

*A Gentle Fold Forward for Forwarding*

Task of childhood: to bring the new world into symbolic space. The child, in fact, can do what the grownup absolutely cannot: recognize the new once again.

– Walter Benjamin, *Arcades Project*

*1st Usufruct*

Charles Olson got his hands on Melville early early. Daddy gave him *Moby-Dick*—a present: “My father gave it to me, when I was a kid. And that was a lucky way to get it, if you can I guess” (“Goddard Talk” 52). Use plus pleasure.

Kept on giving giving—a stroke of luck. Task of the newo|r|ld: bring the child into symbolic space.

cut his way maybe out from Melville’s side

LIKE

. . . (have cut ourselves

out of her [America’s] drugstore flattened-hillside gut

like Wash-Ching-Geka cut

the Winnebago nation out

of elephant—

(*Maximus* 135)

WILD ORCHIDS

Butterick's guide: "The poet's source is a story, 'How Wash-Ching-Geka Destroyed the Elephant and why Elephants are no longer Native American Animals,' from a small booklet entitled *The Trot-Moc Book of Indian Fairy Tales* issued as a promotional device by a Massachusetts shoe manufacturer, *which the poet had kept since a boy*" (193).

kept since a boy LIKE kept in since a boy—

("Was the fact that I had again been involved *in* him"  
("Goddard Talk" 52).

Or never left never disentangled never to have gotten  
out.)

I spell LIKE large because it comes large here. Large and for no good reason.

Despite "TO HELL WITH, like" (*Maximus* 182) and  
"to expiate- / like" (*Maximus* 186) and (finally) ". . .  
*comparison*, or, its bigger name, *symbology*. These  
are the false faces . . ." ("Human Universe," *Collected  
Prose* 157)

—false faces being here as real as anything. LIKE,

Task of childhood: untangle Melville's beard. Untangle it when no one else is interested, or, when no one else deserves. When all—even the scholars—lack the proper measure—fidelity:

# of books or articles published on Melville's work  
before 1947 (the year of *Call Me Ishmael's* publica-  
tion), 31.

# of books or articles published on Melville's work  
before 1929 (the year Olson received a copy of *Moby-  
Dick*), 10.

(these numbers may or may not be)

Daddy gave it to him and Olson likewise gave it to his son.

Early early:

“Like my son has read [*Moby-Dick*], in that wonderful one, that uh—what do you call, what do you call that? Illustrated classics? They’re comic strips. Those beauties! They’re the best of all. They really have some meat in ‘em, those things” (“Goddard Talk” 52).

Drug-store flattened Melville, so attractive—a lure—to Olson—the “original, aboriginal” (*Call Me Ishmael* 13) hollow from whence he threw so many harpoons:

—so  
we move: sd the  
literary man, from hidden places  
sprang  
the killer’s instrument (*Maximus* 126)

Hidden places—the gutters or frames or margins between comic strip panels.

Fruitful cartoon relationship. Palimpsestic usufruct (use plus pleasure). Working out baby-hood’s geometrics and opening its openings onto vistas of the mythic after the end of myth:

“‘The night is also a sun,’ and the absence of myth is also a myth: *the coldest*, the purest, the only *true* myth” (Bataille 48).

“[Melville] sought prime. *He had the coldness we have*, but he warmed himself by first fires after Flood. It gave him the power to find the lost past of America, the unfound present, and make a myth, *Moby-Dick*, for a people of Ishmaels” (*Call Me Ishmael* 15).

Olson wanted a newo|r|ld space. All at once and early early.

## WILD ORCHIDS

Melville was first before Mayans Bigmans Maximus Gloucester.

Before even Olson maybe, a ledge, without really knowing it.

A place to place his foot when “before he did anything, took a step like the bullfighter who leaps back in order to deliver the mortal thrust” (*Call Me Ishmael* 14). Or thrusts.

the number and nature of these barbs

*2nd Usufruct*

DADS—

All a play of DADS—who gets who on who—who fathers or fahters who—and who gets big with who—even here it is a man—a dad—that does this birthing:

“Maximus is a whelping mother, giving birth / with the crunch of his own pelvis” (*Maximus* 257).

Inscribed in the copy of *Moby-Dick* given Olson by his father:

When o'er this book, you cast your eyes,  
Forget your studies and Moby-lize

*Call Me Ishmael's* dedication:

O fahter, fahter  
gone amoong

O eeys that loke

Loke, fahter  
your sone!

who or what looks to what or who?

Primogenitary “false faces”—“masques performed / in the waves” (*Maximus* 346)—

LIKE to LIKE to LIKE

WILD ORCHIDS

LIKE: “he [Melville] gets a lot of lip (who hung in a huge jaw)” (“Letter for Melville 1951,” *Collected Poems* 235)

LIKE: “There is this rock breaches / the earth: the Whale’s Jaw / my father stood inside of” (*Maximus* 36)

LIKE: “(huge Swedish teeth like my father’s, whom god keeps, because he was really in there” (“The Story of Olson, and Bad Thing,” *Collected Poems* 175)

—ghosting one another—pre- and post-dating one another—spitting or swallowing—one to the other—and “prime” is where?

Prime precisely an empty mouth or Maw place holder for

Hunger Himself or Mouth-Without-The-World-To-Eat  
χαω the Muses said the word for the first  
time conceivably, chaow they said or Norse is  
Ginunga Gap something to fill (*Maximus* 547)

Who gets to have his picture taken “forcing back those teeth” (*Maximus* 36), mugging hard with “unselectedness” (“Human Universe,” *Collected Prose* 160)?

who gets to fill who first to table

*3rd Usufruct*

*fahter fahter*

*geography*

*earth*

*harshness toma-*

*hawk, earthquakes*

*machines*

*whaleship.*

*Ahab*

*catches:*

*Ahab*

*geography, an-*

*other antithetical.*

*Noah,*

*Ahab,*

*Ahab's,*

*earth.*

*reaching*

*anything,*

*AHAB,*

WILD ORCHIDS

*4th Usufruct*

Honor, or color, point

they called it, between the middle chief  
and the heart, point

And if nasturtium

is my shield

and my song  
a cantus firmus

1

it is change, no more

and yet no less is  
the edge of

the discrimination

wielded: *cause*

is not the equal of,

the error of,

act

(*Maximus* 97)

In Moby-Dick the sea, its creature, and man are all savage. The Whale is "athirst for human blood." Ahab has "that that's bloody on his mind." The sea will "forever and forever, to the crack of doom, insult and murder man."

It is cannibalism. Even Ishmael, the orphan who survives the destruction, cries out: "I myself am a savage, owing no allegiance but to the King of Cannibals; and ready at any moment to rebel against him." It is the facts, to a first people.

(Nothing is without efficient *cause*)

(*Call Me Ishmael* 81)

CHRIS SYLVESTER

Ectoplasmic armor trying on dad's clothes and seeing they fit that  
they're yours more than his

"Out, / is the cry of a coat of wonder" (*Maximus* 139).

heraldic American amour donned to do battle with who

being after all

your own dad's ghost

WILD ORCHIDS

*5th Usufruct* (a Fact after, the “Last Fact”)

“[This] is the Ahab-World and it is wicked”  
(*Call Me Ishmael* 54).

1946: release of Disney’s  
“The Whale Who Wanted to Sing at the Met.”  
“. . . the tragic story of . . .”

“you sing, you / who also / wants” (*Maximus* 20).  
“Willie could sing in three different voices.”

from Captain Ahab, ““great man”” (*Call Me Ishmael* 64)  
to Professor Tetti Tatti, impresario  
“Efficient cause” is;  
there might be an opera singer in the beastly belly.

You can tell them this: the land-spout’s  
put all the diapers  
up in the trees (what musicians call  
the middle voice, to command it  
is to be in business (*Maximus* 40)

For his troubles Willie gets the harpoon.  
“EQUALS: / tragedy” (*Call Me Ishmael* 65)

“You see, Willie’s singing was a miracle,  
and people aren’t used to miracles.”

The cartoons get it. Antemosaic.  
“I transcribe them as they stand” (*Call Me Ishmael* 52):  
“. . . comic strips. Those beauties!” (“Goddard Talk” 52)



*7th Usufruct*

1.

The myth is  
after myth there is no myth.

That there is “efficient cause” to believe in the death of  
the mythic “is not the equal of” Melville’s act:

That it/he persists in its/his coldness.

“Melville’s ethic is mythic” (*Call Me Ishmael* 83).

2.

Myth—with Melville—shifts from filial piety (a tracing back  
through time drive back for origin) to continued filiations (a  
web or network of tenuous relations between possible origins,  
pseudo-origins, unverifiable unstable multiple and multiplying  
paternities):

“Melville was agonized over paternity. He suffered as a  
son. He had lost the source. He demanded to know the father”  
(*Call Me Ishmael* 82).

To demand is not the same as to get

3.

Cartoons and comic strips also show the shift—that fa-  
ther’s are there not for fathering only use plus pleasure exuber-  
ant citation play—panel to panel added

but with the further complication that was Olson’s  
the space field.

LIKE,

Time a secondary effect of the spatial organization of  
events—a false face. History becomes “islands hidden in the  
blood” (*Maximus* 5)—adjacent—paratactic—unordered by oc-  
currence.

Organized solely by connection via somewhat arbitrary fidelity

In this sense Charles Olson could very well be Melville's dad and Karl Olson Melville's son.

4.

Pick and choose and sort through debris.

If "Space was the paradise Melville was exile of" (*Call Me Ishmael* 82), Olson comes upon it like Ishmael does a heap of whale bones—rubble.

And Melville, Judea: "bones of rocks, —crunched, knawed, & mumbled—mere refuse & rubbish of creation . . ." (*Call Me Ishmael* 98).

"I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America" (*Call Me Ishmael* 11) thereby folds directly into "I am interfused / with the rubbish / of creation" (*Maximus* 154) and "We pick / a private way / among debris / of common / wealths—" (*Maximus* 132).

And to pick a private way when "love is not easy" (*Maximus* 7) is to struggle continually with fidelity.

struggle, to do battle with who

5.

The failure then is not Melville's, his return to the Holy Land and—correspondingly—the new testament.

the failure is with space

to be a paradise proper

to make myth easy

For his troubles Willie still gets the harpoon.

WILD ORCHIDS

6.

The source no longer an option—outsourced—Melville’s lament Olson’s fact “to be dealt with” (*Maximus 6*)—busted up with temporality—the father done in—does not mean absent dad but a proliferation of dads of dadly sons and sonly dads.

Task of the child: to bring the newo|r|ld into dad(less) or (d)addled space.

Task of childhood: choose and bear fidelity to a dad or dads in an infinite field of dads

—witness the figure of Maximus—  
the child her/him-self another dad among them.

in a cartoonish play panel to panel added

Olson’s father gave him *Moby-Dick* early early Olson would not give his father a suitcase Melville would not give either one of them a reason to “Moby-lize.”

there can never be a reason one wants to say anymore  
use plus pleasure outside the bounds of cause

7.

Another Melville Olson wrote—himself—another Fahter to be—himself—in *Call Me Ishmael*.

the Book of the Ghost or Ghosts of the Dad or Dads

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