Moby Dick: The Winding Road Essay, Research Paper

Moby-Dick: The Winding Road

Homosexuality portrayed in the novel, Moby-Dick, was used many times over the 135 chapters. Ishmael s encounters with Queequeg, and their subsequent marriage challenges the controversial lines of male identity in the mid-nineteenth-century. Controversial lines were in fact crossed many times in this book, and Moby-Dick critics express deep concern in the way Melville uses Queequeg as a vessel to explore homosexuality and push it along with underlying tones throughout the novel.

Melville s exploitation of denotation and connotation is extremely vital in a book of such length and with so many views. Queequeg s dilemma throughout the novel with the sailors is whether or not he is in fact a cannibal, or really a savage by heart (Davis). He is a lover of flesh, which can technically make him a cannibal. The way Melville expresses cannibalism is as a lover of all flesh , male of female. Thusly, the dominant reading of American literature by people all over the world was being conveyed and thought of in a way that was indescribable and very inappropriate for the times that the novel was written in.

Many of the names of the Inns that Ishmael looks into staying at also convey a sort of homosexual appearance in just a few of their names. The Crossed Harpoon Inn could be perceived as a fork in the road as to whether or not Queequeg is actually straight or in fact really homosexual and doesn t really understand it all yet. The Spouter Inn could be used to symbolize how lovers often spout off to each other, maybe as a confidant or something of another nature. Most people perceive the Spouter Inn to have something with the male genitalia, and how it may be used in sexual intercourse with two men.

The church conveys a sort of dilemma all in itself. The name of the church is, The Trap which could mean a number of things to many different people. The feelings given off are if you do not have a certain sort of feelings for the opposite sex, then you will most definitely be trapped in Hell. That is why you should attend the church; so that it can lead you to those feelings of the opposite sex, and get that homosexuality out of your mind. The church is also used as a vessel in a way much like Queequeg is, in that it is there to steer you away from the path of homosexuality and lead you down the correct path towards peacefulness with yourself, which is saying that if you are homosexual, you will be damned forevermore, and you can never save your soul (Anonymous).

Melville s recognition of sexual identity is very broad, as shown in a previous book he wrote for his beloved friend and mentor, Nathaniel Hawthorne. The book is about the Salem Witch-trials, in which Melville s writings set a perfect example of the power people have to exterminate a certain people, determining Queequeg s struggle with identity and to come out and tell his peers. Homosexuality is shown most predominately in the novel when Ishmael is expected to sleep in the same bed as Queequeg, thusly producing many fears for a man with set morals, having his mind and heart turn against him in some way he is uncertain of (Gilmore). This fear was produced from the cultural system of the nineteenth-century, in that people of that era were expected to act a certain way, and anyone who decided to branch off of their ideals was to be exiled. The cultural system of the nineteenth-century, from a man s point of view, suggests that it is only proper to sleep in the same bed with a woman, and only a woman, thusly making sleeping with a man quite improper in Ishmael s mind. Therefore what Ishmael is doing is uncomfortable to him, but not to Queequeg because he has no morals, and doesn t mind it. Secondly, Queequeg s interpretation of sleeping with Ishmael has a totally different meaning than that of Ishmael himself and the Inn keeper, in that sleeping doesn t only have to do with being together in bed, but maybe having a more loving approach to the bed that they are sharing together.

In conclusion, Ishmael s encounters with Queequeg and their subsequent marriage do in fact challenge the controversial lines of male identity in the mid-nineteenth-century. Controversial lines were crossed many times in this novel, and Moby-Dick critics express deep concern in the way Melville uses Queequeg as a vessel throughout the 135 chapters, and uses him to explore homosexuality and push it along with underlying tones throughout the novel.