SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR THIRD PAPER

1. What is the difference between the way Pip and Ishmael lack a fixed identity? How does each express in his life his realization that the universe has no fixed meaning?

2. In what ways is Ishmael’s responsiveness to a broad spectrum of situations like and unlike Odysseus’?

3. What does Ishmael mean when he says that the whale has no face, and why is that claim important. What alternative does it suggest to Ahab's desire to "break through the mask"?

4. How do Queequeg and Ahab manifest contrasting responses to Ishmael’s claim that “Presbyterians and Pagans alike…are all somehow dreadfully cracked about the head, and sadly need mending?” (page 79) "What does this suggest about the role of the Holy in human life?"

5. To what extent does Ishmael get in sync with various moods and meaningful practices? Are there some he can’t get attuned to? What distinguishes the moods and practices he shares from those he can’t share?

6. Ishmael discusses various attempts to represent the whale. Why do they all fail? What significance does this failure have for Ishmael?

You are encouraged to propose a paper topic of your own. Before working on your topic, however, be sure to discuss it with your T.A.

Length: 7-8 double spaced pages. Please use Times New Roman 12 pt. font, 1-inch margins, and number your pages. Please type the topic number at the top of the first page of your paper, and print your GSI’s name and section time on the top right hand corner.

Due: By Friday, May 20th at 3:30 pm in Howison Library [305 Moses Hall]
(Papers may be handed in earlier at the Library.)
KEEP A COPY OF YOUR PAPER.

NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Herman Melville’s letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne (excerpts)
Pittsfield, Mass., November 17, 1851

... In me divine magnanimities are spontaneous and instantaneous—catch them while you can. The world goes round, and the other side comes up. ...I have written a wicked book, and feel spotless as the lamb. Ineffable socialities are in me. I would sit down and dine with you and all the gods in old Rome’s Pantheon ...

... I feel that the Godhead is broken up like the bread at Supper, and that we are the pieces.

This is a long letter, but you are not at all bound to answer it. Possibly, if you do answer it, and direct it to Herman Melville, you will missend it—for the very fingers that now guide this pen are not precisely the same that just took it up and put it on this paper. Lord, when shall we be done changing?