

Thesis Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to map the narrative strategies of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*. By applying different narrative theories to *Moby-Dick*, it explores and assesses mainly the narrative reliability (Wayne C. Booth) and the narrative situation (Franz K. Stanzel). Ishmael is generally considered to be an example of an unreliable narrator and in this thesis manifestations of his unreliability are evaluated. Special attention is devoted to the inconsistencies in the narrative (e.g. recurring disappearances of Ishmael, shifts in focus on some of the characters, complete disappearances of other characters) and their treatment, taking the general academic consensus into account. Such phenomena are discussed as deliberately and consciously incorporated into the narrative, rather than being a result of a precipitated writing process. Apart from the formal inconsistencies, the narrative also includes incongruities of thematic nature (e.g. questionable value-scheme according to Rimmon-Kenan). By employing Stanzel's narrative theory, the thesis discusses Ishmael's oscillation between "narrator" and "reflector," with special focus on the dramatic chapters. Using both of these conceptions, *Moby-Dick* is assessed from two different perspectives, hopefully shedding some light on the complex narrative strategy of the novel. The thesis discusses the implications of the employment of various narrative techniques for the interpretation of Ishmael and the effect of his idiosyncratic narrative on the structure and nature of *Moby-Dick* (novel with elements of drama and essay). *Moby-Dick* is viewed as being oriented towards the reader and the various narrative techniques are treated as means of granting the reader greater authority and freedom in his or her interpretation of the book.

After the introduction, Ishmael is evaluated from Booth's point of view, with special focus on the definition and evaluation of the aforementioned incongruities in the narrative; the initial hypothesis being that their primary function is to affirm the narrator's unreliability. Formal and thematic manifestations of Ishmael's unreliability are distinguished and discussed.

The second chapter also deals with the changing status of Queequeg and Bulkington, and with the interpretation of the allegorical names in the context of the narrative. The third chapter examines the narrative situation using Stanzel's narrative theory: the chapter deals with Ishmael's development from the narrator to the reflector and the subsequent oscillation between the two opposing poles. Special attention is devoted to the dramatic chapters. The penultimate chapter zeros in on the interpretation of the narrative situation, making use of the observations gained in the previous discussion. Ishmael's subversive tendencies are analyzed in the context of the encyclopedic novel. Following is the interpretation of the interplay between the thematic and the formal aspects of *Moby-Dick*, including the discussion of Melville's employment of the mental theatre.