

Allusions in *Moby Dick*

CHAPTER 1

Ishmael

- 1) Biblical--son of Abraham; an exile.
- 2) Ishmael ben Elisha--2nd century A.D. Jewish teacher of Galilee; outstanding Talmudic teacher; compiled the 13 hermeneutical rules for interpreting the Torah; founded a school which produced the legal commentary, Mekhilta.

Cato

A Shakespearean character in Julius Caesar; committed suicide by falling on his sword.

Seneca and the Stoics

- 1) Seneca--among Rome's leading intellectual figures in the mid-1st century AD. He and Epictetus were leading voices of Stoicism.
- 2) Stoics--Greek school of philosophy holding that human beings should be free from passion and calmly accept all occurrences as the unavoidable result of divine will.

Narcissus

Greek mythology--young man who fell in love with his own image in a pool of water and either wasted away or fell into the pool and drowned.

Fates

- 1) Greek mythology--the three goddesses who govern human destiny. While one sister dictates the events of an individual's life, another sister weaves them into a tapestry on the Loom of Life, and the third sister stands ready with a pair of shears to cut the thread, thus ending the life.
- 2) Predestination.

Tyre of Carthage

A principal port founded by the Phoenicians, among the greatest seafarers of the ancient world.

Euroclydon

Biblical (Acts 27:14)--the tempestuous east wind that shipwrecked Paul off the coast of Malta.

Moluccas

Spice Islands between Celebes and New Guinea.

CHAPTER 2

Black Parliament sitting in Tophet

- 1) Biblical (Jer. 7:31)--Tophet was a shrine in the valley of Hinnom south of ancient Jerusalem where human sacrifices, especially those of children, were performed to Moloch.
- 2) Hell.

Lazarus

Biblical (Luke 16: 19-31)--the diseased beggar in the parable of the rich man and the beggar.

Sumatra

The second largest island of Indonesia lying in the Indian Ocean west of Malaysia and Borneo by Sunda Strait.

CHAPTER 3

Hyperborean

- 1) Greek--Hyperboea was one known to the ancient Greeks from the earliest times. He lived in an unidentified country in the far north and was renowned as a pious and divinely favored adherent of the cult of Apollo.
- 2) very cold; frigid; north wind.

Jonah

Biblical (Book of Jonah)--an intolerant, unwilling servant of God. He was called by God to go to Nineveh and prophesy disaster because of the city's wickedness. He did not want to go and took passage in a ship at Joppa going in the opposite direction, thus escaping God's command. At sea, Jonah admits to the crew that it is his fault that a storm is about to destroy the ship. They throw him overboard. Jonah is swallowed by a great fish and stays inside it for three days and three nights. He prays for deliverance. He is vomited onto land and goes to Nineveh, as God had commanded.

CHAPTER 4

Cretan labyrinth

Greek--the building containing a maze which Daedalus constructed for King Minos of Crete as a place in which to confine the Minotaur. Those put in the maze could not find their way out and were destroyed by the Minotaur. Theseus was the only one to escape.

CHAPTER 6

Canaan

Biblical--Canaan was the land promised to Moses and his people by God after they fled from Egypt. It was an opulent land of milk and honey.

Herr Alexander

Alexander the great, the military mastermind who conquered the majority of the known world during the years 336-330 B.C. Because of his tactical genius, he was able to accomplish his conquest without superiority of numbers.

CHAPTER 7

Pequod

The Pequod--also spelled Pequot and Pequitoit--was an American Indian tribe which, as Melville briefly mentions, was destroyed by the Puritans. Read Captain John Mason's account of the Puritan attack of the Pequot fort.

cave of Elephanta

Elephanta is an isle off the western coast of India in Bombay Harbor famous for its 8th century temple caves carved out of rock, its walls sculpted with figures of Hindu deities.

CHAPTER 8

Victory's plank where Nelson fell

Horatio Nelson (1758-1805) was a British naval officer and national hero. His ship, Victory, was involved in a battle with the French. Someone on the French ship, Redoutalde, shot Nelson and broke his spine. Nelson died as the British won by annihilating the French.

CHAPTER 16

Medes

Inhabitants of ancient Media, a country northwest of Persia and south of Caspian Sea; an independent country and an empire at its height; conquered Babylon and Assyria; overthrown by Persian Cyprus.

Canterbury Cathedral where Beckett died

British--Thomas Beckett was named archbishop of Canterbury by Henry and became an uncompromising defender of the rights of the church against lay powers; refused to seal the constitution of Clarendon and fled to France. Persuaded Pope Alexander III to suspend bishops who crowned Prince Henry and force the king to reconciliation. Beckett was murdered in the cathedral by four knights of Henry's court. He was later canonized.

CHAPTER 18

Philistine

- 1) Biblical--a people who held the coastal area of southern Palestine and were frequently at war with the Israelites in the period of the judges and the early years of the monarchy.
 - 2) A smug, ignorant, especially middle class, person, who is held to be indifferent or antagonistic to artistic and cultural values; boorish; barbarous.
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CHAPTER 19

Elijah the prophet

Biblical (I Kings)--Hebrew prophet of the 9th century B.C.; lived during the time of Ahab, king of Israel. In his first recorded act, Elijah appeared before the evil King Ahab and predicted a severe drought. The drought occurred. After more than three years, the prophet came once more to Ahab and placed the blame for the famine on the king's sinful policies. Later, Elijah came in the vineyard of Naboth after the king had secured the land through the wickedness of his wife, Jezebel. Elijah placed a terrible curse on King Ahab and his descendants, promising that the entire house of Ahab would be exterminated. This prophecy was brutally fulfilled.

CHAPTER 24

Job (pronounced Jobe)

Biblical (Book of Job)--the upright, God-fearing and good man of Uz, who was made to suffer greatly when God tested his faith and loyalty by allowing Satan to have his way with him. Despite his undeserving misfortunes, Job remained steadfast and faithful. In the end, God restored his substance to him and granted him happiness and prosperity. Job's patience in the face of suffering is proverbial.

Alfred the Great

Ruler of Wessex, 870's, who drove the Norse out of England. He is famous for his cleverness, as he paid the Vikings to leave England for a certain period of time, during which he raised the proper military to defeat them.

Edmund Burke

English politician in the time of King George III; famous for defending liberty and justice.

CHAPTER 26

John Bunyan

1628-1688; English preacher; author of Pilgrim's Progress; one of the greatest literary geniuses of the Puritan movement in England.

Cervantes

A soldier until his hand was maimed by gunshot wounds and he was unable to fight; afterward, over his next twenty years, he became a brilliant author of novels, plays, and tales.

Andrew Jackson

Seventh President of the U.S.A. (1829-1837); the first poor man to rise to become President; known as the "people's President."

CHAPTER 32

Folio

book formed by folding a sheet of paper once; size of book is usually about 11 inches.

CHAPTER 35

Platonist

- 1) One who accepts and adheres to the philosophical thought of Plato.
- 2) Abstractionist .

Descartian vortices

- 1) Descartes the philosopher believed that everything had to be proven rationally; he based his proof of identity on the theory, "I think; therefore, I am."
- 2) vortice--situation drawing into its center all that surrounds it (i.e. whirlpool effect).

Pantheist

One who believes that God is all forces and powers of the universe; God in Nature, or God is Nature.

CHAPTER 38

Iron Cross of Lombardy

An ancient crown, supposedly made from one of the nails from the True Cross, used notably at the coronation of Holy Roman Emperors and at the coronation of Napoleon in 1805.

CHAPTER 40

Pirohitee's peak

Melville gives this descriptive reference to Pirohitee's peak in his second book, *Omoo, A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas*, Chapter 18: "Tahiti is by far the most famous island in the South Seas; indeed, a variety of causes has made it almost classic. Its natural features alone distinguish it from the surrounding groups. Two round and lofty promontories, whose mountains rise nine thousand feet above the level of the ocean, are connected by a low, narrow isthmus; the whole being some one hundred miles in circuit. From the great central peaks of the larger peninsula—Orohena, Aorai, and Pirohitee—the land radiates on all sides to the sea in sloping green ridges. Between these are broad and shadowy valleys—in aspect, each a Tempe—watered with fine streams, and thickly wooded. Unlike many of the other islands, there extends nearly all round Tahiti a belt of low, alluvial soil, teeming with the richest vegetation. Here, chiefly, the natives dwell."

CHAPTER 47

Loom of Time

Greek mythology (see Fates in Chapter 1, above).

CHAPTER 54

Mark Antony and Cleopatra

One of the most famous romances in history. It is said that the marriage ruined Mark Antony's life and ultimately caused him to take it.

CHAPTER 58

terra incognita

Latin--unknown land.

CHAPTER 70

the giant Holofernes and Judith

Judith is the title of a book in the Apochrypha as well as the name of a Jewess from Bethulia.

Holofernes was a general of the Assyrian king Nebuchadnezzar.

To save her city, Judith killed Holofernes in his drunken slumber and showed his head to her countrymen. They then drove off the Assyrians.

CHAPTER 71

Neskyeuna Shakers

In 1776, Mother Anne Lee established the first settlement of American "Shakers" (the Millennial Church or United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing) at Niskayuna, a village in New York, on the Hudson River near Schenectady. The shakers observed celibacy, held all property in common, and believed that Mother Lee was Christ reincarnated. Their nickname, Shakers, derived from their peculiar bodily movements during religious meetings. (Information found in editor's note in *Moby Dick*, edited by Charles Feidelson, Jr., MacMillan 1985, ISBN 0-02-336720-2, p. 409.)

Gabriel

Biblical--masculine given name meaning "man of God"; an archangel who acts as the messenger of God.

CHAPTER 73

Immanuel Kant vs. John Locke

Kant and Locke both expressed agreement with the idea that the State is formed by a social contract--Individuals must give up some of their rights to enter into a social contract in society. However, they differed on the application of the idea.

Kant does not recognize the right of individuals to revoke the contract.

Locke maintains that the state formed by the social contract was guided by the natural law, which guarantees inalienable rights. He formulated the doctrine that revolution in some circumstances is not only a right but an obligation. If the State fails to protect the individuals' inalienable rights, then revolution is a duty.

CHAPTER 80

sphinx

1) Egyptian mythology--a figure having the body of a lion and the head of a man, ram, or hawk.

2) Greek mythology--a winged monster having the head of a woman and the body of a lion that destroyed all who could not answer its riddle.

CHAPTER 82

Perseus

Greek--Andromeda, the daughter of a king, was tied to a rock on the sea coast and a whale came to carry her away. Perseus killed the whale and married Andromeda.

St. George and his Dragon

Probably third century A.D. Christian martyr. Nothing definite is known about his life. In time of Edward II adopted as patron saint of England. Among legends developed about him was that of his conquest of a dragon to rescue the king's daughter, Sabra.

Ezekiel 32:2

Biblical--"Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou art as a whale in the seas: and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and troubledst the waters with thy feet, and fouledst their rivers."

I Samuel 5:2-4

Biblical--"Then they carried the ark into Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon. When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord! They took Dagon and put him back in his place. But the following morning when they rose, there was Dagon fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord! His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained."
