

MULTIFACED PEQUOD AS A PROTOTYPE OF MULTINATIONAL AMERICA IN HERMAN MELVILLE'S «MOBY DICK»

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Abstract: *the article is dedicated to the image of the ship Pequod and its multinational crew as a metaphorical prototype of America of Melville's time. In this research, we have attempted to investigate Melville's implicit references to the current affairs of America of the 1850s as well as to analyze the ambiguous relationship among the crew on board of the ship. The crew of the Pequod consists of different races which represents multicultural population of America and demonstrates the democratic relationship among them. However, further it becomes clear that this relationship is complicated by the strict feudal system and hierarchy on board of the ship.*

Keywords: *Pequod, Moby Dick, ship of state, multinational crew, metaphor.*

МНОГОЛИКИЙ ПЕКООД КАК ПРОТОТИП МУЛЬТИНАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ АМЕРИКИ В РОМАНЕ ГЕРМАНА МЕЛВИЛЛА «МОБИ ДИК»

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Аннотация: *статья посвящена исследованию образа корабля Пеккода и его мультинациональной команды как метафорического прототипа современной Мелвиллу Америки. В данном исследовании мы попытались изучить имплицитные ссылки Мелвилла на современные ему события в американском обществе 1850-х годов, а также проанализировать противоречивые отношения среди членов экипажа Пеккода. Мультинациональная команда, состоящая из представителей разных рас, населяющих Америку, первоначально демонстрирует демократические отношения внутри нее. Однако, в ходе романа Мелвилл указывает на то, что эти отношения подчинены законам феодального строя и иерархии.*

Ключевые слова: *Пеккод, Моби Дик, корабль государства, мультинациональная команда, метафора.*

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The role of the Pequod has motivated endless amounts of research by different scholars. Most of them agree that the international crew of the ship is a symbolic embodiment of America with its multicultural population: “the Pequod incarnates “the American Ship of State and the folly of its passengers as the folly of the collective American national identity” [6, p.178]. By naming the symbolic ship of state the Pequod, Melville refers to the Pequots, an Indian tribe slaughtered and nearly destroyed by the Puritans. Melville links the aboriginal past of America and the ship: “Where else but from Nantucket did those aboriginal whalers, the Red-Men, first sally out in canoes to give chase to the Leviathan?” [6, p. 7]. Thus, we believe, that the link between the Indian hunters and the whale hunters, established by the name of the ship, echoes the Puritans’ murderous violence towards the Pequot tribe, as well as Captains Ahab’s obsession to exterminate the White Whale.

The captain of the ship has three main chiefs which represent different parts of America: Starbuck (Nantucket, New England), Stubb (Cape Cod), Flask (Tisbury, Martha’s Vineyard). Thus, Castronovo lays emphasis on the fact that characters depended on the place of origin: Starbuck demonstrates New England morality, Stubb owes his “easy and careless” character to the jaunty Westerner, and the typical hot-blooded Southern man Flask is always ready to defend a “point of honor” in a fight [2, 121]. Depending on the character represented, each chief mate is served by an appropriate harpooner whose traits of character or habits correlate with the chief mate’s peculiarities. The Islander Queequeg who is “brave” (352) and can “steer us manfully” (395) for “staid, steadfast” [5, p. 115] Starbuck with his “hardy sobriety and fortitude”, whose adherence to superstition makes him similar to Queequeg. The Indian Tashtego, “an inheritor of the unvitiated blood of those proud warrior hunters” [5, p.121], who is from the village of the “most daring harpooners” [5, p. 121] serves Stubb. He is “a happy-go-lucky; neither craven nor valiant” [5, 118] who always smokes a pipe that also links him with his Indian squire Tashtego. The African Daggoo, “a gigantic, coal-black negro savage” [5, p.121] serves Flask who appears as not only a proper mental reflection of his “knight” but also a fitting physical supplement to his “short, stout, ruddy” [5, p. 120] chief mate. At the top of the Pequod’s hierarchy is Ahab who is served by “five dusky phantoms” [5, p. 221]. This pyramid of power on the ship of state, the Pequod, was figured out by Heimert as a political allusion. As Clark puts it: “The history of the Republic was likened to a voyage, and its wreck at the hands of hungry “Ahab’s” who coveted Mexico’s “vineyards” was greatly feared.

Melville's voyage of "The Pequod" gives allegorical expression to the radical Free-Soil fear that Democracy's monomaniacal urge to dominate nature will at worst destroy the Republic and at best contravene the libertarian principles enshrined in the constitution" [2, p. 141-142].

It is worth noting that the introduction of the seamen in the two chapters of "Knights and Squires" is conducted in a strict hierarchical order: the first three chief mates and then their harpooners accordingly. Hence, Gunn highlights "a feudal note" both in the title of the two chapters as well as in the unfolding of the narrative. On the one hand, the crew of the Pequod is constituted of the equally stout fellows, ready to help each other in the face of death but, on the other hand, "the feudal appellations are fully functional and descriptive" on board of this ship [4, p. 85]. The ship obviously serves as a metaphor for the possibility of establishing a new type of society where different races, nationalities, and cultures can share peaceful co-existence. However, the appearance of Ahab on the stage disrupts the basis of democracy on board of the Pequod. "Melville's suggestion to employ the fraternity of sailors as nucleus of a new form of democratic society is subverted by Ahab's hypnotic ability to reestablish a kind of feudal order on board of the Pequod and to manipulate the crew into following him in his own obsessive thirst for revenge even at the cost of self-destruction" [3, p. 210]. Hence, the chief mates are presented according to the feudal system before the introduction of the main feudal lord –Ahab, likewise not far from his appearance we can observe another example of the totalitarianism on the Pequod: the order in which the captain and the mates are proceeding to dinner. In the opposite order to "Knights and Squires", the first is Ahab followed by his chief mates. They are called and enter the cabin-table separately according to their range: Starbuck, Stubb, and then Flask. The whole dinner is a paradox of the totalitarian system where the less significant figure (e.g. Flask here) remains hungry due to the protocol. While on the contrary, the "second table", the dinner of the harpooners (Queequeg, Tashtego, and Daggoo) was hearty and takes place in a rather friendly, democratic atmosphere where different nationalities and skin colours delightedly share their meal with a fellow creature. We believe that these three harpooners symbolically present the three sub-races (African, Indian, and the Pacific islander) which the American economic system submitted and exploited during the 19th century. Interestingly, the fact that the silent leader of this multicultural group, Queequeg, has no exact place of origin blurs the boundaries of American expansionism, so he seems to be constituted of various features belonging to each represented race. His resemblance to the black race is maintained through the description "the harpooner is a dark complexioned chap" [5, p. 14] and his black idol was "exactly the colour of a three days' old Congo baby" [5, p. 23]. Similarities to the Indians could be found in Queequeg's tomahawk pipe. Queequeg's pipe breaks the ice between him and Ishmael, likewise a ceremonial pipe or peace pipe between the two races.

Thus, one can admit that the democratic relationships and fraternities among the multicultural crew on the Pequod are complicated by the feudal system of movement: Ahab, three chief mates, three harpooners and all the rest of the crew presents "An Anacharsis Clootz deputation from all the isles of the sea, and all the ends of the earth, accompanying Old Ahab in the Pequod" [5, p. 122]. We believe that the Pequod with its multinational crew and American movement incarnates America with its obsessive leaders who proclaim to find the best way of developing a country but at the end they are obsessed with the desire to kill their own "White Whales". Symbolically, the flag of the sinking ship which was streaming and "calmly undulated, with ironical coincidings, over the destroying billows" [5, p. 582] is nailed by the "red arm" [5, 582] of the Indian Tashtego.

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