies in *Moby-Dick* to criticize the problems of the fixity and centrality is the illustration of the relational aspects between

the ocean and the land. In the novel, the Pequod shows that its physical and figurative complexity is, at least partially, caused by the ship's dual characteristics of the land and the ocean. Many studies have contributed to understanding the ocean and its unidentifiable complexity depicted in *Moby-Dick*, but the Pequod's ambiguity and its meaning to nineteenth-century America have received scare scholarly attention. In order to approach the meaning of the Pequod on the ocean, this thesis adopts Yamashiro's seashore theory and Steinberg's study of the ocean activists. These studies – I would discuss them in detail in Chapter Two – help to understand the forms of the coexistence of both the land and the ocean in the Pequod space along with the effect of its spatial ambiguity toward the sailors.

The third literary strategy to criticize the nation's obsession with the ideas of fixity and centrality is the Pequod's multiple images and the attributions to its diversity. The novel consistently reminds the readers of the fact that the Pequod is in incessant motion on the ocean. The ship's irregular movement on the ocean makes the images of the ship look unidentifiable, unfixed and multifaceted. On the journey, the Pequod is actively interactive with the ever-changing surroundings such as the environmental conditions and other objects floating in the ocean. Due to the intertwined relationships between the ship and its surroundings, the images of the Pequod are often understood together with the peripheral environmental conditions. In addition, the Pequod is often analogous to the things such as boats and debris of wracked ships as well as living organisms such as the white whale and Pip. As the images of the Pequod are closely linked to the complicated

images of others, many types of figurative and physical journeys are overlapped together with the Pequod's. Like Delbanco's delineation, the journey of the book *Moby-Dick* "begins by refusing to begin," and "undercuts" all its own conclusions as it cannot "properly be said to end" (xxvii).

Given that this thesis is as an exploratory work to discover the social and cultural meanings of the Pequod's ambiguity, the following chapters pose the interdisciplinary analysis. Drawing on oceanography, social geology and American Sea Narrative, I will analyze the meanings of sailing vessels to the nation within the context of nineteenth-century America. In this regard, in what way the scene of the ship on the ocean was understood by American nationalists is specifically discussed in detail. Employing the theoretical and historical backgrounds, Chapter Three examines how the Pequod on the ocean is depicted in the novel. By focusing on one of the key purposes of the sailing vessels as to carry people, I look closely at the features of the Pequod society along with the human practice on it. Diverse perspectives and cultures coexist in the Pequod society so that they are hardly conceptualized into a single image. In Chapter Four, the multiple images of the Pequod are examined in detail. Since the ship exists for carrying people and things from one place to another, the ship's incessant movement on the ocean plays a role in showing the images of the ship. In addition, the ship's dynamic interaction with the surrounding conditions, things and living organisms is scrutinized based on the text analysis. Through these examinations, this study carefully approaches Melville's thoughts

of his nation and the problems embedded in the ideas of fixity and centrality, dominant across the nation during the antebellum era.

2. Ship on the Ocean: A Symbol of Complexity

The ocean is not simply a peripheral environment to the ship. Rather, it affects the ship to a great extent. In order to transport passengers from a continent to another, a ship should overcome or at least reconcile itself with the oceanic conditions. That is why a ship is built upon the solid materiality with providing passengers and goods with relatively a firm ground, but at the same time it should move up and down or to and fro according to the ocean's movements. This means that the ship space on the ocean has static and grounded terrestrial characteristics as well as fluid and unbounded oceanic ones simultaneously.

In what way, then, are these two disparate spatial characteristics composed in the ship? As part of the answer to this question, Shin Yamashiro's seashore is a practical theory. While a seashore physically shows both the land and the ocean at the same time, the space reveals the relationship between the land and the ocean. Of course, this thesis is aware of that simply defining a seashore's spatial aspects as parallel with a ship's spatial ones has a risk. A ship is not a natural scenery, but a social space for sailors to cultivate a society. Nevertheless, the seashore's spatial role to the relationship between the land and the ocean is worth considering especially when it comes to examining the features of the ship. This thesis, therefore, limitedly adopts the seashore's spatial role and its meaning to the land and the ocean.

What, then, does the space embracing both the land and the ocean mean to human and the human society? In this respect, Steinberg's study of the ocean activists' responses to the ocean is a useful framework. Those who are engaged in the ocean activities such as surfing, swimming or sailing, often experience a strange impression about their beings in the ocean. The reason, according to Steinberg, is that these ocean encounters' land-based cultures and knowledges collapse with the experience of the ocean so that the consequential impression and feeling are estranged from both the ocean and the land. Based on these ocean encounters' cultural mixing between the land and the ocean, the role of the ship space to the disparately separate entities such as the land and the ocean and human and nature can be explained. With its purpose of connecting people with the ocean and the land and the ocean, a ship on the ocean is not subordinated into any of the areas completely. At the same time, thanks to this unboundedness, the ship space acts as a node connecting both entities without segregating one from another.

This inclusive features of the ship on the ocean was, however, implicitly forced to be simplified into the sole representation of American nationalists' interests during the antebellum era. Together with the title of the leading transports, nineteenth-century American sailing vessels were one of the emphatic national transports. As vigorously exploring the uncharted sea, these ships served as one of the strategical images for the nationalists to show a strong and self-reliant concept of the United States. Upon the fabricated images, nineteenth-century American sailing vessels were applied as the themes, topics and background settings in several literary works during the time. Despite

the mainstream writers' attempt to infuse the fixed, solid and centered images to the ship on the ocean, some of the writers, including Melville, made use of the ship as a critical metaphor to deplore the nation's fantasy of placing the America's values atop by justifying the nation's brutal expansionism towards others.

Prior to the analysis on the social atmosphere during the antebellum era in relation to the scene of the ship on the ocean, this chapter starts with an examination of the features of the ship on the ocean from oceanic views. Since the ship is a compound space with the terrestrial and the oceanic characteristics embedded within, existing studies in terms of how to see the ocean and its relationship with the land are discussed in advance. Based on it, both the physical and cultural meanings of the ship on the ocean to the relationship between the land and the ocean are addressed. These primary studies will lead us to understand Melville's use of the ship on the ocean in *Moby-Dick*.

2.1. Ship on the Ocean from the Oceanic Views

In critical courses varying from history and culture to literature, the ocean is often considered as an abstract entity. It has been applied as a broad theme or an organizing metaphor (Blum, "Oceanic Studies" 151). Moreover, the analysis of the maritime world is often filled with rather obscure figurative languages (Blum, "The Prospect of Oceanic Studies" 3). This is in part because its transformative physicality, uncountable immanence and volume generate different perspectives, moods and ideas. William Boelhower refers to this phenomenon to a "strategic possibility" (93) of the ocean. According to his

descriptions, the ocean is a “highly fluid space” which has the figurative features of “dispersion, conjunction, distribution, contingency, heterogeneity, and of intersecting and stratified lines and images” (92-93). Due to these unfixed images, characterizing the ocean space has been a controversial issue among the oceanographers. In this regard, Yamashiro aptly points out that the distinction between the land and the ocean remains “vague” (9). This also causes scholars to understand the ocean and its relationship with the land in different ways. The land and the ocean are regarded as “antonyms” to each other while others consider them as the “similarly” paired counterparts (Yamashiro 9).

Sylvia A. Earle’s and Carl Safina’s different views on the ocean and the land are a case in point. Earl argues that disregarding the difference between the land and the ocean causes the ocean to be understood as a space “unknown,” commonly “ignored” or “overlooked” (xvi). That is why Earl emphasizes the ocean’s distinctiveness against the land. In contrast to Earl’s view, Safina focuses on the ocean’s similar aspects with the land. Safina attributes the impersonal treatments on the marine ecosystem and oceanic creatures as commercial commodities to people’s view that the ocean is different from the land. Thus, he makes use of terrestrial metaphors as “similes” to connect the oceanic features with that of the terrestrial (Yamashiro 3). Also, to increase peoples’ awareness of sea creatures, Safina applies the terrestrial imagery into the ocean, in which the Bluefin tuna, for example, is “likened” to terrestrial wild animals on the land (Yamashiro 4).

With respect to these two experts’ divergent approaches to the relationship between the ocean and the land, Yamashiro looks at the reason of how come these

contrastive views are applied in the relationship between the land and the ocean. To find it out, he focuses on the features seen in a shoreline in which the ocean meets the land. As the area filled with the incessant phenomena in which a wave keeps blurring the boundary between the land and the ocean, the margin of the land or the ocean consistently appears and disappears. Regarding this obscure borderline between the land and the ocean, Yamashiro suggests that the concepts of the ocean's relationship with the land could also oscillate the categories between contrast and analogy. Moreover, he states that a seashore space directly reveals this unfixed and thereby flexible relationship between the land and the ocean. With respect to the complicated features of the seashore space, Rachel Carson observes that,

> The Edge of the sea is a strange and beautiful place. All through the long history of earth it has been an area of unrest in which waves have broken heavily against the land, in which the tides have pressed forward over the continents, receded, and then returned [. . .] Not only do the tides advance and retreat in their eternal rhythm, but the level of the sea itself is never at rest. It rises or falls as the glaciers melt or grow, as the floor of the deep ocean basins shifts under its increasing load of sediments, or as the earth's crust along the continental margins warps up or down in adjustment to strain and tension. Today a little more land may belong to the sea, tomorrow a little less. (1)

Carson's illustration of a seashore space is a power alarm to a series of disputes regarding how to clearly define the ocean's relationship with the land. In other words, the seashore

can be physical evidence to show the complicated relationship between the land and the ocean so that dividing one from another becomes a farfetched idea. In addition, the seashore space directly shows what it looks like when the ocean and the land meet each other, that is the meeting of two disparate spaces intermingled with each other. Regarding this feature, Yamashiro phrases that the meaning of the ocean to the land and vice versa are “contrastive” yet “inseparable” (6) from each other, like two sides of a coin. From this context, the question of whether the ocean is in contrast or analogous to the land seems a consumptive dispute as it seems a fight to seize the area which is “a little more” today, and “a little less” tomorrow (Carson 1).

The seashore’s spatial duality and its embedded meanings to the land and the ocean are similar aspects seen in the ship space on the ocean. For instance, the land-based solid materiality of a ship provides a certain ground on which sailors can stand. At the same time, the ship’s incessant fluid movement like the ocean makes it look unfixed, unbounded thereby indefinable and unidentifiable. With these perplexed aspects, the ship on the ocean represents a shoreline’s role as coexisting the land-based quality with the ocean-based one in the middle of the ocean. On the sea, the ship space provides room for the land and the ocean to collapse into each other, and the process of this incorporation forms the images of the ship. As both spatial aspects are interactive with each other without losing their “inherent essences” (Yamashiro 6), the ship space reveals the interwoven state of the two spaces. Despite that similarity, a ship space has different

features compared to a seashore: it certainly seizes its own space and sailors form their livings and society on board.

Among the different aspects compared to a seashore space, human experiences formed in the ship space are a case in point. The importance of the human interaction with the ocean space is well acknowledged in the fields of geopolitics and social geology as they mostly deal with the meanings of a physical space to human and human society. In this regard, the findings of geologist Jon Anderson are worth considering. In his several studies of the ocean's geological values to human, Anderson examines the human experiences of the ocean from those who are engaged in the ocean activities such as a surfing, a swimming and a sailing. In the analysis of a series of the interviews with them, he finds that their impressions and expressions of the ocean are different from the non-ocean activists who only imagine the ocean in their heads. Those such as surfers, swimmers and sailors often conflate the physical experience of the ocean with their land-based cultures and the social background knowledges they learned back in land (Anderson 580). For instance, they review their experience of the ocean as somewhat becoming "one with sea" or "at one" in the "amalgam" of the sea and the swell (Anderson 580). In the case of surfers, Anderson states that they undergo the feeling of not simply "connecting" with the waves, but also "interpenetrating" into the ocean (580). As they float and move according to the rhythmic pattern of the ocean's fluidity, these surfers feel a sense of "union" with and being part of the ocean's movement. Due to their solid physicality, however, they also feel becoming an independent being, "at one" (Anderson

580), in the ocean. Meanwhile, those who encounter the ocean experience "losing coherent sense" of a self as their land-based cultures, norms and notions collapse with the physical experiences of the ocean. As a result, they are often confused with whether their beings belong to the land or the ocean. Regarding this confusion, Anderson argues that human experiences of the ocean facilitate "a new sense" of space emerging as a "consequence" (580).

In fact, a similar paradox occurring to the ocean encounters was also the scene seen among American sailors almost a century ago. In line with the ocean's fluid, insubstantial and thereby unfixed unboundedness, the social and political identity of nineteenth-century American sailors also became blurred and, strictly speaking, vanished away (Blum, "Melville and Oceanic" 24). Although they seemed forgotten by people in mainland American ships had their own societies which had a strict code of rules and conducts, like those in land, which confined the sailors' lives (Blum, *The Sea Eye* 112). Ironically, however, this societal system running the ship society during the antebellum era was not the form identical to that of the mainland. While the land community was rooted in the democratic system – its definition was differently understood to nineteenth-century America though – a ship society during the time was strictly based on the feudal system (Shoemaker 40). This uniqueness was partially due to the ship society which was formed based on the "consequence" of the crash between the land-based ways of thoughts and the sailors' physical experiences of the ocean (Anderson 580). Despite the diverse

features seen in the ship societies during the antebellum era, people in the land did not see the ship as it is.

2.2 Ship on the Ocean in Nineteenth-century America

A sailing vessel was considered by nineteenth-century Americans as a symbol of patriotism since it performed multiple roles for the nation during the era. For those who had dreamed about a new life in a new land, American ships became a kind of Noah's ark, a big carriage that conveyed an exploring number of people, not to mention their cultures and traditions, from Europe to America. Moreover, these sailing vessels protected and drew a new line of national territory. Regarding a series of contributions, American sailing vessels, such as American navy warships and whaling ships were near second to none. When it came to the whale ships, for instance, their roles were versatile. They were ocean frontiers, protectors or explorers as discovering the "new" water and land territory in sailing over Atlantic, Pacific, Indian and Arctic Oceans (Dolin 206).

Besides their intrepidly patriotic position, sailing vessels during the antebellum era were one of the prime movers which steered a robust growth of the nation's industry and economy at the front. The development of navigation technology enabled ships, including whaling ships, to march into the sea. Comprising the fifth largest industrial sector in America of the time, the nation was hugely dependent on the highly profitable products

that the whaling ships, especially, brought back to port.[4] With the whaling vessels' contribution to the national growth, productivity and profits, the American whaling ships during the "golden age" of nineteenth century rejoiced with their "unparalleled" status (Dolin 205).

Amidst the sailing vessels' growing reputation, many American artists also applied the scene of the ship on the ocean as a theme and a place setting in their works. Sparked by the War of 1812, the patriotic movements rising from some American artists soon posed in the mainstream and their desires to set a "new" political identity of the nation led them to seek native materials. (Stein 27). In this situation, these highly patriotic artists focused on the relationship between American's ships and the ocean in particular. According to the artists' political and societal stance, the scene of the ship on the ocean was often portrayed in a way that boasted the ship's dauntlessness against the ocean's hostility. For instance, contemporary painters, such as John Singleton Copley and Thomas Birch infused political overtones into their paintings by sharply dividing Americans from Englishmen or more radically emphasized their willingness to create visual symbols of the new nationalism in the paintings (Stein 18, 31). These painters depicted the ocean as the rough and risky antagonist to the ship or expressed a "harmonious" relationship between men and nature for feeling no need to domesticate or "compress" a "fearful" image of the sea (Stein 23, 31).

[4] Regarding the importance of the whaling business to the growth of the nation, leading U.S. senator William H. Seward described whaling as an important "source of national wealth" (Dolin 206).

While these artists' ideal figures of the nation were expressed through drawings and paintings, the literary worlds also zestfully corresponded to American nationalism by making use of the natural scenery, including the ship on the ocean. For instance, Emerson applied the natural scenery as a strategy to lead a continuous "shaping influence" on the U.S. culture (Rowe 1) and many intellectuals supporting his ideas packed in the mainstream during the antebellum era. In *Nature*, Emerson stresses the value of the self by defining it as the independent and self-reliant center of the worlds while the value of others, such as nature, is regarded as relatively insignificant. By generalizing diverse forms and shapes seen in nature such as the land and the ocean into a simple title "nature" (24), Emerson separates the nature from the self by affirming it as "NOT ME" (24), "all" (26), or "the field" (27). He also reveals his wishes to "behold" (26) the nature as the processions of the self. When it comes to the relationship between the ship and the ocean in *Nature*, his desires are explicit: the ocean is considered as "ancillary" (32) to the ship, while the ship represents a bold "means" which "carries" (28) the ocean. Moreover, the ship on the ocean is not "to be tossed," but is "a house to stand" (44) on the ocean. From the geological aspects, Emerson's stratified set of the relationship between the ship and the ocean directly reveals that nineteenth-century America's self-esteemed fantasy to stretch the "geographical destiny" (Hsu 4) of the nation. American whaling ships during the time were, thus, regarded as the emissary reflecting the ethos of American nationalism. Meanwhile, brutal exploitation of sea creatures including whales was

executed in the sea. In land, the territorial expansionism justified America's intrusion over the spaces belonging to other nations.

Toward the nation's brutal deeds, Melville consistently stripped off the vexing issues by revealing the problems embedded in the ideas of fixity and centrality. He deplored that the nation's overwhelmed desires did not see the reality in which the diverse ideas, values and cultures existed. Besides, he criticized that his nation is obsessed with oversimplifying those various values into a single concept driven by the elite groups. In an essay to Nathaniel Hawthorne that celebrated Hawthorne's publication of Mosses from an Old Manse (1846), Melville denounced the dismal situations by depicting that the world is in the "blackness" (Baym and Levine 1431), which comes with the "blindness of eyes" (Rose 543) smitten by "the world of lies" (Baym and Levine 1432). In response to the nation's overwhelmed fervor of the fixity and centrality, Melville persistently investigated on the ambiguity. In this regard, the Pequod on the ocean in the novel is one of the examples which directly show how it is hard to fix a universal or ultimate concept into the ship incessantly floating on the ocean. Instead of the fixed concept, the Pequod on the ocean has various features depending on one's perspective and different situations that the ship falls in. Many critics during the nineteenth century often saw Melville's approaches as a failure of suggesting an alternative and universal resolution. However, his unbounded points of view did not at least deny or disregard any excluded. Melville's depictions of the Pequod on the ocean, therefore, look obscure and complicated, but it became a critical strategy to deplore the force of the oversimplified image of a single

nation which turns out the violent tools that impinged on the individual's rights, values and cultures. By putting his life even at unease, Melville, like the words he wrote to Hawthorne, lied "cunning glimpses" (Baym and Levine 1432) at the "uneven balance[d]" world, and brought about "the other side" after "touch[ing]" it, rather than "inspecting" it (1431).

3. The Pequod on the Ocean: A Medium for the Worlds Intermingled with Each Other

When seeing a ship apart from the peripheral environments and surroundings, it seems the fruit of science and mathematics in precision. In order to convey people and things from one place to another under the non-inhabitable environmental conditions for a long time, every inch applied in its design is based on the accurate physical laws. What, then, causes the ship—and especially the Pequod in the novel— to be seen as an ambiguous space? One of the answers to this question is the different perspectives of the people on board, whose images of the ship are formed together with the various elements they experienced such as the surrounding environments, situations, individual knowledges or emotions. In this regard, the novel shows how these elements make the ship on the ocean a profoundly metaphorical space which enables the multifaceted interpretations to be applied into it. However, this diversity is rather intentionally ignored by the near absolute power of Ahab's view on the ocean and the ship on it. Ahab often considers the ocean as the antagonist against the ship's journey so that the ocean should be defeated, conquered or possessed. The ocean's vastness becomes simplified into the one which opens a new opportunity for humans' profit-gaining or is to be controlled while other features seen in the ocean such as fluidity, unboundedness, chartlessness and immanent volume under the surface are regarded as obstacles to overcome. Upon this falsified

image of the ocean, the Pequod is, for Ahab, presumed as a land-based heroic means, such as a horse or a train, which rushes straight towards the destination. However, the Pequod on the ocean is neither a horse nor a train. It is deeply dependent on the surrounding environmental conditions of the ocean. Due to Ahab's illusive fantasy, his views on the Pequod often have several self-contradictions, which are often witnessed by other sailors, including Ishmael.

From the societal contexts, Ahab's exaggerated images of the Pequod explicitly reflect nineteenth-century American nationalists' overwhelmed fervor to place the nation's values atop even above nature. American nationalists defined humans, especially American who can surpass nature and can claim it as their territorial property. This explains the reasons why Ahab is strongly obsessed with overcoming nature. In addition to Ahab's narrow perspective, the way in which Ahab makes use of his social power to infuse this fantasy into his sailors trenchantly connotes the social milieu of nineteenth-century America. The power elite groups such as merchants, intellects, politicians and philosophers were a center of proliferation of the delusive national desires. Behind Ahab's gallant revengefulness, however, there were growing fears over the white whale and uncontrollable conditions of the ocean and the Pequod society, which had corollaries in the actual scene of the force of the nation's overwhelmed ideas to the public during the antebellum era. They had an increasing anxiety over the fluid reality.

Although Ahab regards his fantasy as the definite truth, the Pequod's spatial ambiguity reveals that it is only one of the ways to see the ship. As the different ideas and

perspectives are clustered at the same space, they meet and collapse each other so that the readers without notice are required to compare one with another simultaneously. As the ship on the ocean connects the land with the ocean, each different idea is met and intermingled with each other in the ship space.

3.1. The Ambiguity of the Pequod on the Ocean: A Space with Incessant Interaction

From the aspects of the terrestrial and the oceanic quality, the Pequod on the ocean has both qualities simultaneously. The ship's physicality and solid materiality evoke at the grounded and firmed image of the land while its state of being, floating on the ocean, reminds one of the oceanic images. On the insubstantial and ungraspable ocean, the Pequod moves to and fro, and up and down, like the wave on the ocean, which affects its images seen as unbounded and unfixed. How do these complicated transformations affect the sailors on board? Compared to the ocean's insubstantiality, the ship serves as an inhabitable place for the sailors so that the Pequod becomes the sole home for them to rely on. As this instance shows, the concepts of the Pequod are formed with considering the peripheral atmosphere surrounding it. When the immanent vastness of the ocean is "heartless" and causes "intolerable" "lonesomeness," the solid image of the Pequod is reinforced among the Pequod sailors. That is why the sailors attempt to be closer to the ship during a swimming practice, by hugging and coasting only the sides of it (371). The

reliability over the Pequod is, however, temporal comfort. As long as the ship is on the ocean, it cannot ensure their safety ultimately for the ocean's hostility could any time "swallow" up (273) and turn the ship into the "split wrecks" (248).

Another instance which shows that the surrounding situations are one of the keys to the ship's transformative images is the try-works on board. In Ishmael's eyes, once the planks are streamed with whale's blood and oil, the "entire ship" looks the "great" leviathan itself (382). Ishmael's review of the scene is obviously in contrast to Ahab's classification. According to Ahab, the Pequod is defined as a hunter, a conqueror or a bastion while the white whale is demonized as the one to be hunted down, conquered and defeated by the men, especially Ahab. However, Ishmael finds little distinction in the relationship between the ship and the whale. Ahab's classification which draws an unmovable and fixed line between the materialized ship and the immaterial whale ironically convinces that the boundary between the two concepts can be blurred at any time. In fact, the ship's image is not only compared to the white whale, but also to Ahab. Under the hostile conditions of the ocean at night in which the howling wind and leaping waves make the ship "groan" and dive (378), the Pequod "rushing" into "blackness of darkness" is, for Ishmael, seen as the "material counterpart" of its "monomaniac" commander Ahab (379). Paradoxically, the further Ahab endeavors to classify, define or separate himself and the ship from the whale or the ship from the ocean, the more deeply they are found to be inseparable from each other.

In company with the ambiguous physical state of the ship, the society formed in the Pequod space reveals that the solid and independent images of the ship are not the sole characteristic of it. As soon as the surrounding conditions change, the atmosphere of the ship society drastically alters. For instance, when the Pequod is moored in a harbor, the ship's society is literally dead with "nobody" (62) on the quarter-deck. Ishmael describes this atmosphere as being one in which everything is "profound[ly]" quiet with "not a soul moving" (88). From the sociological aspects, the Pequod on a berth no longer exists as a social space to the sailors, but it is just one of the material things.[5] This implies that a ship's society is formed and perishes away depending on whether the ship sails on or not. Related to the ship's societal features, specific standing spots on the board are also a case in point. By representing one's social status during a journey, the back side of the Pequod deck is allowed only for the "first" class of officers while the bow is for the "last" class sailors (129). When tied near at shore, this "grand distinction" (129) surprisingly vanishes away except for their physical differences and the given appellations. Along with the obliteration of the social meanings given to the specific standing points, the authority of the ship's captain during a journey is effaced at a port. Unlike the notorious

[5] In Radway's terms, when the Pequod is on port, the space is not literally a social space to be called. Radway addresses that new American Studies consider the meaning of a space based on the contemporary social milieu. In this regard, a space is more likely a social area which is peopled or infused with power legacies of overlapping experiences of conquest and multiple contestations (Radway 443). The new American Studies efforts put an emphasis on the human practice of the place with cultural encounters and the space of cultural production in the formation of a cultural space. It is in contrast to traditional American Studies' point of view on the space. According to traditional American Studies, a space is defined by the power and the "legacies of conquest" (443).

power of the captain's brutal despotism on the ocean, Ahab's "presence" is by no means necessary until the ship is out to sea (90).

Not only the surrounding conditions, but also the sailors' different views on the ship society make the ship a baffling space. It is explicitly seen when the harpooners' promiscuous taste for the Pequod customs are compared with the captain's conformity to it. Although the harpooners' social status is as higher as that of the captain in the Pequod society, their "professional superior" power is not used to show their supremacy over the lower class. Rather, this social authority exists only for "nominal" purpose (128). For instance, they do not stay in aft or sleep in a place which enables indirect communication with the mates even though they can use them (129). Moreover, during a mealtime, the cabin's table in which the officers including Ahab eats "solemn" meals in "awful silence" (132). However, this solemnity dramatically turns out to be the "entire care-free" time at "ease" when the harpooners take it over (133).

As the ship's journey continues, the concepts of the Pequod on the ocean are as hardly fixed into any clear images. This is due to the collision of different aspects, ideas and views on the ship: the ship's solidity and rigidity are collided with its flexibility and fluidity without assimilating one with another in the process; Pequod society consists of the coexistence of the strict rules and a code of conduct with the elastic freedom. Since each quality cohabits in the ship space, the Pequod on the ocean has multi-layers' of different images. As for diverse qualities not to mention sailors' different views the Pequod provides them with room, like a plaza, in which these different aspects meet,

collide with, and are woven with each other. In this cooperation, the images of the ship on the ocean become diverse and multifaceted.

3.2. Ahab's Fantasy of the Pequod *at* the Ocean: Reflection of the Ideals in Nineteenth-century America

Despite these diverse images embedded in the Pequod, Ahab keeps claiming that the ship can be fixed, traceable and stood immovable. Strictly speaking, Ahab regards the Pequod as a train which "unerringly" "rush[es]" on the "iron rails" (149) to Moby-Dick. Guided by his "fixed" purpose of the voyage, the Pequod is to rush "through" the hearts of mountains and "over" unsounded gorges of the ocean, with no "obstacle" or "angle," which would "swerve" its racing towards the white whale (149). The image of the Pequod rushing on the "iron way" (149) reflects Ahab who stands "erect" looking "straight up" the horizon with the "fixed" and "fearless" eyes (109). Ahab's lopsided view on the ship is also mirrored in the descriptions of the ship's state on the ocean. Ahab strongly convinces himself that the Pequod stands "level" on the ocean as the ship's spot can be accurately pinpointed by the ship's "level" compass, the "level" dead-reckoning, and by log and line (444). In addition, even at the moment when the Pequod is heading for the wrong direction guided by the malfunctioning compass (457) Ahab assures that he can "drive" the sea with "[his]" ship (457).

Ahab's overemphasis on the Pequod's static and fixed aspects is also applied in his views on the ocean. According to Ahab, the ocean's qualities are identical to the flat, solid and static image of the land, and thereby the Pequod sailing on it is also considered one of the land-based forms of transports. The "heavy" pewter lamp "continually" rocking above his head persistently shows that the ocean is a motional space and the location of the Pequod, therefore, cannot be accurately traceable. Nevertheless, Ahab is extremely infatuated with "marking out" lines and courses on the sea chart (177) every night. Moreover, he "so assure[s]" that he knows all the sets of currents and tides so that he can calculate the drifting of the sperm whales' food and can predict the exact time and spot to hunt the whales (177). Ahab builds up his own methodical scheme based on "certainty," rather than admitting that it could be one of "the possibilities" (179).

Behind the Ahab's fantasy of the flat ocean and the static ship at it, there is a growing anxiety over the fragility of his being against the white whale. Compared himself with the white whale, Ahab is too vulnerable and weak. He is a man who is not able to stand alone without fixing his leg into an auger hole on the deck. Unlike his weakness, the white whale is a "new terror" (160) and the gliding "great demon" (167) among the sailors, including him. The anxiety that the whale is watching over him beneath the sea surface, out of his sight, makes him burst from his hammock every night in horror (181). Like Ahab, American nationalists had fears that the nation's short history and lack of traditional cultures caused others to disdain their country. That is why American nationalists were so determined to build up the strong and independent concept of their

nation. They hypnotized themselves that defining the nation's own and affirmative values is one of the ways to achieve their desires. Without this anesthesia, the chaotic reality surrounding unsettled domestic issues, including race and conflicts with other nations, especially Britain for the world primacy (Delbanco xiv) could not be overcome.

Thus, the force of the ideas of fixity and centrality was a way to channel the public's concern about the existing dilemma with other issues. In this regard, Ahab also makes use of it. Since he perceives that his revenge request is as a pressing portent to his sailors, Ahab has a fear of being dethroned from his supreme position in the Pequod society. In dealing with the Pequod crews, he is, thus, "anxious" to "protect" himself (191). Although his despotic demagoguery succeeds to quail high officers like Stubb, Flask and Starbuck by making them look either sideways from or downright in front of him (147), Ahab is "conscious" of the scene in which his sailors disobey or "violently" wrest from his command (191) or any rebellions taken place in the society (146). In order to overcome these fears, Ahab makes use of the concepts of fixity and centrality as "tools" (190). Ahab profoundly anticipates his ideal to conquer the white whale is "any object," "remote" and "blank" in the pursuit (190). Thus, it "must" be "withdrawn" into the "obscure" background (190), which "intervene[s]" in the sailors' thought over the "full terror" of the voyage and draws their attention only to other tasks (190). The Spanish ounce of gold hammered at the mainmast (143) is transformed into the "food" to increase the sailors' "more common [and] daily appetites" for money (191). As for Ahab, the "strange imaginative impiousness" of the fluid reality "must be" concealed (190).

That is why Ahab sets "some nearer things" (190) to conciliate his sailors' suspicion over the purpose of the Pequod's journey.

Similar situations incurred in nineteenth-century America driven by contemporary intellectuals, including highly patriotic writers. During the time, nineteenth-century patriotic writers were those of the frontiers who actively set the new nation's cultures (Baym and Levine 4-5). For instance, with a growing interest in the meaning of a space to the nation, nineteenth-century literary writers corresponded to the public demand with geography textbooks, which became the bestselling publications during the antebellum era. They applied maps into their texts as frontispieces, props, metaphors or formal elements (Hsu 3). By responding to these movements, the nation's overwhelmed fever to build an independent and separate nation drastically encouraged the contemporaries to expand the national territory to the west. Meanwhile, the contemporary intellectuals constituted the philosophical and political frameworks to declare the legitimacy of the new nation. While Thomas Jefferson wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence to proclaim the America's "ideals of freedom" (Baym and Levine 787), John L. O'Sullivan's article of *The Great Nation of Futurity* in 1839 reverberated across the nation with his term Manifest Destiny.[6] Along with them, a number of "highly" patriotic writings such as Irving's *The Sketch Book* (1819-20), Bryant's *Poems* (1821),

[6] He used this term to justify the annexation of Texas in the first place. As time went by, it became a symbolic term which directly showed nineteenth-century America's brutal longings for territorial expansionism.

Cooper's *The Spy* (1821) and *The Pioneers* (1823) drove the proliferation of a "worthy" American literature (Baym and Levine 5-6).

Unlike the nation's fanaticism of building up its ultimate and definite values, the reality was more complexed filled with individualities. In this regard, the Pequod space on the ocean is a microcosm of the nation, which reflects the complicated reality of nineteenth-century America. In contrast to Ahab's idea, the Pequod space on the ocean features the collaborated integration of fluidity and solidity, ductility and rigidity, and stability and instability. Ahab is convinced that he, as the center, is separate from other things and living organisms by considering his sailors and even the Pequod as his "tools" (190) which he controls. Despite his illusion, he is also part of the society, and can do nothing without his "tools" (190). This irony implicitly reveals how a society is run. The Pequod space shows that a society consists of various types of people who have different ideas. That is why a person like Ahab can argue his own willingness, but it cannot be the absolute providence as another like Ishmael can have different ideas.

The "messianic fervor" which disregarded this aspect failed to embrace people' widely spread views on the nation (Delbanco xiii). While northerners defined free institutions and market culture as the grounded value of the U.S. nationalism white southerners considered it in relation to the preservation of slavery and the plantation culture with owning slavery. Moreover, the West and elsewhere apart from the North and the South saw the idea of a nation according to how much it modifies and embraces diverse regional values not to mention frontier individualism, distinctive religious beliefs

and the local cultures (Baym and Levine 1283). The more the nation attempted to define and universalized its own values, the more the reality became fluid, which failed to embrace individualities. For instance, despite mainstream literary writers' endeavors to create a "worthy American literature," their publications were found to be not distinct from, but rather linked to English literary traditions (Baym and Levine 6): Jefferson's notable phrases to celebrate America's own "democratic ideals" did not include colored people, but only the whites (787); those who insisted the impossibility of nation's self-independency risked of being charged with treason (Delbanco xiii); O'Sullivan's blueprint of the nation's "destined" (426) future ignored the near-genocide of the American Indians and the other national sovereignties, particularly that of Mexico. In the case of the race issue, southerner writers such as George Fitzhugh and Caroline Lee Hentz supported the institution of slavery, while writers such as Thoreau, Stowe and Melville advocated the anti-slavery movement (Baym and Levine 16).

Contemporary America's prurience over seizing more areas under its territory also glamorized the sections and regions of others' belongings such as Indians and Mexico as a "unspoiled" (Baym and Levine 7) space of "virgin lands," or "Eden" (Janice 443). However, a series of disputes surrounding the definition of America's own values was not concluded. That is why each different perspective from each group forced the legitimacy of their ideas, which resulted in the continuing sectional and regional conflicts across the nation. The farther the nation sought for the expansion of its territory and its power, the

harder the “widely dispersed” (Baym and Levine 1283) people reached the consensus, which ended up with the outbreak of a bloody civil war in 1861.

4. The Ship in Motion: Journey of the Ocean of Ambiguity

A ship is to carry people or things from one place to another. In other words, a ship is built to move or be moved without being stagnant at one spot for long. In this regard, the Pequod on the ocean shows that the ship is fulfilling its own purpose. The central plot of *Moby-Dick* is about what happens in the Pequod sailing on the ocean. With the Pequod's eternal movement, it becomes free from the fixed framing infused by Ahab. Also, it is a literary strategy which criticizes that nineteenth-century American nationalists' ideas of fixity and centrality are provisional and temporal. From the motional aspects, the ship on the ocean means that it is in fluid motion. Incessantly sailing on the ocean, the ship faces different conditions of the surroundings, which together affects the images of the ship to consistently change. Seeing the ship on the ocean is like seeing a full-length movie which contains the periodical and sequential movements and events. To understand the ship on the ocean, approaching the whole process of its movements is, therefore, required rather than only simplifying a few moments of the whole process as its ultimate figure. In other words, this means that the attempt made by American nationalists to fix this fluidity into a static frame was to see the ship on the ocean as a motionless space. They associated a ship in motion with something unstable, unsafe and even dangerous. That is why nineteenth-century American nationalists' ideal images of

the ship on the ocean covered only a few aspects of the ship while those which did not fit for the boundary were neglected.

In the novel, the Pequod's incessant movement causes the ship to blur the socially constituted boundary between the land and the ocean by visiting and staying both spaces freely. The novel reminds that neither the ocean nor the land could be the ideal paradise to the ship. The land and the ocean could turn out a home or a perilous stop-over to the ship at any time. As described in chapter 23, when "the land" is in a gale a port becomes the ship's "direst jeopardy" in that one touch of it would make the ship "shudder through and through" (94). Under this circumstance, the ship "must" fly to the ocean despite its "all hospitality" (94). Coming into the land is as hazardous as going out to the open sea. Instead of the "tempestuous" land, the ocean ironically becomes a safer space with "comfort" like "hearthstone [or] supper warm blankets" to the ship (94). This subversive situation implies that the Pequod seems a visitor to the land and the ocean, rather than a settler at one area for long.

While the Pequod incessantly moves on the ocean, the ship space is sociologically engaged with the sailors' experiences and memories. In the engagement, the ship's incessant moving state becomes one of the significant elements webbed into form the ship's journey. As each moment of the ship's physical movement collides with the sailors' experiences, the Pequod's journey becomes an accumulation of every moment of the ship on the ocean. On a journey every moment causes different situations to happen, which, therefore, cannot be simplified into the ultimate image as Ahab assures. In a

similar way, nineteenth-century American nationalists' force to infuse the fixed image of the ship on the ocean was an attempt to give a specific moment selected by them the ultimate representative concepts of the ship's journey. However, for Melville who experienced a seafaring life, each moment of journeys had its own individual meaning to be taken account. Thus, Melville's depictions of the Pequod seem to more focus on each moment of a journey rather than attempting to define it.

One of the literary effects applied in the novel in this regard is the indefinable beginning as well as its ending of the story. In the novel, it is rather unclear if the Pequod sails back to the ocean or to the land. Similar with the white whale which considers some specific spots in the ocean as its "casual stopping-places," the land is for the Pequod one of the ship's "casual stopping-places" or the "inns," not the place of "prolonged abode" (179). The destination of the Pequod's journey is also complicated. For instance, from Ahab's point of view, it is not bound by a port. This is due to that his destination is a moving creature Moby-Dick. In fact, the end of the Pequod journey is also blurred. Although the Pequod becomes shattered under an attack of the white whale, and drowned under the sea, Ishmael survives from the sinking ship and takes over its key to continuing the voyage (509). Provided that the story of the ship's journey is the central plot of *Moby-Dick*, obscure depictions of its beginning as well as its ending are, indeed, "an instance" of "sheer literary virtuosity" (xxvii) as Delbanco aptly points out.

Accompanied with the novel's obscure start and end, the ship's incessant motion makes the Pequod look analogous to other things and beings. In Melville's paradoxical

allegory, the depictions of the Pequod floating alone on the immanent ocean are juxtaposed to Pip who is accidently left alone in the sea: Pip's "ringed horizon" expands around him "miserably," and the sea "jeeringly" keeps the upper half of the Pip's body "up" and the other "drowned" (371). Moreover, "the sun" at the loftiest and the brightest in the ocean of the sky is also depicted as "another" lonely castaway along with Pip and the Pequod on the ocean (371). The sun's "loftiest" and "brightness," then, implicitly remind readers of Ahab's social position because his status is at "the loftiest" and "the brightness" (371) in the Pequod society. More complicatedly, the novel also links a person in the highest position with another in the lowest one. Pip, the lowest rung on the ladder and whose "soul" is drowned down to the sea's "wondrous depths" (371) is bafflingly the only person "tied" to Ahab by cords woven of his heartstrings (462). Despite their different social status, the top Ahab and the lowest Pip look like two "daft ones" from the old Manxman's eyes (462). Ahab's appearance is also portrayed as analogous to that of his antagonist, the white whale. The faceless white whale's "peculiar" snow-white wrinkled forehead (163) is found in Ahab's brow which flashes like a "bleached" (112) and "snow-white" (180) bone.

This complicated interconnection between Pip, the sun, Ahab and the white whale indicates that the concept of the Pequod's fluid motion can also be a critical strategy to debunk the ideas of fixity and centrality. Although it seems obvious that the physicality or and appearances of Pip, Ahab, sun and white whale are all different, it is "not so easy" to "settle" these "plain" things to "declare" its definite identity (333-34). In this complicated

matrix, Melville cannot help, but “pester” with all these reasoning then shows that “no absolute certainty” can yet be arrived at the ultimate truth. Thus, Melville argued that the nation of his time should to “live in” the world, not to be a “being” of the world (277). Throughout the complicated thereby unfixed and indefinable images of the Pequod as well as the things surrounding it, Melville trenchantly lampoons that his nation boasts its supremacy even though they still do not know whether the spout coming out from the whale’s breathes is water or vapor (333) or whether the whale’s blubber is the skin of the whale or the skin of the skin (275). The more “precisely” either physiognomist or phrenologist attempts to point at what is a nose, eyes, ears and mouth in the whale’s appearance, the more obviously it reveals that the whale has “no face” (311).

Regarding the disputes surrounding the land and the ocean, the author also suggests that how to see both spaces are different according to the ways in which one sees it. Therefore, there would be no ultimate or fixed boundary dividing the land from the ocean. The “appalling” sea is regarded as a “foe,” “fiend” to the “verdant” land on the surface but Ishmael’s fine reading of their relationship finds the “strangely analogy” embedded in both (248). As the “preternatural terrors” with “no mercy [but] its own control” is one of the other faces hidden beneath the “loveliest tints of azure” of the ocean, there are also “all the horrors of the half known life” concealed behind the “green, gentle, and most docile” features of the land (248). In other words, according to whichsoever aspects humans take on, the land and the ocean would look different from

one another, or look similar like the “inseparable twin” brother to one another tied in the “monkey-rope” (187) which connects Queequeg with Ishmael on the ocean.

5. Conclusion

The large oil painting which Ishmael sees before boarding on the Pequod was a trigger to set sail on a journey of this study. Ishmael's reading of "a long, limber portentous, black mass of something" (9) in the center of the picture was one of Melville's signs, which show how the ship on the ocean would be described in the following chapters. The portentous "something" in the middle of the picture was the "unaccountable masses" of the wrecked ship and a leviathan intermingling with each other irregularly. Due to their inseparable states of one from another, Ishmael is puzzled to find out what it is in the first place. As the picture arises the feeling of something "boggy, soggy [and] squitchy" (9), Ishmael is no longer a person who observes the ship on the ocean in distance, but already becomes part of the scene. In fact, the place in which the dark spout painting is displayed is the Spouter-Inn, the features of which confuse Ishmael as if he is already on board. With all these mysterious effects, the novel conveys the "palpable" reality (Delbanco xxvii) of the ship on the ocean to the fictional character Ishmael, as well as an innocent reader.

A sense of palpability directly reveals that the boundary which separates the novel from its readers also becomes blurred. Along with the Pequod unstoppably sailing on the ocean, readers are soon aware that they are on the Pequod's journey with Ishmael. This means that the Pequod sailors are not merely those who are engaged in the Pequod

voyage. Readers are also invisible members involved in it. Melville sets various journeys, most of which have possibly already begun before the readers' notice. Like Ishmael's adventure, which begins even before the Pequod departs from a port, the readers' journey already begins before Ishmael appears. As soon as readers take a glimpse at the moments of the novel's journey, the sailors and the readers including the narrators all become passenger.

The true form of the Pequod's ambiguity is that the features of the Pequod on the ocean remain vague, and the ship itself becomes a representation of what it looks like in its ambiguous state. In the Pequod space, the sailors consider the ship as their emotional anchor to rely on, yet as not the final shelter. The ship also provides the solid ground for the sailors, but that ground is consistently wobbled and tossed due to the surrounding environmental conditions. In addition, the Pequod society has its own solid rules and codes with which all sailors comply, but the cultures and forms do not exist in the land-based society in the nineteenth century. Upon the ship's dual physicality which embraces both the land and the ocean, the sailors cultivate their livings. The sailors' experiences of being alienated from both the land and the ocean make the ship on the ocean a more complicated space. However, thanks to this ambiguity, the Pequod on the ocean becomes a profoundly metaphorical space capable of showing colorful characteristics of both features simultaneously.

The Pequod's multifaceted aspects were not welcome from the mainstream literary world during his time. Although Melville claimed to be unhurt by the public criticism in

some moods, he was, in other moods, distraught that he had failed to engage with the American public (Delbanco xiii). Due to the nation's "messianic fervor" (Delbanco xiii), specifically over the fixity and centrality, Melville's literary strategy of ambiguity failed to effectively persuade the public. As I examined in Chapter Two, the fond illusion accelerated from several intellectuals, including Emerson, permeated into a range of fields, and became one of the major causes of social conflicts both in and out of the nation. In contrast to the overwhelming supports to the American nationalists across the nation, the voices, including Melville's, who lambasted the mainstream ideals were considered as insignificant shibboleth, which was shown through several negative reviews and poor sales records of *Moby-Dick*.

Between the public interest and his critical mind about social issues, Melville suffered from the "literary-economic dilemma" (Baym and Levine 1425). When working on *Moby-Dick* in 1850, Melville confessed his agony over this paradox to Nathaniel Hawthorne: "I am so pulled hither and thither by circumstances. The calm, the coolness, the silent grass-growing mood in which a man ought always to compose – that, I fear, can seldom be mine. Dollars damn me; and the malicious Devil is forever grinning in upon me, holding the door ajar" (511-12). Not only the economic pressure, but also harsh critics with respect to his satirical and parodic eloquence on the nation's problematic issues such as the political ideology, the brutal expansionism, race and the exceptional cultures were also hard on Melville.

Despite the public rebuke, Melville defied to conform himself to see the world in the same way as the American nationalists did. Instead, he made use of the same natural scenes or situations applied by American nationalists as the literary objects in *Moby-Dick*. Given that the highly patriotic writers placed a special emphasis on the meaning of the physical spaces such as the land and the sea for the development of the national character, Melville responded to their imaginations with the real features seen in the spaces: when American whaling ships were set by American nationalists as the representation of the nation's "greatness", Melville revealed the nation's brutal prurience concealed behind the "greatness" through the Pequod space; when Emerson claims "a transparent eyeball" at the highest altitude in the "infinite space," (26) Ishmael "uplift[s]" on top of the mast in Pequod to see if Emerson's idea is demonstrable. Melville's six-year-experience of the sea life was presumed to be instilled sophisticatedly into the Pequod's voyage and to make the life on the Pequod more realistic to readers. Unlike nineteenth-century literary writers' illusively idealistic images of a ship, Melville's depictions of the Pequod on the ocean reveals that a ship space on the ocean is rather an ambiguous space.

Although Melville criticized the nation's obsession of underpinning its core values as the center of the worlds, he did not claim counterpart concepts as the alternative resolution to the nation. Rather, he paid attention to the ironic and contradicted states when extreme concepts came into collapse. That stands as one of the reasons that Melville's attitudes towards Emerson and mainstream literary writers such as Irving, Sedgwick and Cooper were both positive and negative (Baym and Levine 19). Despite the

harsh reviews from the public, Melville's inclusive attitudes helped to reveal the gap between the ideal and the reality (Williams 12). He deterred the nation's myths about the fixity and centrality by showing the impossible demonstration of separateness from others. At the same time, as incorporating different ideas, Melville once again deterred the reproduction of another sense as fixed and grounded.

Thus, the "black mass" (9) Ishmael saw in the Spouter-Inn is a key to understanding Melville's thoughts about human society and culture. As the Pequod's incessant motion connects the ship with the surroundings, Melville trenchantly points out one of the very natures of a society, in which individual difference organically connects with each other and becomes a source of creating diverse and multifaceted cultures of the society. As depicted in the Pequod's inseparable relationship with the things surrounding it, Melville reveals that all elements consisting cultures of a society should be concerned as the wholeness. In addition, Melville reminds his readers that they are on a journey of not only *Moby-Dick*, but also of their own lives with the complicated and multiple aspects embedded within.

The spatial distinctiveness of a ship on the water was a primary question at the early stage of shaping a topic of this study. Compared with nineteenth-century land-based transportations, such as a horse, a train and an auto-mobile, a ship space was directly exposed to the extremely disparate and non-inhabitable environment, the ocean. Due to this hostile condition of the ocean, the ship was both physically and socially an isolated space. However, at the same time, the ship on the ocean had freedom of its movements of

to and fro, up and down, right and left, or tilt from side to side. This led the ship on the water evocative of the images transcending all the physical and figurative limits. Regarding these subversive views on the ship on the water, it would seem pertinent to compare the ship in the river with that on the sea through Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) and Melville's *Moby-Dick.* Although three decades interval lie on between the two novels, the time settings of the two fictional worlds are based on the antebellum era, and their central place settings are grounded on the life on the sailing vessels. Although both are depicted as an alienated space from the mainstream society, these vessels' complicated features and images seen in the novels are presumed to be an explicit representation of the contemporary nation and the problems embedded in the fixity and centrality. Thus, I hope this thesis can serve as a groundwork for studying this issue further in the future.

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