

ALLEGORY, ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION, AND
LITERARY EXPERIENCE: ESSAYS IN CRITICISM

by

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis will focus on the close relation between allegory and interpretation. Because interpretation proceeds from the viewpoint that the literary work is essentially a statement about some aspect of experience, it attempts to reduce the literary work to an argumentative statement. This thesis will argue that interpretation is, therefore, a mode of allegorization.

Following from the argument that interpretation is allegorization, this thesis will point to factors suggesting that the interpretive allegorical approach is antithetical to literary expression. Interpretation generally fails to recognize the distinction between philosophical discourse and literary expression, or between the logic of discourse and the logic of narrative. Further, allegorization has a restrictive effect on literary expression, in that an interpretive framework limits the possibilities of the suggestive ramifications of the literary tale.

The restrictive effect of allegorization can be related to sociological and cultural factors -- factors that often determine the direction of literary response. The Renaissance furnishes an example of allegorical criticism that interprets in order to see literary works in terms of the presiding cultural-philosophical system. Further, the example of the Renaissance suggests that we might look for a parallel in the conduct of modern criticism.

Allegorization in modern criticism can be seen in interpretations derived from Freudian, Marxist, or Christian Humanist viewpoints. This thesis will argue that such interpretive criticism begins from outside the literary work, for it sees the literary work in terms of the vocabulary of the critic's system. Examples of approaches to Moby Dick will be advanced as evidence of interpretation that results in allegorization.

A further example of the way allegory guides the response of the reader can be seen in The Pilgrim's Progress. Chapters I and III will argue that we can distinguish between the tale and the allegory, and suggest that the presence of the allegorical guide can be traced to extra-literary motivations. Further, when we attempt to reconcile the tale and the allegory, we see more clearly the irrelevance of the allegorical framework.

Satiric allegory, however, presents a unique problem, in that allegory in satire is generally not obtrusive. Chapter IV will point to factors, such as the satirist's viewpoint, that prohibit the allegory from becoming a restrictive framework, as is seen in satiric allegories such as Animal Farm and Brave New World.

In opposition to the interpretive-allegorical approach, this thesis will argue that the open response is more in keeping with the demands of the literary work. The freer and more contemplative attitude of the open response dispenses

with the search for the hidden meanings of literary expression. Critics such as Kazin, Lawrence, Sontag, and Rahv point to the attitudes and practise of the anti-allegorical approach.

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. Preliminary Distinctions.....	1
II. Allegorical Criticism: Translations of <u>Moby Dick</u>	12
III. Author as Allegorical Critic: <u>The Pilgrim's Progress</u>	37
IV. Allegory Made Subservient: Satiric Allegory.	56
V. The Open Response: The Unfortified Critic...	72
Conclusion.....	88
Bibliography.....	92
Appendix. Allegorical Criticism: A Cultural Motivation.....	96

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Chapter I

Preliminary Distinctions

The purpose of the following chapters is to discuss the relationship between interpretive allegory and literature. In addition to the usual sense of the term, I am using allegory to refer to interpretive approaches such as Freudianism, Marxism, or Christian Humanism. Further, I am suggesting that these interpretive approaches are similar in effect to the use of allegory by the literary artist. This thesis will suggest that an interpretive framework, imposed by either author or critic, is essentially alien to literary experience, unless the interpretive aspect of allegory is smothered, as in the case of satire.

A basic proposition of this thesis, then, is that allegory is part of the world of fact and discourse. Allegory proceeds in terms of logical frameworks and affirmation of facts. The world of the literary work is quite different, in that it does not proceed on the basis of discursive logic. True, the literary work has its own logic, as is seen, for example, in the "logic" of its structure and unity. But as Frye suggests, the logic of prose fiction is based on narrative principles, while the logic of discursive prose is based on the principles of the proposition.¹

Further, literary expression is basically suggestive in that it does not make a definite statement about experience.

The hypothetical nature of literature ensures that it will always be suggestive, as opposed to the more definite nature of discourse: "Literature presents not an affirmation or repudiation of facts, but a series of hypothetical possibilities."² Because of its hypothetical, suggestive nature, literary expression is always expanding in terms of significance: "Language can thus be regarded as either a medium of communication or as a medium which can, while communicating, simultaneously expand the significance of the communication. The latter is the literary use of language and does not, of course, confine itself to prose fiction."³ Thus I would describe literary expression as basically open-ended, in that it is more suggestive than affirmative.

Even though literary expression is generally accepted as suggestive rather than affirmative, one can readily point to attempts to define the expanding significance of a given literary work. For example, witness the constant efforts to name an equivalent for the whale in Moby Dick. The false assumption in such efforts is that a symbol must have an equivalent that can be defined in discursive terms. I do not mean to suggest that the whale does not have symbolic significance. But a symbol need not be part of an argument. In fact, such a symbol would merely be a signpost erected to illustrate a moral. On the contrary, even though a symbol has more than literal significance, it can remain indefinite. There are minor allegories in Moby Dick, but these are not sufficient to

contain the symbol. As the novel progresses, the whale gains significance, and the reader too is caught up with the excitement of the hunt. But the reader does not know what exactly he is pursuing. To present an interpretive framework in such a case would limit the novel and the symbol of the whale.

But the quality of open-endedness or expanding significance is not peculiar to works that focus on central symbols such as the whale in Moby Dick. The following chapters proceed from the viewpoint that this quality is basic to literary expression. In Melville's case, because of the temptation presented by the whale for the allegorizing critic, we become particularly aware of the necessity of allowing the literary meaning the freedom to expand. But the quality of openness is also essential to works such as The Adventures of Augie March -- a novel with no central symbol.

If we try to translate the wanderings of Augie March into a convenient mythic pattern, we can soon limit the expanding possibilities of the work. If, however, the reader allows the various episodes to grow upon him, the impact of the novel transcends any attempt to categorize it.⁴ There are various patterns in The Adventures of Augie March such as that of the wandering explorer, and thus the reference to Columbus at the end is appropriate and effective. But even here the pattern is more suggestive than conclusive. Bellow's novel and Melville's are vastly different. In one case we focus

on a central powerful symbol, which takes us into ethereal wanderings, while in the other, we are generally on a much more naturalistic level. And yet, in both cases the quality of open-endedness is important.

The quality of open-endedness distinguishes literary expression from discursive statement. Literature in its purest form would avoid all comment on "life" or experience, or at least any direct comment. But in practice literature is not often this "pure" and possibly this is a good thing. On the other hand, when literature makes a direct statement about experience, such as when it recommends a certain pattern of behavior, it becomes allegory or discursive statement. The open-ended literary work presents itself as a kind of compromise. An indefinite symbol might point in the direction of a certain meaning or statement, but it never completes such a statement. Rather than judging this to be a lack of clarity and preciseness on the part of literary language, one can see it as part of the suggestive, expanding and unsettling effect of literary expression that can only be appreciated if the reader is willing to lay aside his discursive and argumentative frame of mind. Thus when literature comes in contact with an allegorical frame of mind, it can at least have the effect of exploding the set patterns.

When a critic attempts to define a meaning for the literary work, he approaches it from an outside position. That is, the allegorizing critic might begin from historical

or sociological facts, and then move towards the literary work, with the intention of finding sociological or historical information or patterns. But it is essential to realize that such an approach always begins from the world of discourse outside the literary work: "Literature must be approached centrifugally, from the outside, if we are to get any factual significance out of it. Thus an historian could learn much from a realistic novel written in the period he is studying, if he knows how to allow for its hypothetical structure. It would not do much violence to customary language to use the term 'allegorical' for this whole descriptive level of meaning, and say, for instance, that a realistic novel was an allegory of the life of its time."⁵ As Frye goes on to suggest, this procedure is legitimate as long as the historian or sociologist realizes that what he is describing is the historical or sociological background, and not the essence of the literary work.⁶ The problem with such allegorical criticism is that it tends to assume that the factual background material is the author's meaning or statement.

Further, the artist himself can write in an allegorical manner. But even if he does so, he still creates his hypothetical world of fiction, and thus we read the allegorist's work, even if we dismiss the allegory. The writer of allegory is in essence another allegorical critic, for he too recognizes the distinction between the literary work and the world of discourse: "A writer is being allegorical when he himself

indicates a continuous relationship of his central hypothetical structure to a set of external facts, or what he assumes to be facts. This continuous counterpoint between the saying and the centrifugal meaning is called allegory only when the relation is direct."⁷ The distinction between the literary work and the external facts is essential, because it makes it possible for the reader to respond to the tale, even though he might reject the allegorical framework.

Basically, the imposition of an allegorical framework on a tale can be traced to the desire to translate the tale into discursive terms. The explanations for such a desire are numerous. On one hand, there might simply be a lack of awareness of the distinct difference between discursive and literary expression. On the other hand, the translator-critic might be interested in channelling the literary work in what he considers to be a desirable direction. In its more serious form, such an effort can become a form of censorship.

To this point the distinction between literary expression and discursive statement or argument have basically been pictured as being clearly separated. This, of course, is not always the case. A literary work might move between the poles of expression. At times Moby Dick seems to be allegorical. For example, the names of the ships that the Pequod meets appear to have allegorical overtones. But I would suggest that the purpose of the allegorical overtones is to continue

to stimulate the interest of the reader. That is, the reader returns to the literary work, because he senses the added symbolic significance of literary expression. Such a response, however, is not necessarily synonymous with allegorical explication. Even if we see more than literal significance in the whale in Moby Dick, we need not, therefore, define that significance.

Further, criticism too might move between the two poles. As suggested already, background material might be necessary for more adequate literary appreciation. But it is essential that we move ultimately away from the pole where we view literature as an allegorical comment on "life", to an appreciation of the separate world of literary expression. As Frye suggests, we move from seeing literature as a commentary on life to responding to literature as a unique language:

For we think also of literature at first as a commentary on an external "life" or "reality." But just as in mathematics we have to go from three apples to three, and from a square field to a square, so in reading Jane Austen we have to go from the faithful reflection of English society to the novel, and pass from literature as a symbol to literature as an autonomous language. And just as mathematics exists in a mathematical universe which is at the circumference of the common field of experience, so literature exists in a verbal universe, which is not a commentary on life and reality, but contains life and reality in a system of verbal relationships. This conception of a verbal universe, in which life and reality are inside literature, and not outside it and being described or represented or approached or symbolized by it, seems to me the first postulate of a properly organized criticism.⁸

An attempt to justify allegory as literary expression

can be seen in Edwin Honig's discussion of allegory.⁹ Honig makes a basic distinction between the concept of allegory and the manifestation of allegory in a literary work. Honig's thesis is that in practice allegory is much less distasteful than in theory. In fact, Honig feels that allegory can be an aesthetically pleasing mode of literary expression: "But in the practical completion of its design, the allegorical work dispenses with the concept of allegory, as something preconceived, in order to achieve the fullest fictional manifestation of life. Allegory, which is symbolic in method, is realistic in aim and in the content of its perception."¹⁰

The validity of Honig's distinction between the concept of allegory and the manifestation of allegory in imaginative literature is debatable, for the concept should be derived from what one observes in the literary work. The artist, in using allegory, determines its nature, and thus if one finds the concept distasteful, I suspect that this might be because of previous experience of allegory in literary works.

Furthermore, Honig's description of allegory suggests that the allegorist is caught in a curious game of being pursued and pursuing. On the one hand, the allegorist begins with an idea or argument he wishes to illustrate. On the other hand, he sets out to forget that idea and to discover it in the course of his creation; he is pursued by the preconceived idea as he attempts to discover it. The allegorist, then, is caught looking both ways, and conse-

quently, one can readily understand why countercurrents might develop in his allegory.

Honig attempts to justify allegory to the contemporary reader by destroying our preconceptions about allegorical literature. He hopes that the end result will be our acceptance of allegory as a legitimate mode of expression for the creative imagination. But I suspect that what Honig describes as the working out of allegory in realistic fiction is actually a description of the allegorist overcoming the limitations of the allegorical mode, or the process of the transformation of allegory as interpretive framework or discourse into literary expression.¹¹

A further problem in Honig's argument is his equation of symbolic literature and allegory. Honig argues for the emergence of theme or meaning from the concrete action of the literary work, as opposed to the use of theme as an arbitrarily imposed article of faith. Further, Honig suggests that emergence of the theme from a concrete basis, the theme as the end towards which the whole literary work moves, is the characteristic method for all symbolic art.¹²

One has no quarrel with Honig's description of the emergence of the theme in effective symbolic art. What is questionable is the argument that allegory is a symbolic mode, and therefore, an effective literary medium. I suspect that once allegory becomes effective symbolic art, it ceases to be allegory. When the allegorical framework is

left behind, the creative writer is free to develop his theme organically, but he will no longer write allegory. To say that this latter result is still allegory only confuses the issue, because then one must say that all symbolic art is allegory.

In the process of attempting to justify allegory, Honig takes a great deal of liberty with the meaning of the term. He appears to be intent on adding to allegory characteristics of myth, archetypes, and indefinite symbols. The end result is the creation of allegory as a close synonym for effective symbolic art, but in the process one loses a necessary critical distinction.

The following chapters, then, are presented as related essays that focus on various facets of the conflict between the interests of allegory and literary expression. Chapter II focuses on interpretive-allegorical criticism of Moby Dick. Chapter III focuses on the separate interests of allegory and the tale in a literary allegory: The Pilgrim's Progress. Chapter IV is a discussion of allegory as effective literary expression in satiric allegory. Chapter V focuses on characteristics of the open response, in contrast to allegorical criticism. The appendix points to cultural motivations in allegorical criticism.

CHAPTER I

FOOTNOTES

¹Northrop Frye, "Levels of Meaning in Literature," KR, XII (1950), 252.

²Ibid., 249.

³David Daiches, A Study of Literature (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 39.

⁴Note Daiches' comment on the cumulative effect of expanding significance in prose: "In prose writing it generally takes time to achieve the proper effect: there must be a group of patterned incidents, rather than a single incident, for prose is a medium which, compared with poetry, achieves its effect expansively rather than intensively, depending less on sudden 'explosions' of meaning in the reader's mind than on the progressive fusion of retrospect and anticipation in a more or less leisurely manner" (A Study of Literature, p. 37).

⁵Frye, "Levels," 250. See also The Educated Imagination (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1963), p. 53.

⁶Frye, "Levels," 250.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Frye, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," UTQ, XIX (1949), 13-14.

⁹Dark Conceit (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1959).

¹⁰Ibid., p. 3.

¹¹For further discussion of this idea, see comments relating to Frank Kermode's The Romantic Image, in the introduction to Chapter III.

¹²Honig, p. 177.

CHAPTER II

ALLEGORICAL CRITICISM: TRANSLATIONS OF
MOBY DICK

The conflict between the interests of allegory and literary expression is evident in a large part of modern criticism. Although the critical approaches in question do not see themselves as allegorical approaches, their interpretations suggest that they, in effect, allegorize literary expression. Examples of such approaches are the Freudian, Marxist, and Christian Humanist interpretations of literary works. Reading such criticism, one observes that these approaches begin from a position outside the literary work. That is, the vision of these allegorical critics is always coloured by their systems of viewing literature and experience, and consequently, they fail to openly confront the literary work. The vocabulary of the systems of interpretation acts as a protective barrier, channelling the impulse of literary expression in the direction that the system prescribes.

Briefly, the response referred to in the preceding paragraph should be separated from other trends in modern criticism that have greater respect for literary expression. For example, the formalist school of criticism, at least, attempts to begin within the literary work, by pointing to

rhythms and patterns that characterize the unique quality of literary expression. Frye, too, works with a systematic approach to literature, but again, his system proceeds from within, in that he attempts to see literature as a separate universe of literary forms and patterns, giving rise to a systematic science of criticism.¹ Whatever the faults of Frye's system and that of the Formalist critics might be, they at least approach the literary work from within, in an attempt to avoid seeing literature as an allegorical comment on "life".

Focusing on a novel as primarily a work of the creative imagination is not tantamount to saying that a critic must only eulogize a work of art in rapturous generalities concerning the intuitive nature of artistic insight. I must admit, though, that I favour the view that there always is some aspect at the core of a literary work which cannot be stated in terms of discursive meaning. Therefore, the critic's emphasis should be more on realization and appreciation of patterns and rhythms that comprise the narrative structure and logic of works such as Moby Dick. Further, the critic should not forget the simple axiom that the processes of art are based on intuition rather than on systematic rational thought. If the critic would curb his curiosity, he might emerge with a clearer picture of the artist and his work:

...one soon comes to a point at which it is wise to ask if the pursuit of high colored exegetical discoveries, like the pursuit of the White Whale himself, may not end in mere negation. The vice of criticism is curiosity. It has been since the nineteenth century. And it is a deadly vice, for in the desire to know everything the critic endangers his capacity for concretely realizing anything. That is to say, while the accumulating data piles up in his books, there is likely to be a relaxation of relevance, and the image of the artist is likely to be supplanted in the critic's mind by a fetish image corresponding to the living creator only in inaccurate and misleading ways.²

Not only is the dogmatic exegetical approach often irrelevant; more seriously, it usually turns the work of art into an allegory.

In order to illuminate the weaknesses of allegorical-interpretive criticism, this chapter will focus on representative interpretations of Moby Dick. This novel is a good basis for a discussion of allegorical criticism, because in approaching Moby Dick, the critic is confronted with a literary work in which a central symbol forms the core. The imaginative impact of Moby Dick can be traced to the suggestiveness of the central indefinite symbol -- a suggestiveness which continually expands as the novel progresses. Whatever approach the critic might take, he must not circumscribe the ramifications of a symbol such as Moby Dick, because when this happens he is diminishing the imaginative impact of the literary work he is criticizing.

The attempt to elucidate the meaning of literary works

all too often results in the translation of a literary work into a system of thought. What happens in the imaginative work is translated into economic, psychological, or religious terms by the critic. If this translation is carried through to any great length, the literary work soon becomes an allegory, as the system imposed by the critic becomes the allegorical framework. Such translation is clearly evident in critical interpretations of Moby Dick. This novel has been read as a diatribe against God, as a parable on the virtues of humility before God, as a parable of the ruin of capitalistic civilization, and as a story of innocent homosexual love.

In attempting to define the meaning of Moby Dick, Howard Vincent advances a dogmatic Christian interpretation of the novel.³ A brief summary of his interpretation will help to focus on the limitations of his critical method. For Vincent, Father Mapple's sermon is central to an interpretation of the novel.⁴ Vincent takes the sermon at face value and suggests that the characters in Moby Dick are to be judged by the implications of the sermon; each character is to be judged according to his deviation from or adherence to the principles enunciated by Father Mapple. The novel represents Melville's attempt to work out the nature of the relationship of the individual soul to God, because Melville's attitude is the same as Father Mapple's.⁵

Vincent also sees Ahab's destruction in terms of his allegorical interpretation. Ahab, unlike Jonah, does not repent, and thus Ahab is destroyed while Ishmael lives. Thus Vincent feels that Melville is arguing that the individual should have liberty, but like Milton's individual, Father Mapple's "selfhood" is only attained by submission to God.⁶

Vincent's allegorical and dogmatic interpretation of Ahab can be seen clearly from the following quotation:

From his Father Mapple's eloquent and passionate affirmation the rest of Moby Dick unfolds. Ahab no less than Father Mapple is in search of an Absolute, be its name God or Moby Dick, but unlike the whalerman-preacher, Ahab acknowledges no law but his own; his search will be carried on in self-assertion, not in self-submission. In the early, unrepentant Jonah, Ahab has been prefigured. Ahab defies God; his hybris is the antithesis of Jonah's submission. Great as Ahab is, he is not, to borrow a phrase from Keats, "magnanimous enough to annihilate self." Striving to be God himself, or in worshipping false gods (even as the Ahab of the Old Testament worshiped Baal), Ahab will never know delight. "Delight," Father Mapple states significantly and memorably, "can only be to him who has striven to be God's." Not to him who strives to be God. Ahab should have been one of the silent worshippers at the Seaman's Bethel.⁷

Melville's argument, as interpreted by Vincent, is very similar to that of Milton's, in that Father Mapple's sermon is close to Milton's doctrine of right reason. In fact, the end result of Vincent's interpretation is that Moby Dick becomes predominantly an argument comparable to Paradise Lost, in its conscious and specific intent of justifying the

ways of God to men.

Vincent's statement about Melville's theology is too allegorically oriented to account for what happens in the novel, more specifically, to describe Melville's attitude to Ahab and Ishmael. Melville invests Ahab with considerable nobility. Further, Ahab emerges as a forceful character precisely because Melville sympathetically identifies with his hero. To suggest that Ahab should have been a mute and docile worshiper at the local chapel implies a renunciation of the sympathies that Melville projects into Ahab. One wonders how much of Vincent's interpretation of Ahab stems from a desire to avoid the implications of Melville's sympathetic treatment of Ahab.⁸

Ishmael too is not so good an orthodox Christian as Vincent would have us believe. True, Ishmael's language is often pious. But Ishmael is also involved in scenes where his piety could be called into question by the orthodox prelate. For example, Ishmael suggests that he made the following observation in admonishing Queequeg about the rigours of his Ramadan: "In one word, Queequeg, said I, rather digressively; hell is an idea first born on an undigested apple-dumpling; and since then perpetuated through the hereditary dyspepsias nurtured by Ramadans."⁹ On the other hand, we do not need to pounce upon such statements as evidence of an anti-Christian framework.

When Vincent begins to interpret Moby Dick, he translates Melville's vision into the vision of an orthodox Christian, and Melville's novel becomes a moral exemplum on the virtues of submission before the Puritan God. Because Vincent attempts to see Moby Dick in terms of a discursive statement, he allegorizes the novel.

A second interpretation which attempts to work out a very definite meaning for the whole of Moby Dick is that of Lawrance Thompson.¹⁰ Again this interpretation takes a rigid viewpoint towards the novel, and the result is that the symbolism, including that of the whale, becomes fixed. In essence, Thompson's interpretation makes another allegory of Moby Dick.

After having followed his interpretation throughout his study of Moby Dick, Thompson has little freedom in suggesting a viewpoint about Melville. Thompson, of necessity, concludes that Melville continued to be dependent on the Calvinistic concept of God -- at first he honoured God in terms of love; then he saw God in terms of hate.¹¹ Ahab's quest is thus an allegorical revenge plot directed at God.¹² Thus, according to Thompson, Melville could never go beyond the reacting stage, and consequently his art suffered because of a lack of detachment.¹³ In reading Thompson's criticism, one realizes though that his conclusion grows out of his insistence upon Melville being governed by a specific ironic purpose throughout the whole of Moby Dick.

According to Thompson, Melville's purpose in writing Moby Dick was to write a diatribe against God, and to write this diatribe in the form of ironic satire:

Having declared his independence from Christian dogma, and from God, Melville arranged artistically to achieve, as his major effects in Moby-Dick, various forms of taunting ridicule, aimed at Christian dogma and at the Christian concept of God. I have already suggested that whenever ridicule is expressed in ironic satire, the inevitable consequence is that somebody gets taken in or left behind or trapped. Melville seems to have counted on just that, and there is some evidence that his success exceeded his boldest hope.¹⁴

Thompson thus analyzes the whole of Moby Dick with the intention of showing that Melville was continuously speaking ironically, so that his message would get through to the initiated and be lost to the naive orthodox believers. In this way, Melville could both reach the select few and protect himself against the criticism of the clergy.¹⁵

According to Thompson, Melville chose the symbol of the whale, because he knew that any concern with the whale as a symbol would be construed to be a genuine concern with God. Melville, then, maliciously used the symbol of the whale to develop his anti-God allegory and to play his personal joke on the theologians of his day.¹⁶

The adverse effect of Thompson's interpretation is that it imposes another system on Moby Dick. One feels that the logic of Thompson's argument is more complete than that of Melville's novel. Granted, Melville is often ironic,

but Thompson's concern with intention supplants his critical sense when he continues to discover irony in every passage in Moby Dick. Also, when the concern with intention is taken to these extreme limits, the intention becomes the allegorical message and mold of the novel.

Thompson's allegorical interpretation is particularly apparent from the unequivocal manner in which he equates the whale with God. In other words, for Thompson the symbol of the whale is always fixed: "Allegorically, we must remember, all concern for whaling in Moby Dick is some form of God-concern."¹⁷ Taken in a broad sense, one could possibly accept this statement, but we know that Thompson means specifically the Calvinistic God and Melville's own quarrels with his background.

Using the equation of the whale as God as a basis, Thompson allegorizes every part of the narrative of Moby Dick. One of the more absurd examples of this allegorizing process is Thompson's commentary on the Jungfrau: "The Jungfrau is a German vessel out of Bremen, and this affords Melville a chance for a backhanded slap at what seemed to him the feebleness of Spinozean, Kantian, and post-Kantian theorizings as to the nature of God: 'At one time the greatest whaling people in the world, the Dutch and Germans are now among the least.'¹⁸ Continuing in a similar manner, Thompson comments further on the Pequod's meeting with the various whaling vessels: "Over a period of weeks, the Pequod

speaks nine separate whalers, and asks each what it knows about the White Whale; allegorically, about God."¹⁹

A further example of Thompson's method of interpretation resulting in a " hideous allegory " is his discussion of the roles of the three mates. Because Thompson has committed himself to the view that the whale is Melville's Calvinistic God, the attitudes of the mates become their attitude to that God: "Allegorically, of course, each mate's attitude toward whaling suggests his attitude toward God."²⁰ Thus Stubb's pleasant and amiable attitude becomes the mark of the naive and unthinking religious believer:

In the light of Stubb's attitude toward death, it is possible to view him, allegorically, as an habitual user of religion until his senses have become so dulled that while he is vaguely aware of a Superior, who may some day call him "aloft", he is not much interested in the subject of either the call or the Caller. Stubb sums up his religious belief this way: "Think not, is my eleventh commandment, and sleep when you can, is my twelfth."²¹

The immediate question one asks is why must Stubb's attitude be seen in narrow religious terms? But Thompson has fixed the symbol of the whale, and following from that he determines to make the allegory consistent. Thus instead of focusing on the attitudes of the three mates, Thompson defines their attitudes in terms of Melville's supposed argumentative position.

Thompson continues his rigid allegorization of Moby Dick into his discussion of the chapters where Ishmael is

concerned with cetology. Here again Thompson sees intentional satirical comment on God and theology:

Instead of accepting God's inscrutability, as Job did, Captain Ahab defies it and vows to dismember his taunting Dismemberer. While Ahab goes about that obvious business, Ishmael goes about his covert business of taunting the Taunter. With mock humility, for example, Ishmael sets up the pun value of cetology-theology in the opening paragraphs of the "Cetology" chapter, and progresses until he can exclaim sarcastically, "What am I that I should essay to hook the nose of this leviathan? The awful tauntings in Job might well appall me. 'Will he ((the leviathan) make a covenant with thee? Behold the hope of him is vain!'" With equally taunting mockery and sarcasm, Ishmael contemplates a dying whale (possibly a symbol of an impotent and defeated and dying God), and continues his anti-Christian sneering in these rhetorical questions, "Is this the creature of whom it was once so triumphantly said--'Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? Or his head with fishspears?...'" This the creature? this he? Oh! that unfulfilments should follow the prophets. For with the strength of a thousand thighs in his tail, Leviathan had run his head under the mountains of the seas, to hide him from the Pequod's fish-spears!"²²

Continuing in the same manner, Thompson states that the chapters where Melville relates how the whale is transformed from the dead whale into usable whale oil are meant to be sardonic comments on Job's reference to the inscrutable nature of Leviathan in Job 41.23.

The undesirable result of Thompson's approach is further seen when he attempts to force Ishmael into his system. If one disregards Thompson's approach and that of other allegorical critics, the chapters where Ishmael comments on the whale are characterized by fluidity and expansiveness. As Ishmael focuses on the whale and the

whale hunt, the whale develops continuously into a more expanded symbol. Ishmael's focus on the whale results in an expansion of its symbolic possibilities, until we see one central whale, which no one meaning can circumscribe. If, however, one approaches the whale with the intention of finding some definite meaning, the expansion of the symbol is immediately limited.

Ishmael seems to be the one character in Moby Dick who has a symbolic imagination. The evil aspects of whiteness, of the whale, of the universe, frighten him, but at the same time he is able to live with ambiguity. Therefore, it is Ishmael's imagination that focuses on the indefinite and expanding nature of the symbol of the whale.

On the other hand, in Thompson's interpretation, Ishmael's imagination is restricted by the critic's allegorical approach. According to Thompson, there can be little ambiguity about the whale; Ishmael is also reacting against Ahab's God. According to Thompson, the attitudes of Ahab and Ishmael are similar, except that Ishmael is able to hide the true intent of his words in masterfully deceptive language.²⁴

In reaction to Thompson's allegorized version of Moby Dick, Bewley suggests a reading which more fully respects the imaginative core of the novel. But even though Bewley suggests that the whale should not be explained in terms of an argumentative position, he cannot resist offering his own

counter interpretation:

D. H. Lawrence, in what must always remain one of the finest criticisms of Melville ever written, said that probably Melville himself didn't know what the White Whale meant. But Lawrence did not mean that the White Whale was a vague symbol that could mean everything or nothing. He only meant that what it actively realized in itself -- realized with the complexity and mystery of a living thing -- was incapable of being neatly itemized or systemized. The White Whale is Melville's profoundest intuition into the nature of creation, and it is an intuition in which God and nature are simultaneously present and commenting on each other. But the intuition exists in the world of Melville's creative imagination, and the utmost care must be taken when making correlations between his art and the theological articles of his faith.²⁵

Thompson's interpretation fails precisely because of his lack of caution in translating Melville's vision into a theological stance.

It can be taken for granted that the whale in Moby Dick suggests some form of ultimate concern. But as long as Melville uses a symbol or image to suggest this ultimate concern, the critic should not attempt to define this concern in terms of a system that is basically part of the world outside the literary work. We might say that the symbol of the whale is defined in terms of literary expression, and thus to define the symbol in terms of the language of discourse and argument can only result in a bad translation from a language we can all read.

Another allegorized version of Moby Dick is that of James B. Hall.²⁶ Hall is reacting to the indefinite nature

of much of the criticism of Moby Dick: "Much criticism makes Melville a fo'castle tragedian or a metaphysician of the sea. In the case of Moby Dick these critical attitudes are evasive actions: by vast generalization the critic can vault a fundamental implication of the book."²⁷ Hall's comments about the evasive criticism of Moby Dick are probably justified. In any work where there is a broad vision as in Moby Dick, the critical tendency is to offer vast generalizations about that vision. But in reacting to this trend, Hall goes to the opposite extreme and suggests a more definite meaning by allegorizing Moby Dick. One should, however, credit Hall for stating that his interpretation is not necessarily the main concern of the novel.²⁸

Hall's approach is clearly seen when he suggests that Melville is fulfilling his role as a novelist in that he shows the result that capitalistic society has on humanity.²⁹ In other words, Hall's aesthetic favours a didactic literature--specifically, a didacticism arising from a Marxist viewpoint. Hall's interpretation of Moby Dick clearly follows from his aesthetic: "The Pequod is an archetype of capitalistic enterprise conceived in the mood of an expanding ocean-frontier. She is a cannibalistically dressed ship, "A noble craft, but somehow melancholy!" This melancholy of the patriarchal figure" sic among whaling ships suggests a tragic flaw in the nature of an enterprise laid down on the general principles expounded by Adam Smith."³⁰

Having established that Moby Dick is about the weaknesses of capitalistic society, Hall proceeds to identify the whale in terms of his allegory, and the symbol of the whale becomes fixed, because of an attempt to codify the meaning of Moby Dick. The whale is some ultimate state of industrialization, which is sought by the culture hero of the capitalistic society, Ahab.³¹ Ahab's pursuit of this ultimate state of industrialization, then, points to the destructive nature of the culture out of which Ahab emerges.³¹

Continuing with his Marxist interpretation of Moby Dick, Hall allegorizes the rest of the action of the novel. As in Thompson's interpretation, the various ships which the Pequod meets are given allegorical significance. The Town Ho! becomes an example of the result of a system where relations are based on force alone, while the Bachelor becomes an example of a capitalistic dream.³¹ Further, the novel portrays a system which results in a complete lack of moral concern by everyone concerned--the owners of the ship remain at home, and the captain of the ship is pressured from the owners who are not on board the ship. No one is present to take moral responsibility for the welfare of the men on the ship.³²

Hall is pointing out a significant aspect of the theme of Moby Dick when he suggests that the novel points to the result of unbridled individualism. But the problem arises when Hall translates this concern of Melville's into terms of

a specific political and economic system. Once these specific terms have been used, the novel has become an allegory because everything in the novel becomes part of an allegorical drama. Like Thompson, Hall does not sufficient care in making the translation between Melville's symbols and other abstract systems, and as a result the whale again becomes static.

Another critic, Slochower, sees many of the same themes in Moby Dick that Hall does.³³ But Slochower is able to illuminate these themes without fitting them into an allegorical mold. True, Slochower sees Moby Dick in terms of a mythic framework, and this could be seen as a specific system, but a mythic framework is closer to the imaginative world, because it rises above the more specific systems to express a pattern that is more all-inclusive.³⁴ Thus Slochower is able to talk about the problem of individualism and the collective without turning the novel into a rigid allegory.. In the same way, any consideration of religious concerns in Moby Dick should extend beyond a specific theological framework and a specific God in order to focus on broader archetypes of experience -- archetypes which subsume the narrower allegories, and work in a much more suggestive manner.

The Freudian or psychological approach offers another systematic approach to literature, and as could be expected, Moby Dick has been analyzed from this viewpoint. Leslie Fiedler's interpretation leans heavily in this direction.³⁵ Whatever one feels about Fiedler's allegorizing tendencies,

one should give credit to Fiedler for his penetrating analysis of Melville's epic. Fiedler's comments are on the whole a great help in understanding the novel. Particularly is this true of certain aspects of the novel such as the relationships between Ishmael and Queequeg, and Ahab and Fedallah.

The allegorizing tendency in Fiedler's interpretation of *Moby Dick* results from his use of psychological or Freudian terminology. The redeeming factor in his criticism is that he generally does not push the terminology to an extreme. As in Hall's interpretation, the terminology of a specific system of thought begins to move the interpretation of the novel in an allegorical direction. For example, Fiedler suggests that the motif of the rejected sons emerges from the descriptions of Ahab and Ishmael. Ahab is thus the rejected son who at times desires to be reunited with the feminine aspect, but basically desires to grapple with the "fiery Father". Ishmael too feels rejected (note his dream about the hand), but in the end he is reunited with the mother weeping for her children -- Rachel.³⁶

At another point in his analysis of Moby Dick, Fiedler again employs Freudian terminology; he is focusing on the thematic significance of Fedallah and Queequeg: "Those themes the main themes of the novel are projected by two dark-skinned characters, supernumeraries in the action, who represent the polar aspects of the id, beneficent and

destructive."³⁷ Again, the terminology forces us to read the novel in terms of a specific system of thought.

When Fiedler comments on Ishmael's dream in which he sees the hand, Fiedler's Freudian bias leads him to make a statement that is consistent with the general direction of his interpretation, but questionable in terms of the novel. Fiedler suggests that the hand which Ishmael sees in the dream is to be interpreted as a symbol of guilt feelings about masturbation.³⁸ Ishmael's dream is one of the many vague aspects of the novel. It raises a problem in interpretation, as does the symbol of the whale. In such cases the Freudian or Marxist critic would like to suggest that he has the terminology to clarify the indefinite passage. But Fiedler's attempt to do this with Ishmael's dream is another example of the allegorizing result when a critic brings a certain system of thought to an imaginative work, and makes the translation without being sufficiently aware of the untranslatable nature of the imaginative work. And further, what difference does it make to be able to interpret the dream in terms of a specific system? The important aspect is the effect of terror that the hand induces.

As could be expected, Fiedler's interpretation of the meaning of the whale is also based on his Freudian bias. The descent into the sea of the whale is for Fiedler emblematic of the immersion in the id: "The descent into either (as opposed to the assault upon either), like the love-union

with the dark savage (as opposed to the pact with him), signifies a life-giving immersion in nature or the id, a death and rebirth."³⁹ Fiedler's comment in the above passage reflects both the strength and limitation of his critical approach. He limits the novel by pushing too much in one direction, but the pattern he suggests is still more inclusive than rigid allegory, because Fiedler makes an attempt to think more in terms of archetypes.⁴⁰

The critical approaches of Vincent, Thompson, Hall, and Fiedler are examples of interpretive criticism, which because of its allegorizing tendencies, fails to allow the imaginative work to move in an expanding direction. In making the translation from Moby Dick to their systems of psychology, philosophy, or religion, these critics codify the meaning of the novel. The indefinite nature of the symbols is undermined, and the scope of the novel is restricted. Literary expression can be translated only to a certain point, and certainly the symbol of Moby Dick is part of literary expression.

Even though allegorical criticism is basically dangerous to and destructive of the literary work, it might have limited value. For instance, allegorical approaches are generally stimulated by some aspect of the work in question (e.g. mysterious symbols), and to the extent that they help point to the existence of that aspect, they are helpful.

Furthermore symbolism is a broader classification than allegory, and allegorical ramifications can be present in

symbolism. Thus an allegorical interpretation helps to point to one aspect of the symbolism.⁴⁰ But generally the allegorical critic forgets that the expanding symbol is more comprehensive than his more specific systematization of the symbol, and thus we are left with the task of separating the allegorical critic's interpretation from the patterns that he has been able to bring into focus.

A more important result of allegorical criticism might be its ability to force the reader to face implications of the literary work. In such cases, allegorical criticism would be a liberating factor. The critic's terms then become what Fiedler calls, "mediate metaphors":

But surely, the duty of the critic is to mediate between the lay public and any area of experience which illuminates or is illuminated by a work of art. The general failure to come to terms with works of literature is often a failure to connect; and the critic who chooses to deal with the work in isolation aggravates an endemic weakness of our atomized world. The critic's job is the making of mediate metaphors that will prepare the reader for the more drastic metaphors of the poet; and such metaphor-making is his concern because he knows that the relationships he clarifies are real relationships.⁴¹

The basic danger though of allegorical criticism is that it becomes more than a "mediate metaphor". As long as any criticism helps the reader to move towards a more open and direct confrontation with the literary work, it performs a useful function. Such criticism would first of all be more concerned with bringing the reader to the literary work than with preserving the logic of the interpretive-allegorical

system. In order to bring the reader to the literary work, such criticism might use allegory merely as a means to an end. That is, it might employ allegory in order to supply the reader with helpful analogies that would help the reader to enter the literary work.

Restrictive allegorical criticism though would see the allegorical interpretation as a conclusive statement -- one which defined the meaning of the literary work. Instead of leading the reader to confrontation with literary expression it would, in essence, substitute an interpretation for the literary work. Further, such restrictive criticism would lead the reader to substitute the clarity and preciseness of the logical interpretation for the obscurity and unresolved tension that might be present in the literary work.

The nature and attractiveness of restrictive interpretive criticism is described clearly by Allan Rodway:

Certainly, students of literature nowadays prefer reading criticism, for the critic displays in full-flowering clarity what was perhaps buried or obscure in the rich confusion of the original work. He relates that work to Man and Morality, to Nature and Science, to History and Society. He sees its analogues and precedents, and foresees its descendants and its role in worldmaking. Moreover, he marshals the Many into One system. No wonder, then, in such transcendence, he should seem preferable.⁴³

It is against such criticism that I am arguing.

CHAPTER II

FOOTNOTES

¹Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (New York: Atheneum, 1966), pp. 15-16.

²Marius Bewley, "A Truce of God for Melville," SR, LXI (1953), 682.

³The Trying-Out of Moby-Dick (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965)..

⁴Ibid., p. 70.

⁵Ibid., p. 71..

⁶Ibid., p. 72..

⁷Ibid., p. 75..

⁸For a discussion of allegorical interpretation as a form of censorship see the Appendix.

⁹Moby-Dick, ed. Charles Feidelson, Jr. (Indianapolis, New York, and Kansas City: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964), p. 126.

¹⁰Melville's Quarrel with God (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).

¹¹Ibid., p. 149.

¹²Ibid., p. 190.

¹³Ibid., p. 420..

FOOTNOTES (CONTINUED)

- ¹⁴Ibid., pp. 239-240.
- ¹⁵Ibid., p. 6.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 148.
- ¹⁷Ibid., p. 211.
- ¹⁸Ibid., p. 211.
- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 206.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 173.
- ²¹Ibid., p. 177.
- ²²Ibid., p. 154.
- ²³Ibid., p. 214.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 151.
- ²⁵Bewley, p. 692.
- ²⁶"Moby Dick: Parable of a Dying System," Western Review, XIV (1950), 223-226.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 223.
- ²⁸Ibid., p. 226.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 223.
- ³⁰Ibid., p. 223.

FOOTNOTES (CONTINUED)

³¹Ibid., p. 225.

³²Ibid., p. 224.

³³Harry Slochower, "Moby Dick: The Myth of Democratic Expectancy," AQ, II (1950), 259-269.

³⁴Note Northrop Frye's statement about the relationship between literature and other studies that focus on more specific thought systems: "I think it has somewhat the same relationship to the studies built out of words, history, philosophy, the social sciences, law, and theology, that mathematics has to the physical sciences. The pure mathematician proceeds by making postulates and assumptions and seeing what comes out of them, and what the poet or novelist does is rather similar. The great mathematical geniuses often do their best work in early life, like most of the great lyrical poets. Pure mathematics enters into and gives form to the physical sciences, and I have a notion that the myths and images of literature also enter into and give form to all the structures we build out of words" (The Educated Imagination (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1963), p. 54).

³⁵Love and Death in the American Novel (New York: Criterion Books, 1960).

³⁶Ibid., pp. 550-551.

³⁷Ibid., p. 530.

³⁸Ibid., p. 535.

³⁹Ibid., p. 534.

40

Fiedler's discussion of his concerns as a critic suggest that his concern with myth and archetypes (the broader patterns) is similar to Frye's: "In terms of myth, too, the critic finds it possible to speak of the profound

FOOTNOTES (CONTINUED)

interconnections of the art work and other areas of human experience, without translating the work of art into unsatisfactory equivalents of "ideas" or "tendencies". The myth approach is, of course, no panacea; in the hands of the scientizers it becomes, like many other approaches, merely an excuse for another jargon, just one more strategy for avoiding evaluation" ("Toward an Amateur Criticism," KR, XII (1950), 574). The criticism that I would make of Fiedler's analysis of Moby Dick is that his terminology still leads him too far in the direction of translation.

⁴¹R. W. Short, "Melville as Symbolist," University of Kansas City Review, XV (1948), 41.

⁴²Fiedler, "Toward an Amateur Criticism," 564.

⁴³"By Algebra to Augustanism," in Essays on Style and Language: Linguistic and Critical Approaches to Literary Style, ed. Roger Fowler (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 53.

CHAPTER III

AUTHOR AS ALLEGORICAL CRITIC: THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

A work that is explicitly allegorical forces the reader to commit himself on the question of the value of allegory in imaginative literature. Obviously, one cannot conclude that allegorical works need only to be rescued from allegorizing critics, because the allegorical writer places an interpretive framework on his tale. In other words, the author himself becomes the allegorical critic. This proposition, of course, implies that we see a distinction between the author's allegorical framework and his tale, a distinction which is evident at points in Bunyan's tale, The Pilgrim's Progress.

In his book The Romantic Image, Frank Kermode traces the development of the Symbolist aesthetic.¹ He shows that this development was concerned with underlining the uniqueness of literary expression as opposed to the language and method of discourse. The implications for the literary work are significant in that the literary work is not seen as essentially a presentation of an argument. If there is a discursive element in the literary work, it is essential that this element be assimilated into the literary work, for otherwise it remains an imposed allegorical framework. In other words, thought content or the discourse must undergo a transformation; subject matter will then become an in-

divisible part of the aesthetic whole.²

One of the reasons for the difficulty in responding to allegory is that the allegorical framework is often a discursive element that has not been assimilated. Thus we see both the tale and the framework that is to interpret the tale for the reader. But allegorical literature is still appreciated, and this chapter will focus on various approaches to The Pilgrim's Progress, some of which suggest acceptance, and others, dismissal of the allegorical framework.

One approach to The Pilgrim's Progress would be to read it in terms of its allegorical intention. Such an approach is presented by Roger Sharrock, who suggests that we should follow Bunyan's invitation to make the correlation between his tale and the implied theological framework: "The correspondence between the major incidents of the story and the psychological crisis of a Puritan conversion invites us to follow Bunyan's injunction, 'Turn up my metaphors'. The narrative method may seem to be that of a popular episodic romance, but there is a strong framework of Calvinist theology underlying it."³ And further, Sharrock suggests that "we shall not do justice to Bunyan's imagination underestimating the importance of his theology: it is well to grasp in outline the theological ground-plan of the allegory."³

Sharrock then attempts to recreate the theological basis of The Pilgrim's Progress for the reader. In the

process, he becomes involved in pointing out the fine distinctions between Bunyan's Calvinist faith and other theologies. Thus Sharrock focuses on problems such as the following: "The figure of Christ in his human nature enters little into Puritan piety. The dynamic principle in the theology of Calvin and his successors is the tension between the total depravity of fallen man and the transcendent goodness of God. To dwell much upon the Incarnation, in which divine and human are reconciled, would blur this tension; but a central place is given to Christ's sacrifice on the Cross."⁴ In the same passage, Sharrock goes on to show how Calvin's theology related to Augustine and other theologians, and how Bunyan was following Calvin's theology.

What Sharrock recreates for the reader is possibly significant as historical data. That is, Sharrock sees The Pilgrim's Progress as an allegory of a theological stance that is a part of the history of thought. Thus Sharrock's analysis could be helpful in terms of understanding Bunyan's theology and the factors that influenced him, but the question is whether the allegorical framework which Sharrock describes can be reconciled with the literary aspect of The Pilgrim's Progress.

As we follow Sharrock's analysis, we realize that the attempt to remain true to Bunyan's allegorical intention is forced and awkward. One senses that a framework is being imposed upon the tale. For example, Sharrock is forced into

the position of placing the conversation between Christian, Faithful, and Talkative in a prominent position, even though we might find this episode relatively insignificant in terms of concrete scene and action: "This conversation is most important for our understanding of the theology of The Pilgrim's Progress. Faithful is more inclined to dialectic than Christian, and he makes a number of things clear which might otherwise cause difficulty."⁵

In the course of his analysis, Sharrock, in effect, admits that the reader might be inclined to move away from the allegorical meaning of Bunyan's allegory. Thus Sharrock is always caught in the unenviable position of attempting to pull the reader back to the allegory: "The brisk fairy-tale narration of the Doubting Castle episode must not make us forget that this episode is a study of spiritual malaise, like the Slough of Despond and the struggle with Apollyon."⁶ And further, "Mr Wordly Wiseman (a later addition to the First Part) talks and behaves like a well-fed tradesman, but he is there to illustrate the dangerous inadequacy of a life of works without read faith."⁷

If we must be reminded constantly of Bunyan's meaning, we might conclude that Bunyan's allegorical framework is part of the world of discourse that has not been assimilated into the literary work. That is, if we are forced to realize that Doubting Castle is representative of a specific stage in Calvinist theology, we are not free to respond to that

scene in terms of narrative effect. And the fact that the allegory seems forced, as is evident when Sharrock interprets Mr. Wordly Wiseman allegorically, leads us to suspect that there are different levels of response to The Pilgrim's Progress. On one level, we admire parts of the tale as realistic narrative. On another level, we see an interpretive framework which is imposing an argument on Bunyan's tale. The first level is the concern of literary expression, while the second level is the concern of discourse.

Another attempt to read The Pilgrim's Progress in terms of historical background can be seen in Kaufmann's analysis.⁸ Kaufmann's reading is more relevant to the question of the literary response in that he is concerned with more than just the doctrinal framework. As Kaufmann points out, The Pilgrim's Progress can be related to the Puritan tradition of meditation or method of looking at scripture.

One effect of Kaufmann's historical approach is to show that Bunyan was using Biblical literature not only for dogmatic allegorical purposes. Kaufmann shows that trends in Puritan meditation were allowing for a more symbolic appreciation of scripture and that this is reflected in The Pilgrim's Progress:

Now if the Psalms could be approached as the record of powerful feeling, if Job could be seen against the vividly imagined background of the ash heap, the time could not be far off when the metaphor of these books which Bunyan used so freely in the construction of his myths could be appreciated as symbols which derived their power from complex and irreducible human experience rather than from vaguely suggested doctrines.⁹

On the other hand, this historical approach may provide interesting information that has little pertinent value in dealing with the question of the aesthetic appreciation of allegory. For example, Kaufmann feels that he has proven that Christian's retelling of his experience at the House of Interpreter is not redundant, but rather in the Puritan tradition of meditation on experience.¹⁰ This may be true, but what bearing does this knowledge have on our appreciation of The Pilgrim's Progress? Further, if we can say that it is appropriate for Christiana to engage in occasional meditation, whereby she gives a meaning to everything that she sees and experiences,¹¹ we still are revolted by her constant moralizing. We may be aware of the tradition explaining her method of meditation, but this knowledge does not make the allegorical framework less obtrusive.

The attempt to rebuild the historical background, then, does not necessarily enhance our appreciation of an allegory. The images may be filled out for us by providing the doctrinal substance used by the author, and if this process of historical recreation is thorough enough, we may even be able to make a valid statement about the intention of the author.¹² On the other hand, the fact that we are forced to go outside the work to fill out the images of the allegory suggests that allegory lacks an independent life of its own. And once we have defined the author's intentions, we are still confronted with an argument rather than with literary expression.

Since allegory relies so heavily on intention, it demands agreement or disagreement with discursive statement, rather than response to the independent life of a literary work.

Ultimately a literary work should be free of the author's intentions . Just as Kermode suggests that "Leonardo's 'intentions' for the Mona Lisa have no more to do with it than Pater's reactions to it,"¹³ some might argue that Bunyan's intentions with reference to The Pilgrim's Progress are irrelevant to our response to The Pilgrim's Progress as a literary work. At least to the extent that they can be equated with the imposition of an allegorical framework, they are irrelevant. In essence, Bunyan's allegorical meaning is another interpretation of his tale, and we are free to either accept or reject the allegorical framework.

Sharrock and Kaufmann, then, attempt to reconcile allegory with literary expression. In Sharrock's analysis, allegory still emerges as a discursive argument that is to be illustrated in the course of the literary work. Kaufmann suggests that the allegorical framework is a symbolic way of viewing experience, but even if Kaufmann is able to show the presence of such a tradition in Bunyan's time, the reader is still faced with a predominantly didactic allegorical framework.

The ultimate aim in the appreciation of allegory as imaginative literature is to become aware of qualities in the

work that simply cannot be contained and defined by the allegorical framework. These qualities would belong to the more timeless qualities of the allegory, continuing after the more dated allegorical framework (made up of ideas or doctrines) had lost its relevance and capacity for forceful impact. Further, this approach would take us away from agreement with discursive statement and intention to response to literary expression. In terms of The Pilgrim's Progress, we can observe the qualities that make this work effective as imaginative literature -- qualities that are not part of the allegorical framework and intention.

In the Slough of Despond episode, one can see some aspects of Bunyan's literary art. In terms of the narrative, this episode is important and effective. Christian's pilgrimage is made more interesting by the portrayal of difficulties that he encounters. And thus when Christian wallows in the mire, our interest is stimulated because of the concrete pictorial effect, as well as the element of suspense: "The name of the Slow was Dispond.. Here therefore they wallowed for a time, being grievously bedaubed with the dirt; and Christian, because of the burden that was on his back, began to sink in the Mire."¹⁴

However, in terms of literary response, we are not particularly interested in Bunyan's interpretation of the Slough of Despond episode, even though his interpretation is obviously present. Bunyan wishes to control our reading of

the tale and thus in the passage where Help asks Christian why he did not look for the steps, Bunyan adds a footnote stating that the steps are the promises. Further, Bunyan states that the filth of the slough is comprised of the sins that leave the repentant sinner, and that Christian's fall into the Slough of Despond is to be interpreted as an image of the fears and doubts of the Christian who wonders whether his sins have been actually forgiven.

The scene of Vanity Fair is one of the prominent reasons why we might continue to read The Pilgrim's Progress as effective literary expression. We are presented with a wide range of human characters and actions. One observes a picture of realtors selling houses, prostitutes selling their bodies, while fools and murderers go about their daily routine. The vanity of human affairs is seen to extend from the business of the individual to the business of the state.

A passage from Bunyan's description of the Fair can help us to focus on the literary qualities of Bunyan's allegorical tale:

Therefore at this Fair are all such Merchandize sold, as Houses, Lands, Trades, Places, Honours, Preferments, Titles, Countreys, Kingdoms, Lusts, Pleasure, and Delights of all sorts, as Whores, Bawds, Wives, Husbands, Children, Masters, Servants, Lives, Blood, Bodies, Souls, Silver, Gold, Pearls, Precious Stones, and what not.

And moreover, at this fair there is at all times to be seen Juglings, Cheats, Games, Plays, Fools, Apes, Knaves, and Rogues, and that of all sorts.

Here are to be seen too, and that for nothing, Thefts, Murders, Adulteries, False-swearers, and that of a blood-red colour.¹⁵

Even though Bunyan is describing the world that Christian is to reject, he succeeds in concretely portraying the vanity of human affairs.¹⁶ The list of the merchandise that is sold at the fair grows into a concrete image of the way of the world. Further, the phrase "that of a blood-red colour" provides us with an earthy, vivid picture of the thefts and murders that are a part of the Fair.

Bunyan's manner of description, then, is a key factor in the creation of concrete detail and scene. For example, Bunyan effectively portrays the confusion that results when Christian and Faithful suggest to their inquisitors that they wish to buy the truth: "At that, there was an occasion taken to despise the men the more; some mocking, some taunting, some speaking reproachfully, and some calling upon others to smite them. At last things came to a hubbub, and great stir in the fair; insomuch that all order was confounded."¹⁷

But again, in the Vanity Fair episode, one is aware of the allegorical framework. The fair becomes an emblem of the world. Even this would not be a restrictive allegorical interpretation, but following the portrayal of Vanity Fair, Bunyan makes it clear that he means the world in terms of his theological allegory. Thus the world (Vanity Fair) is a place that the Christian must traverse as he journeys to the Celestial City. On the one hand, one is aware of Bunyan's artistic ability to create a vivid image of the vanity of human affairs, while on the other hand, one senses

Bunyan's allegorical intention dismissing the richness and excitement of *Vanity Fair*, that Bunyan the artist has just created.¹⁸

One might suggest, then, that at times the tale and the allegory are distinctly separated in The Pilgrim's Progress. As far as the reader's response is concerned, the distinction allows him to respond to the tale, even though he might reject the allegory.

As we focus on the fictional aspects of Bunyan's allegory, we also become more aware of the weaknesses of allegorical expression. We respond to the plot, but we become annoyed, whenever the allegory enters in an attempt to establish an argument. The Pilgrim's Progress is a good example of the weaknesses of allegory as pointed out by Poe:

One thing is clear, that if allegory ever establishes a fact, it is by dint of overturning a fiction. Where the suggested meaning runs through the obvious one in a very profound under-current so as never to interfere with the upper one without our own volition, so as never to show itself unless called to the surface, there only, for the proper uses of fictitious narrative, is it available at all. Under the best circumstances, it must always interfere with that unity of effect which to the artist, is worth all the allegory in the world.¹⁹

An example of the interference of allegory with fiction is the scene where Christian faces Apollyon in battle. Following this battle, Christian enters the Valley of the Shadow of Death. But after Christian emerges from the Valley of the Shadow of Death, he recites one of his hymns.

The hymn in this case may not be as obtrusive as others, and yet it clearly points the fiction towards a specific theological framework. Moreover, one feels that where these hymns occur, Christian is stepping aside from the action to make a statement that obstructs the fiction. The author clearly feels obligated to create signposts to point the reader in the direction of his argument.

Poe's statements about allegory help to define the basis upon which we can appreciate The Pilgrim's Progress as imaginative literature, for Poe suggests that our enjoyment of Bunyan's allegory depends upon the degree to which we can smother the allegorical intention of its author.²⁰ In other words our appreciation of The Pilgrim's Progress is based upon our ability to see it as imaginative fiction, rather than as allegory.

Further, when we consider The Pilgrim's Progress as as imaginative literature, we become aware of an annoying lack of unity, resulting from the presence of an allegorical framework. This lack of unity can be traced to the simultaneous presence of both literary expression and the language of discourse. A work like Moby Dick is not perfectly unified, because its large scope. Such a lack of unity is not aesthetically dangerous. But a lack of unity resulting from an imposed allegorical framework disrupts the response of the reader.

Another objection to allegory is its manner of communicating meaning. The objection to The Pilgrim's Progress because

of its message is not to suggest that fictional unity implies absence of meaning. Honig, however, feels that those who reject allegory, reject art that has any relationship with ideas: "The current prejudice against literary allegory...is really an expression of dissatisfaction with the concept of allegory, and with the idea that art -- an autonomous product of the imagination, a thing-in-itself -- has any business with beliefs or purposes."²¹

The Pilgrim's Progress can be appreciated for meanings which are not part of its allegorical framework. On this level one is responding to the discourse that has been assimilated into the literary work. For example, one senses a strong feeling of purpose in the allegory. This sense of purpose is communicated to the reader, as he sees Christian's continuing quest. Shaw appreciated The Pilgrim's Progress for this reason. He saw in the allegory the picture of an individual caught up with and wasting himself for a significant purpose that is larger than himself.²²

Further, the sense of purpose that Shaw saw in The Pilgrim's Progress is convincing because it evolves as the tale progresses. One does not need Bunyan to tell him that Christian sees a significant goal at the end of his journey. Neither does one need Bunyan to place this significance in a specific theological framework. Rather the awareness of purpose is integrally a part of the aesthetically pleasing fiction. In fact, the feeling of purpose is woven so

inextricably into Bunyan's tale that it cannot be separated from it.

The feeling of purpose in The Pilgrim's Progress described by Shaw can be separated from the allegorical framework. While we are convinced of the statement of purpose emerging from the tale, we are generally annoyed by the purpose suggested by the allegorical framework. We can readily sympathize and identify with Christian's drive to attain a final goal. But we react strongly when this goal is translated into a salvationist theological framework by Bunyan. Just as the allegorical framework intrudes upon the integrity of the tale, so it intrudes upon the integrity of the sense of purpose emerging from the tale. The allegorical framework does not allow the tale and the purpose which is inextricably a part of the tale to speak for themselves, and therefore, it is valid to make a distinction between the significance that is part of the allegorical framework and the significance that is part of the fiction.²³ Leavis' comment is relevant here: "Bunyan's theological statement of the significance he wishes to enforce is abstract; but the sense of significance that actually possessed him couldn't be stated, it could only be communicated by creative means."²⁴

We are, then, aware of working with two levels in The Pilgrim's Progress: that of the allegory, and that of the tale. As we saw, these two levels were evident in such scenes as the Slough of Despond and Vanity Fair. The level of allegory

is comprised of Bunyan's Calvinist theology, which is to act as an interpretive guide for the tale. The level of the tale is comprised of scene, action, and character, as well as the literary meaning that emerges organically from the evolving plot.

The distinction between allegorical framework and tale is not merely a distinction between meaning and plot. I would suggest that the tale has its own literary meaning which might consist in part of the sense of significance and purpose commented on by Shaw and Leavis. Thus Shaw and Leavis were possibly pointing to the assimilation of the allegorical framework into the tale, or the ability of Bunyan to go beyond his own allegory. For example, Leavis makes the following comment: "For what makes The Pilgrim's Progress a great book, one of the classics, is its humanity -- its rich, poised and mature humanity. And this is not the less impressive for our being, here and there, by the allegorical intent of this and that incident, reminded of the uglier and pettier aspects of the intolerant creed, the narrow Calvinistic scheme of personal salvation, that Bunyan explicitly sets out to allegorize."²⁵

In essence, the allegory in The Pilgrim's Progress is another interpretive framework imposed on the tale. This time the author himself becomes the allegorical critic, and again, allegory emerges as a restrictive mold. Further, we can trace the desire for placing the mold on the tale to

Bunyan's fear that the reader might not arrive at the sanctioned conclusions, if he reads the tale without an interpretive guide. The desire to control the response of the reader is, therefore, again the product of a cultural or religious interpretation of experience. But we can point to scenes such as *Vanity Fair* to see where Bunyan was able to go beyond his own allegorical framework.

CHAPTER III

FOOTNOTES

¹(New York: Chilmark Press, 1961).

²Ibid., pp. 158-159.

³John Bunyan (London: Hutchinson House, 1954), p. 76.

⁴Ibid., p. 77.

⁵Ibid., p. 83.

⁶Ibid., p. 85.

⁷Ibid., p. 75.

⁸Milo U. Kaufmann, "The Pilgrim's Progress" and Traditions in Puritan Meditation (New Haven and London: London University Press, 1966).

⁹Ibid., p. 158.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 219-220.

¹¹Ibid., p. 195.

¹²In allegory the question of intention takes the reader outside the work under consideration and, therefore, the historical approach is important in defining the intention: "Both theological and poetic allegory, then, are seen as depending on intentions, for in both cases meaning is sought, not in the work itself (the first condition of modern poetics) but in the physical, psychological, and mental objects which the work presupposes" (Harry Berger, Jr., The Allegorical Temper: Vision and Reality in Book II of Spenser's "Faerie Queene" (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 182). I realize that I am quoting Berger out of context, but his argument

points to a significant weakness of allegory, in spite of Berger's intentions to justify it.

¹³Kermode, p. 47.

¹⁴The Pilgrim's Progress, ed. James Blanton Wharcy and rev. by Roger Sharrock, 2nd edition (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 14.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁶Arnold Kettle's comment on The Pilgrim's Progress is relevant here: "But the essential point is that, though he cannot wholly evade the consequences of a world-picture which sees death as more important than life and salvation as a matter concerning the individual as an isolated entity, in spite of this basically life-denying philosophy Bunyan manages to infuse a living breath into his fable" (An Introduction to the English Novel (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1960), I, 44).

¹⁷The Pilgrim's Progress, p. 90.

¹⁸Leavis suggests that there is a strong sense of enjoyment in the earthly life in The Pilgrim's Progress, even though the theological statement of the allegory would deny this. "Afterword", The Pilgrim's Progress (Toronto: The New American Library of Canada Limited, 1964), p. 300.

¹⁹Edgar Allan Poe, Literary Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. Robert L. Hough (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 147.

²⁰Ibid., p. 147.

²¹Honig, Dark Conceit, pp. 181-182.

²²George Bernard Shaw, The Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1965), p. 589. Also relevant here is Leavis' comment that in great works of art we are concerned with the question of significance -- a concern that overrides the answers. F.R. Leavis, "Afterword", pp. 297-298.

FOOTNOTES (CONTINUED)

²³Kaufmann also sees both the tale and the allegorical framework in The Pilgrim's Progress, and he further suggests that the presence of both in the allegory resulted in tension. On the one hand, Bunyan saw narrative as myth -- an intuitive approach to truth. On the other hand, Bunyan saw truth as logos -- a rational and expositional approach. Both approaches are evident in Bunyan's allegory. See Kaufmann, p. 15.

²⁴Leavis, "Afterword", p. 298.

²⁵The Common Pursuit (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 206.

CHAPTER LV

SATIRIC ALLEGORY: ALLEGORY MADE SUBSERVIENT

To this point, we have considered allegory as a restrictive framework. But the condemnation of allegory should be qualified, because in satire, allegory becomes an effective means of literary expression. In satire, the restrictive, interpretive traits of allegory fade into the background, as the vision and attitude of satire move into the foreground.

When under the control of satire, allegory becomes part of the satiric purpose of uprooting established patterns and attitudes, rather than a restrictive force, attempting to solidify existing positions.¹ The ethos of satire transforms allegory into an effective literary medium. The allegorical element no longer attempts to simplify fiction and experience; the allegory is content to allow the tale, for the most part, to speak for itself.

A definition of satire can help us to clarify the role of allegory in satire: "satire consists of an attack by means of a manifest fiction upon discernible historic particulars".² Two aspects are particularly important in this definition. First of all, Rosenheim suggests that the satirist proceeds by creating a tale. But the tale is also directed towards an object of attack, and this is where allegory is important. That is, allegory persuades the reader to look for the

implications of the tale, without defining these implications. In this way allegory works in a suggestive manner, because even though it points the reader towards significances of the tale, it allows the reader to draw his own conclusions. Because allegory is suggestive in satire, it can point in certain directions, without interfering with the integrity of the fiction.

A good example of effective satiric allegory is Orwell's Animal Farm. As in Part IV of Gulliver's Travels, the animal world provides the basis from which satiric allegory proceeds. Further, Animal Farm is a brief, but effective tale -- effective, because the narrative surface is not disrupted by the allegory. It begins as an animal story and remains so to the end. Throughout the course of the story, we see everything from the viewpoint of the animals. In other words, Orwell realizes that in order to communicate as an artist, he must first of all see to the creation of a convincing fictional world.³

The success of Animal Farm is closely related to its point of view. The progress of the tale is controlled by the insight of the animals: "The point of view is always that of the animals who are being duped. Their plight is deepened for the reader by his being allowed to discover the successive machinations of the pigs only as they are borne in upon the stupider animals."⁴ In other words, we share the growing realization of the animals that something is amiss, and our realization accompanies that of the animals.

Granted, we realize more fully what is happening than does Boxer -- we are closer to Benjamin, who knowingly shakes his head after any further alteration in the seven commandments or proclamation explained by Squealer. But basically our realization keeps pace with that of the animals; our realization of the full extent of what is happening is also always increasing, until we too are confronted with the final scene.

Since we share in the growing realization of the animals, we can conclude that Orwell has created a story that works effectively as a tale. Our interest in Animal Farm as a story prohibits us from systematically working out an abstract statement of what Orwell is saying, at least until the end of the story.

In Animal Farm we are, however, concerned with making a correlation between the animal and human worlds. The allegory thus has its effect, because we are stimulated to determine for ourselves the significance of the misfortunes at Manor Farm. But as Leyburn suggests, the allegory works indirectly; we draw the conclusions for ourselves: "Orwell's keeping the point of view consistently that of the helpless animals and letting us make only the discoveries that they make forces us to interpret for ourselves not only the misfortunes of the renamed Manor Farm, but also those of our own world. We are compelled to participate imaginatively. Animal Farm is successful social satire because it is successful allegory."⁵

Leyburn's comment here points to a basic aspect of the

role of allegory in satire. The element of allegory persuades the reader that the satiric fiction relates to a specific problem, but the allegory does not didactically define the relationship. If it were not for this sense that the satiric fiction related to a particular problem, we might move from the realm of satire into that of comedy.⁶ Allegory, then, persuades the reader to see the more serious implications of the satiric fiction, without necessarily defining these implications.

The nature of didacticism in satiric allegory is unique in that it can "teach" without disrupting the narrative. Since the satiric allegorist is concerned with making an assault upon the evils he sees, it is evident that an element of didacticism will still be present in satiric allegory. But in satiric allegory, the didacticism does not close the work as in Bunyan's case, where he plays the roles of both artist and preacher.

Didacticism, though, can be indirect, and this is its nature in good satiric allegory. For example, Orwell does not spell out the relevance of his story. As a satirist, he has a didactic emphasis in that he points to social, moral or political evils. But the didacticism is controlled. Its basic effect is to convince the reader that what he is reading is not pure fantasy, but rather related to his own existence, and to stimulate the reader to think about the nature of that relationship. In other words, when a reader becomes involved

in the fantasy worlds of the Yahoos and Houyhnhnms, or in the quarrels of Peter and Jack in A Tale of a Tub, the role of the allegory is to not allow the reader to escape with the feeling that he is reading only fantasy. Thus Frye describes allegory as "a powerful undertow": "The humor of pure fantasy, the other boundary of satire, belongs to romance, though it is uneasy there, as humor perceives the incongruous, and the conventions of romance are idealized. Most fantasy is pulled back into satire by a powerful undertow often called allegory, which may be described as the implicit reference to experience in the perception of the incongruous."⁷ As long as the reader can read Gulliver's Travels as fantasy, he can stay in the realm of children's literature. Once, however, the allegory begins to affect him, the work is not nearly as innocuous.

Recognizing the risk of oversimplification, one might compare allegory and didacticism as it appears in Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress to allegory as it appears in a satiric allegory such as Animal Farm. The reason we find allegory obtrusive in the former case is because the allegory begins from outside the literary work. That is, Bunyan has an allegorical framework which he wishes to illustrate in the course of his tale. Thus we are moving from an outside interpretive framework towards an interpretation of the tale and experience. We would, therefore, prefer to stay on the level of the tale, because the allegorical framework establishes Bunyan as an opponent with whom we argue about an interpretation of experience.

On the other hand, in satiric allegory, the allegory proceeds from within the tale. We begin, first of all, with the fiction, but in the course of our reading, we become aware of radiating allegorical suggestions. These allegorical suggestions are not, however, an imposed framework, but rather a persuasive power, leading us to think about some aspect of experience.⁸ In satiric allegory, then, allegory does not blind us to contradictory realities -- a confrontation that takes place without the aid of a convenient interpretive framework.

Huxley's Brave New World provides us with another example of the effective role of allegory in satire. In Huxley's book we are again in the realm of fantasy, because a picture of the future must of necessity be a creation of the imagination. But in Huxley's case, we can never move far into the world of fantasy; the proximity of our own world to Huxley's imagined world prohibits any tendency to escape. Huxley's future world always appears to be just one step away: "The characteristic future world created by satirists of our own day is made not by contrast with the world that exists but by an enlarged likeness of it. The vehicle of their satire is simply an extension of the present."⁹ Huxley, then, creates a tale about a future world that allegorically suggests that our world is very close to that of Brave New World. But Huxley does not need to state this; the tale has sufficient power to suggest the allegorical correlation, and thus we are pulled back from the realm of

fantasy. If we cannot move very far into the world of fantasy in Huxley's satire, it is because of the close proximity between Huxley's world and our own.

The suggestive nature of allegory in satire allows the author to direct the response of the reader, without standing between the reader and the literary work. For example, since Orwell stimulates the reader to work out the correlation between the animal and human worlds, it is obvious that he is still acting as a guide. On the other hand, Orwell stays outside the tale. Thus Orwell meets that demand of the reader in that he is detached, and yet acts as a guide.¹⁰ Also, satiric allegory enables the author to communicate his judgement dramatically without overtly stating it.¹⁰ And as long as the author focuses on the dramatic presentation of his judgement, the didactic aspect of allegory will be held in check.

Allegory that is not overtly didactic might appear to be a contradiction. And surely, in Bunyan's case the allegorical framework is obviously didactic, because its intention is to teach the reader how to live, and the reader's response to the tale is necessarily restricted unless he can forget the allegorical framework. Orwell's allegorical suggestions are rather meant to illuminate a distressing pattern of development, and any overt answer is overpowered by the final scene. Orwell's allegory tends to explode all simple solutions.

Allegory, then, plays a very important role in satire.

On the one hand the satirist must create an imaginary world that has its own laws and consistency. If the narrative surface is to be left undisturbed, he must devote his energies into staying on the level of the imaginary world. Possibly this is why it might be important that satiric allegories can be effective as children's literature, for if they are effective, they must have a good narrative surface. The satirist, however, creates the hypothetical world in order to make a disguised comment about experience, and allegory allows the satirist to stimulate thought about his tale without having to interpret the fiction. He stays on the level of the hypothetical world, but he also leaves behind enough guiding hints to direct the reader back to the world of experience.

Further, the element of irony in satire helps to ensure that allegory will be suggestive, rather than overtly didactic. The characteristics of the ironic method are clearly described by Frye: "The term irony, then, indicates a technique of appearing to be less than one is, which in literature becomes most commonly a technique of saying as little and meaning as much as possible, or, in a more general way, a pattern of words that turns away from direct statement or its own obvious meaning."¹¹ Essentially, the ironic method can be described as one of indirection and understatement. Under the influence of irony, allegory becomes an effective literary technique, because as it becomes more suggestive, it stimulates the reader's response to a

greater degree.

A prime example of satiric allegory's forceful indirect statement is Erasmus' colloquy, "Charon". The object of the satire is war and its devotees. The allegorical dramatic situation is created indirectly in the course of the conversation between Alastor and Charon. Alastor informs Charon that the earth is ravaged by war and that they will be more than busy now, because there will be an increased number of dead people wishing to cross the river Styx. Alastor asks Charon why he is not tending to his business, and Charon replies that his boat has been shipwrecked, because of the excessive number of shades:

Alas. Can't get ahead of that goddess! But why are you loitering here without your boat, then?

Charon. Business trip: I came here to get a good, strong trireme ready.. My galley's so rotten with age and so patched up that it won't do for this job if what Ossa told me is true. Though what need was there of Ossa? The plain fact of the matter demands it: I've had a shipwreck..

Alas. You are dripping wet, undoubtedly. I thought you were coming back from a bath.

Charon. Oh, no, I've been swimming out of the Stygian swamp.

Alas. Where have you left the shades?

Charon. Swimming with the frogs.¹²

On the one hand, the situation described in the above conversation is almost comic. For a moment we seem to be moving towards the realm of fantasy, but the allegory pulls us back into the realms of irony and satire as we realize that the reason for the increased number of shades is the increased scope of the war.

Further, the hypothetical situation is extremely ironic; Erasmus takes the point of view of the spirits who rejoice as the wars increase. The element of irony makes the dramatic situation very suggestive, persuading the reader to make the allegorical reference to his own experience.

In both Animal Farm and "Charon" the authors direct their energies into creating a convincing hypothetical world. Thus both authors work with the ironic method; any implications about experience are always made indirectly. Both works, then, are very suggestive, as the element of irony acts as an effective controlling force on the allegory. Instead of being repulsed by the allegory, the reader is persuaded to complete the allegory as he reads the literary work. That is, both Orwell and Erasmus stay on the level of their hypothetical worlds, trusting that the reader will follow out the implications of their tales in relating the fictional world to the specific problem.

Further, allegory in satire is not obtrusive because of the satirist's attitude towards a rigid interpretation of experience. Even though satire has a didactic tone, in that it lashes out against evils and often assumes a high moral attitude, it does not propose an alternative rigid framework. Satiric allegory is deceptive, because it usually develops a close parallel between the hypothetical world and the real world. This parallel might suggest that the satirist is about to impose a framework on experience, but the satirist develops this parallel in order to undermine the systems that

he is attacking. Thus the end result of the satirist's temporary adoption of a framework is explosive rather than repressive.

The satirist's creation of a close parallel between his fictional world and the world of reality is more a matter of literary technique than one of illustrating an ideological viewpoint. As he creates his fictional world, the satirist moves away from the discursive statement of polemic argument. The creation of a good fictional world helps the satirist to become more indirect and suggestive, whereas an allegorist like Bunyan moves towards argument and discourse as he creates the parallel between the real world and his tale.

The satirist casts a wary eye on any system, for he sees both the system and that which the system has swept beneath the carpet to preserve clarity of definition. Thus allegory in satire becomes an ironic comment on rigid allegorical interpretations of experience. The position of the satirist does not allow him to write a tale that is meant to fit a rigid framework. Thus Frye states: "Insofar as the satirist has a 'position' of his own, it is the preference of practise to theory, experience to metaphysics."¹³ Certainly, this is true of Swift when he points to the absurdity of the religious systems evolved by Jack and Peter in A Tale of a Tub. Also, we sense that Swift could not remain in the world of the Houyhnhnms for any length of time, because that world is too systematically rational.¹⁴

The satirist attacks the system not only because it is

an over simplification, but also because of its effect on human freedom. As Frye suggests, one aim of satire is to break up the systems that impede the free movement of society.¹⁵ Thus Orwell writes a satire that portrays the evolution of tyrant, and Huxley writes a satiric allegory about the possible effect that scientific development might have on human freedom, when the individual no longer has the liberty to feel pain and horror.

Because the writer of satiric allegory is not interested in codifying, allegory becomes a literary mode whereby systems are attacked. This explains why allegory is not as distasteful in satiric allegory. Granted, satiric attack generally implies the presence of a counter ideal in the satirist's mind. But at least this ideal is not forced on the reader.¹⁶ The presence of irony leads to the indirect method. Also, in satire, the position of the satirist is usually general enough to surmount sectarian boundaries. That is, if the satirist upholds the cause of freedom, his concern is not to spell out the exact nature of that freedom. Or, if he attacks vice, he does not deliver a moral exemplum on virtue. The satirist's abhorrence of systems is simply too strong.

There is a basic difference, then, between allegory as it appears in the satires discussed in this chapter, and allegory as used by Bunyan, or even Spenser. With Spenser, the reader often wishes that the poet had been content with his world of fantasy. Although we enjoy his imaginative world,

we resent the allegorical conclusions that Spenser draws for us.

Granted, the satiric allegorist can also fall prey to the temptation of pushing his moral. For example, Huxley tends to mistrust the effectiveness of his tale and characters, and consequently, he occasionally overemphasizes to prove his point. At times, the speeches tend to be long and the dialogue is often slanted too obviously towards Huxley's moral. Granted, in a satiric allegory, the concern is not for detailed and full characterization, but in Brave New World, Lenina's attitude to sex is overemphasized, to the extent that she is often more humorous than revolting. And as Huxley himself admitted, John Savage strains the credibility of the reader. But at least Huxley uses a basically indirect method. On the other hand, Orwell in Animal Farm shows himself to be the master of the indirect method in satiric allegory. His tale is generally free of unnecessary elaboration.

Basically, then, we can picture the satirist, as an individual who constantly rejects any dogma or form that might stand in the way of the impulse for freedom: "The satirist is no revolutionary, that is, he offers no opposing dogma, no divine plan to save the world. He is no conservative, in the sense of rejecting innovations and clinging to old forms because they are old. He is the rebel who asserts the civilizing forms of society, old or new, so long as they

permit man to fulfill himself. His rebellion is the will to live, the impulse of life determined to overcome its chains."¹⁷

To suggest that allegory is more palatable when used in the cause of freedom is not tantamount to saying that revolutionary works are necessarily better literature. The freedom connected with satiric allegory is a freedom arising from the satirist's viewpoint towards interpretations of experience, as well as a freedom of response on the part of the reader. Because the satiric allegorist does not define the nature of freedom, his attack remains indirect and suggestive, and thus more in line with literary expression. Ultimately, we find allegory in satire more palatable, because it directs the response of the reader without placing defining and restricting boundaries on that response.

CHAPTER IV

FOOTNOTES

¹See comments later in this chapter on the nature of didacticism in satire. Even though the satirist reacts to established positions, he does not necessarily suggest a counter system. I would suggest that the nature of literature (and satire) is such that it tends to constantly point in the direction of alternative hypothetical possibilities without defining the alternative. This is why the relationship between literature and life appears to be vague and indefinite. If the satirist would define a counter system, his use of allegory would become restrictive.

²Edward Rosenheim, Jr., Swift and the Satirist's Art (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 31 (emphasis Rosenheim's). Note also p. 22 where Rosenheim suggests that the satirist creates the fiction, and the reader's task is to make the correlations.

³At first the reader is totally engrossed in the development of the tale. But he realizes too that the tale has further significance. This awareness of the significance should only be elaborated on by the reader himself after the tale is completed. Realization of thematic significance, then, should be an after effect of reading effective fiction. As Coleridge suggested, poetry (the same could be said of literature generally) should first of all please.

⁴Ellen Douglas Leyburn, Satiric Allegory: Mirror of Man (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), p. 68.

⁵Ibid., p. 70.

⁶Rosenheim, p. 31.

⁷Frye, Anatomy, p. 225.

⁸Leyburn's comments on Aesop's fables are relevant here: "The more artistic fables tell the story and stop like true allegories, allowing the reader the pleasure of

FOOTNOTES (CONTINUED)

drawing his own conclusion before he reaches the labeled moral, which remains outside the story" (pp. 57-58). Significantly, the moral is described as being outside the tale.

⁹Leyburn, p. 114.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 11.

¹¹Frye, Anatomy, p. 40..

¹²The Colloquies of Erasmus, tr. Craig R. Thompson (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 390-391.

¹³Frye, Anatomy, p. 230..

¹⁴Because satire points to the oversimplification of systems, it makes a conscious effort to be realistic, in the sense of restoring the balance by showing fully the prevalence of evil. Note, for example, the concluding scenes of Animal Farm and Brave New World. The overpowering awareness of evil prohibits the allegory in satire from presenting a simple didactic view of experience. On the vision of evil in satire see Philip Pinkus, "Satire and St. George," Queen's Quarterly, LXX (1963/64), 30-49.

¹⁵Frye, Anatomy, p. 233..

¹⁶The purpose of satire is not to reform in the usual sense of reformation. Rather its purpose is to strip away the covering of hypocrisy, in an effort to lead the reader towards awareness. Pinkus, pp. 43-44.

¹⁷Pinkus, p. 49.

CHAPTER V

THE OPEN RESPONSE: THE UNFORTIFIED CRITIC

In the previous chapters we have looked at allegory as a fortification (except in the case of satiric allegory) that stands between the reader and literary expression. These fortifications can be erected by both author and critic, in an effort to channel the literary work in acceptable directions and to protect the reader from implications that might be unsettling. The opposite reaction to literary expression would be the open response. This chapter will point to characteristics of that response, and to attitudes that stand in the way of such responses to literature.

One might be tempted to ask why a literary work should be entitled to unique analysis and response. And one might simply answer that if the artist were only interested in making a statement that could be translated into the terminology of the critic's system, he would not write literature. If the artist creates only a statement that can be paraphrased, we can picture him as a writer who starts with a preconceived idea of his statement, and then embellishes this statement by creating a tale. No doubt, examples of such allegorists can be found. Furthermore, such a writer could be quite effective, because the techniques of "literary" expression could enable the "artist" to overpower the unwary

reader. But once the reader is aware of what is happening, he might become quite annoyed, because he resents being the recipient of propaganda.

On the other hand, in a good literary work there is very little that can be translated in terms of a statement. What a novel says can be said in no other way, and everything in the novel contributes to the total effect of its suggestive expression. Therefore, it is futile to attempt to isolate the subject or statement of a good novel: "A work of literature means what it says, and means all that it says: it never means what someone else can say that it says. The true meaning includes all the suggestions and cumulative insights which derive from adequate symbolization, adequate enrichment of meaning at all points through style, pattern, plot, rhythm, tone -- everything. Ideally, there is no such thing as the subject of a good novel. There is only the novel."¹

Given the view of a literary work suggested by Daiches, one can readily see why critics and readers might become uncomfortable in the presence of a work of art. The critic that allegorizes looks for interpretive patterns, and if a work does not fit a system, he tends to look until he feels that he has discovered sufficient evidence to warrant categorizing the work of art. Once he has fitted the literary work into its appropriate place, he breathes a sigh of relief, because the system has remained intact.

Thus a reason for the allegorizing tendencies of critics is the unpredictable effect of a work of art. This

same reason accounts for the efforts of medieval and renaissance critics to allegorize works that might be considered morally objectionable. Readers could then view the works in question in terms of accepted systems of interpretation. Today critics disparage this particular phase of the history of criticism, but the tendency to see literary works in terms of presently acceptable systems, whether they be Freudian or Marxian, is simply another version of allegorical criticism. The only aspect that is different is the allegorical framework.

The development of literary criticism as a science can be blamed partly for the tendency of the individual to think in terms of systems of interpretation. Because of his desire to make his discipline respectable, the literary critic has evolved a systematic approach to literature. A systematic approach could be beneficial, but a system tends to see literary expression in discursive terms. Thus systematic interpretation can very easily lead to categorizing and allegorization.² Often, the critic seems to have forgotten that the basic assumptions of his discipline might be antithetical to the demands of the literary work.

Another aspect of the tendency to make literary criticism into a system is the ascendancy of the intellect. When this ascendancy is assumed in the process of criticism, the result is a reactionary attempt to curb the degree of exposure to the work of art: "Today is such a time, when the

project of interpretation is largely reactionary, stifling. Like the fumes of the automobile and of heavy industry which befoul the urban atmosphere, the effusion of interpretations of art today poisons our sensibilities. In a culture whose already classical dilemma is the hypertrophy of the intellect at the expense of energy and sensual capability, interpretation is the revenge of the intellect upon art."³

The institutionalization of the arts and the tendency to see literary expression as statement inevitably stand in the way of the open response, because such attitudes and methods fail to take into account the uniqueness of encountering a work of art. The methods of studying an object must, at least to some extent, be determined by the nature of the raw material, but in the case of much literary criticism, this simple axiom has obviously often been overlooked. A basic premise of criticism, then, should be the distinction between literary expression and statement: "A work of art encountered as a work of art is an experience, not a statement or an answer to a question. Art is not only about something; it is something. A work of art is a thing in the world, not just a text or commentary on the world."⁴

Following from the above premise, the critic should realize that the knowledge he gains from a literary work is also unique. The open response leads to an experience of awareness, rather than to a knowledge of an intellectual conceptual system: "Whitch is to say that the knowledge we gain through art is an experience of the form or style of

knowing something, rather than a knowledge of something (like a fact or a moral judgement) in itself."⁵ The knowledge that we gain from an encounter with a literary work cannot be conceptualized. And once we attempt to describe that knowledge as knowledge of something, we avoid encountering the literary work, because the experience of the totality of the literary work is the experience of awareness. Since literary criticism as a science assumes that the literary work can be interpreted as a statement about a particular subject, it fails to do justice to literary expression.

In contrast to the systematic, interpretive approach, the critic should approach the literary work with complete openness. This approach allows for the literary work to have its effect -- an effect of placing the reader in a state of contemplation that is above rejection or approval of discursive argument: -- "But art does not excite; or, if it does the excitation is appeased, within the terms of the aesthetic experience. All great art induces contemplation, a dynamic contemplation. However much the reader or listener or spectator is aroused by a provisional identification of what is in the work of art with real life, his ultimate reaction -- so far as he is reacting to the work as a work of art -- must be detached, restful, contemplative, emotionally free, beyond indignation and approval."⁶ Such a state of contemplation would obviously rule out the

possibility of mechanical allegorization.

One can see where the contemplative attitude described by Sontag could be rather unsettling for the critic, since the open response demands that the reader-critic approach the literary work without the fortifications of preconceived schemes for interpretation. Thus we might reasonably suggest that the unpredictable nature of confrontation has kept readers and critics from approaching literary works in an open manner. The open response demands an almost childlike innocence. But readers and critics fear this unprotected state, because they wish to know the direction of their response, before they have approached the literary work. Sontag astutely traces the fear of the aesthetic response (state of contemplation and openness on the part of the reader) to the fear that truth and morality will be compromised.⁷

Systems of interpretation are also attractive because they have a completeness that is very desirable for wishful thinking. Rahv develops this thesis by making a distinction between mythic models and history. Mythic patterns are complete because they are above history. If fiction is seen in the light of the mythic patterns, fiction becomes a haven for those who wish to see the reassuring patterns. Rahv, however, counters by arguing that fiction has a close relation to history -- the actual situation where patterns may not be as complete. For Rahv, then, the attempt to see fiction in terms of patterns is a reaction on the part of the critics against the unpleasant realities of history.⁸

Along with the distrust of the moral effects of the literary work, interpretive criticism reveals a marked distrust of appearances.⁹ That is, the critic approaches the literary work with the presupposition that a mysterious meaning lurks behind the surface, and that, therefore, his task is to discover that meaning. Such a view of symbolization in literature prevents the critic from exposing himself directly to the work of art. There is neither time nor place for a detached, contemplative approach. Instead, he must play the role of literary detective, in an effort to discover sufficient evidence to make a case for what he sees to be the mysterious meaning. The symbol hunting critic can only see the writer as a deceptive craftsman, whose intent is to hide his statement. The critic becomes the learned psychiatrist-sociologist, discovering hidden traits in both the author and his work.

A clear example of the distrust of appearances can be seen in the Marxist and Freudian methods of interpretation. Both viewpoints proceed from the assumption that the surface level should be distrusted. What lies behind the appearance (assuming that there is something there) is of ultimate importance. When these viewpoints are applied to literature, the result is a complete restatement, in basically allegorical terms, of what happens in the literary work: "According to Marx and Freud, these events 'manifest content' only seem to be intelligible. Actually, they have no meaning without interpretation. To understand is to interpret. And

to interpret is to restate the phenomenon, in effect to find an equivalent for it".¹⁰ The critic who wishes to restate what he reads will inevitably approach the literary work with suspicion. Consequently, instead of being able to respond freely to the work of art, the critic finds himself in a state of conflict with the literary work.

The open response, however, does not preclude the concern with symbolic expression. Symbolization is basic to literature. If a novel is effective, its effectiveness often stems from its suggestiveness; it stimulates the imagination of the reader, as the reader becomes receptive to the suggestive aspect of the literary work. But symbolization in literature is quite distinct from the kind of symbolism envisioned by those who see symbols as clues to the statement of the novel:

This is not to say, to be sure, that fiction excludes symbolization. On the contrary, works of fiction abound in symbolic devices and the more significant among them have symbolic import. But when we speak of symbolic import of a novel what we have in mind is nothing more mysterious than its overplus of meaning, its suggestiveness over and above its tissue of particulars, the actual representation of which it is comprised; and that is scarcely the same thing as treating these particulars as "clues" which it is the ingenious critic's task to follow up for hidden or buried meanings that are assumed to be the "real point" of the text under examination.¹¹

In other words, the symbolization of a literary work must be allowed to remain open-ended. The critic should be concerned that his responses to the literary work will not circumscribe its expanding significance, for otherwise, the

critic will be working against the nature of his subject matter. As Daiches suggests, the expanding quality of symbolization is the distinguishing aspect of effective literature: "What distinguishes symbolization in art from other kinds of symbolization is largely the constantly expanding and reverberating meaning of the symbol."¹²

If the critic adopts the open response to the literary work and symbolization, his role and stature as a critic will be significantly affected. As long as the critic acts as an interpreter, he can pose as the bearer of the interpretive keys that will open the secret chambers of the literary work. But once the critic accepts the open response, he must resign himself to a more humble role. The readjustment will place the literary work in the crucial position, while the critic will become what Rahv calls a "...participant in the literary event."¹³

One of the first postulates of the open response to the literary work is that criticism can never be a final statement. Because the literary work is untranslatable, the critic can do no more than point to suggestive patterns and rhythms: "Literary criticism is always exaggerated, always metaphorical, always an oversimplification. At best it is suggestive rather than final. By suggesting what we should look for it may help us to see more clearly, but what we actually observe when we do see more clearly may be something which the critic could not or would not discuss."¹⁴

And a further comment: "Art is always more complex than any

theory about it -- more complex and yet more simple, for its meanings are subtle and manifold while its essence is single and even primitive. The critic can do no more than make relevant, but never wholly tenable, generalizations."¹⁴

A good example of criticism that focuses on illuminating patterns without, for the most part, interpreting them is Alfred Kazin's essay on Moby Dick. Kazin's open response to Melville's novel is shown by the focus of his comments. He points to the patterns and rhythms that account for the sense of exhilaration and vastness that we experience in reading Moby Dick:

If we start by opening ourselves to this abundance and force, by welcoming not merely the story itself, but the manner in which it speaks to us, we shall recognize in this restlessness, this richness, this persistent atmosphere of magnitude the essential image on which the book is founded. For Moby-Dick is not so much a book about Captain Ahab's quest for the whale as it is an experience of that quest. This is only to say, what we say of any true poem, that we cannot reduce its essential substance to a subject, that we should not intellectualize and summarize it, but that we should recognize that its very force and beauty lie in the way it is conceived and written, in the qualities that flow from its being a unique entity.¹⁵

Significantly, Kazin does not attempt to discover a pleasant resolution in Moby Dick. In fact, Kazin suggests that Ishmael remains alive only because of the need for a witness to the final events.¹⁶ Rather than resorting to an allegorical framework in order to provide the novel with a convenient resolution, Kazin points to possible reasons for

our feeling of terror: "What Melville does is to speak for the whirlwind, for the watery waste, for the sharks."¹⁶

Kazin's critical comments, then, focus on what Daiches would call the style of the literary work. Daiches suggests that the choice of words and images and handling of the action at any given point are all part of style, and further the style maintains the constant effect of symbolic expansion.¹⁷ Kazin's criticism is helpful precisely because he elaborates on those aspects of Melville's novel that create the open-ended effect.

D. H. Lawrence's comments on Moby Dick are a good example of criticism that is based on the open response to the literary work.¹⁸ As we read Lawrence's criticism, we sense that we are listening to the spontaneous remarks of another reader. There is little effort to fit the novel into a system, except for the conclusion, where Lawrence suggests that the whale is possibly representative of blood consciousness. On the other hand, Lawrence balances such a statement by saying that he does not know what the symbol stands for, and he further suggests that Melville himself did not have a definite meaning for the symbol.

Further, Lawrence does not attempt to justify the whole of Moby Dick. Even though he feels that Moby Dick is a superior novel, he fully acknowledges the weaknesses of the work. There is no artificial attempt to fit the whole of the novel into one comprehensive system, as Lawrence readily admits that aspects of the style disturb the reader.¹⁹ This candour is refreshing, and a good example of freedom of

response on the part of the reader.

Lawrence's method of criticism is particularly forceful, in that he simply places the various aspects of the novel before the eyes of himself and other readers. One senses that one is being called upon to freely respond to the key aspects of the novel.

Also, Lawrence's criticism is free of the scientific objectivity that sorts out data in order to categorize the work. Lawrence's criticism is both objective and subjective.. He remains objective in that he constantly focuses on basic aspects of the novel. Also, he does this by taking these aspects at face value.. But Lawrence is also subjective in that we are aware of an individual reader with individual idiosyncrasies. There is enough of Lawrence in the criticism to make us aware that the critic is an alive reader. And Lawrence is never objective to the point where he feels inhibited about commenting on the relationship between Melville's novel and the reality that inspired it.²⁰

The kind of criticism advocated by Daiches, Rahv and Sontag, and practised by Lawrence and Kazin demands both humility and courage. On the one hand, the critic must resign himself to a role that is subservient to the literary work. He must be willing to be dispensable. In fact, that should be his goal, for his concern should be to lead the reader beyond his criticism to the literary work.

Courage is also required, because the open response demands that the reader-critic allow the unresolved tensions

in the literary work to remain unresolved. This is a necessary price to pay, for if the critic wishes to experience the joy of open response, he must also be open to the accompanying terror.

CHAPTER V

FOOTNOTES

¹ David Daiches, A Study of Literature, p. 52.

² Philip Rahv comments significantly on institutionalization and the arts. He suggests that art has always tended to be antithetical to institutions. One can see, therefore, why the effort to make literary criticism into a science (a form of allegorization) is not an unmixed blessing. "Criticism and the Imagination of Alternatives," in The Myth and the Powerhouse (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), pp. 62-63. The other essays by Rahv referred to in this chapter are also from this collection of essays.

³ Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation," Against Interpretation (New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc., 1966), p. 7. The other essays by Sontag referred to in this chapter are from this collection of essays.

⁴ Sontag, "On Style," p. 21 (emphasis Sontag's).

⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

⁶ Ibid., p. 27.

⁷ Sontag, "On Style," pp. 22-23. Following from her attack on morality as a rigid code of behavior, Sontag proceeds to elaborate on her view of the relationship between art and morality, in order to show that her view of art does not compromise morality. According to Sontag, art leads us to greater sensibility and awareness -- a sensibility and awareness that arise from disinterestedness and contemplation. Art induces such a response and thus the aesthetic response to art can lead to a moral response -- moral in the sense that awareness can lead to a conscious choice. "On Style," p. 25.

⁸ "The Myth and the Powerhouse," p. 21. The argument that literature suggests more complete patterns in opposition to

FOOTNOTES (CONTINUED)

the vicissitudes of history has a long tradition in criticism. This same argument was prominent in Sidney's Defense of Poesy, and it can also be traced back to Aristotle's Poetics.

⁹Sontag, "Against Interpretation," p. 7.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 7.

¹¹Rahv, "Fiction and the Criticism of Fiction," p. 46.

¹²Daiches, p. 51.

¹³Rahv, "Criticism and the Imagination of Alternatives," p. 74.

¹⁴Daiches, p. 107.

¹⁵"Introduction to Moby-Dick," in Melville: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Richard Chase (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), pp. 39-40 (emphasis Kazin's). Kazin further points to the profusion of chapters and Melville's attempt to record the vastness of nature as aspects of the novel that communicate an expanding sensation to the reader, pp. 46-48.

¹⁶Kazin, p. 46.

¹⁷Daiches, p. 35.

¹⁸"Herman Melville's Moby Dick," Studies in Classic American Literature (New York: The Viking Press, 1961), pp. 145-161.

¹⁹Sontag also suggests that it is futile to attempt to justify everything in a work of art: "Usually critics who want to praise a work of art feel compelled to demonstrate that each part is justified, that it could not be other than it is. And every artist, when it comes to his own work, remembering the role of chance, fatigue, external

FOOTNOTES (CONTINUED)

distractions, knows what that critic says to be a lie, knows that it could well have been otherwise. The sense of inevitability that a great work of art projects is not made up of the inevitability or necessity of its part, but of the whole" ("On Style," p..33).

²⁰Lawrence is able to respond to what Rahv calls the "felt reality of art". Rahv suggests that in order to escape the immediacy and grossness of action, scene, and other aspects of the empirical nature of fiction, critics have attempted to schematize works of art. In this way the critic can avoid the direct confrontation with the art and the reality that inspired it. "Fiction and the Criticism of Fiction," p..45.

CONCLUSION

In the cases of both allegorical literary criticism and the allegorical literary work, we have seen allegory as an outside force, imposing a framework that redirects the impulses and suggestions of literary expression. Further, we have seen allegory as a rational discursive element, attempting to control and interpret irrational aspects of the literary work.

The crucial aspect of allegory as a controlling agent is the question of motivation. As long as allegory is in control, the literary work is being "used" for extra-literary purposes. This is evident in Bunyan's tale, where he interprets Christian's journey in terms of Calvinist theology.

In the case of Bunyan, we have the necessary historical distance to distinguish between his moral and his tale. Thus we can ignore his allegorical framework, if we choose to do so. But in terms of literary criticism, the problem of allegorical interpretation is more serious, particularly when we realize how easily allegorical interpretation becomes an accepted and standard mode of reading literature.

In the present age, the problem of allegorical interpretation is evident in the ascendancy of Christian Humanist readings of literature.¹ The outline of the interpretive framework is possibly not clearly evident, but a nostalgic residue can be seen in the sentimental allegorizations of literary works. If we must have allegorization, one would

prefer Bunyan or Milton, who at least openly state the nature of their allegorical frameworks.

When allegorical interpretation is unconsciously accepted as a standard method of reading literature, the repressive effect of allegory is particularly apparent. With Bunyan or Milton, there can be open disagreement between allegorist and reader, as we can choose to ignore their allegorical frameworks. But if the nature and extent of allegorical interpretation is not realized, it can colour and control everything that the individual reads.

An interesting counter-argument for allegory has been offered by Honig, who suggests that allegory makes it possible to suggest destructive implications, in such a way that they will be expressed, but still controlled: "From the beginning, allegory has offered the rational consciousness a way of regulating imaginative materials that otherwise appear confounded by contradictions and bristling with destructive implications."²

I would argue with Honig on two basic accounts. First of all, he states that the irrational elements of literary expression are constantly played off against the controlling framework of allegory. Literary expression thus never comes into its own, because it is always subservient to the prevailing mode of interpretation.

Further, the argument that the irrational in literature could lead to dangerous acts presumes that literary expression is didactic, either positively or negatively. A good

answer to this viewpoint is presented by Sontag. Sontag suggests that a work of art does not or, at least, should not lead directly to moral or immoral action. For example, the question of sexual excitement is irrelevant to literary expression, for if the result of the literary work is sexual excitement, this is the result of pornography and not of literary expression. Art leads to a state of contemplation -- a contemplation that is above immediate rejection or approval, or disagreement or agreement. Further, the result of the state of contemplation is awareness and not immediate action.³ In other words, the open response described by Sontag can lead to free acceptance of and reconciliation with emotion. What Honig describes would lead to tentative acceptance, followed by repression.

Since allegory as a controlling interpretive agent is an outside force, it is not a part of literary expression; it is antithetical to literary expression, in that it represses the open response created by the literary work. The failure to achieve the open response can then be traced to the unwillingness to give oneself to the control of the literary work. It would appear, then, that allegory as an interpretive framework and literary expression have separate interests, and each seeks to control the reader.

CONCLUSION

FOOTNOTES

¹I am using this term somewhat loosely here, possibly because of the vague outlines of the Christian Humanist position today. I am not suggesting that definite Christian allegorizations of literature are evident today as they were in the sixteenth century, when the Christian Humanist position was more clearly defined. But I would suggest that there still is a strong tendency to read literature in terms of good and evil, appearance and reality -- readings that can be traced to the Christian Humanist tradition.

²Honig, Dark Conceit, p. 53.

³Sontag, "On Style," pp. 26-29.

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APPENDIX

ALLEGORICAL CRITICISM: A CULTURAL MOTIVATION

As we saw in critical interpretations of Moby Dick, the tendency to impose an allegorical framework on literary works is evident in modern criticism. Further, the example of Moby Dick leads us to think about the motivating factors that might lead to allegorical interpretation. That is, we are led to ask whether there are cultural or sociological factors that lead to such criticism. In the case of Moby Dick, this question is particularly important, because the indefinite nature and unsettling effects of the work are a prime target for the restricting effects of allegorization.

An example from the history of criticism might be helpful in exploring the question of motivation. In the English Renaissance, moral critics argued that poetry could be dangerous, because it might lead to immoral conclusions. Such charges sparked a lively debate regarding the virtues and defects of the art of poetry. From those who attacked poetry, we hear comments such as the following: "I must confesse that poets are the whetstones of wit, notwithstanding that wit is dearly bought: where honie and gall are mixt, it will be hard to sever the one from the other. The deceitfull phisition geveth sweete syropes to make his poyson goe downe the smother."¹ And further, the same critic maintains that poets intentionally focus on evil:

It is the custome of the flie to leave the sound places of the horse, and sucke at the botch: the nature of colloquintida to draw the worst humors to it selfe: the manner of swine to forsake the fayre fields and wallowe in the myre; and the whole practise of poets, either with fables to shewe their abuses, or with playne termes to unfolde their mischeefe, discover their shame, discredite themselves, and desperse their poison through the world. Virgil sweats in describing his gnatte; Ovid bestirreth him to point out his flea: the one shewes his art in the lust of Dido; the other his cunning in the incest of Myrrha, and that trumpet of bawdrie, the Craft of Love.²

In order to justify literature, Elizabethan writers such as Harington and Nashe suggested that the literary work might be read in terms of an allegorical framework. Thus Harington argued that the poet did not really intend for his work to be read on the literal level: "Now for the breeding of errours which is the third Objection, I see not why it should breed any when none is bound to beleue that they write, nor they looke not to haue their fictions belied in the literall sence...."³

Further, Nashe's definition of poetry points to one of the fundamental assumptions of the allegorical view of literature, in that he sees poetry as a branch of philosophy: "I account of Poetrie as of a more hidden & diuine kinde of Philosophy, enwrapped in blinde Fables and darke stories, wherein the principles of more excellent Arts and morall precepts of manners, illustrated with diuers examples of other Kingdomes and Countries, are contained...."⁴

Nashe also comments on poetry that might be morally questionable. Thus Nashe admits that in some instances his

definition of literature will not apply.. But he does not conclude that such literature should be dismissed.. Rather, in such cases the reader (critic) will have to be more careful to focus on those aspects of the work that will have the desired moral effect: "...and they that couet to picke more precious knowledge out of Poets amorous Elegies must have a discerning knowledge before they can aspire to the perfection of their desired knowledge, least the obtaining of trifles be the repentent end of their trauell."⁵ In this statement we have a clear indication of the procedure of allegorical criticism. It selects those aspects that will help to construct the allegorical framework, and thus avoids confrontation of those aspects that might be destructive of the framework.

The Renaissance, then, provides us with an example of criticism that resorted to allegory to control unwanted implications in literary works.⁶ On the other hand, one should realize that there were individual Elizabethans, such as Sidney, who were pointing to the uniqueness of literary expression, even though they were working in a predominantly didactic tradition of literary criticism.

The allegorical approach to literature suggested by Renaissance critics such as Nashe points clearly to the restricting effects of such criticism. Thus if a tale is read from the allegorical point of view, everything in the tale will be seen in terms of the allegorical framework.. The allegorical mode of interpretation acts as a guard, prohibiting

confrontation with aspects contrary to the framework. In essence, then, such an approach to literature is a form of censorship, with the allegorical framework acting as the censor. In its more extreme forms, allegorical interpretation could discourage awareness of anything that might be antithetical to the prevailing tradition, even though the literary work in question might, in actuality, be quite subversive. Thus in the Renaissance, Nashe could sanction Ovid by suggesting at one point that the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha referred to the deluge at the time of Noah.⁷

In the same way, modern interpretive criticism can be allegorical and repressive. That is, even though modern criticism does not overtly interpret literature allegorically, it still often sees literary works in terms of an essentially allegorical framework. The terminology of the Freudian, Marxist, or Humanist points of view provides the reader with a convenient vocabulary to explain what happens in the literary work, but the vocabulary forms a protective barrier between the reader and the literary work. Thus rather than allowing anything to remain indefinite, or to be defined in terms of literary expression, the critic resorts to the vocabulary of his system, in an effort to explain and justify.

One of the prominent allegorical approaches in modern criticism is that of the Christian Humanist. This term is not used here to describe a philosophical-metaphysical system, as for example, represented by Milton, but rather a weaker,

more sentimental, popular tradition of viewing experience and literature. Such a response in modern criticism would see the literary work in terms of generalities such as the conflict between good and evil. Further, this approach might even see the universe as basically unkind to man, but it will insist that man will prevail. Literary works, then, become a commentary on how men might prevail, even though the odds are against them.

In the criticism of Moby Dick, the Christian Humanist approach becomes rather obvious, because the novel is filled with more than the usual quota of unpleasant implications. There is Ahab who strikes out against God, and this factor is frightening if we admit that Melville projects his sympathies into Ahab. Further, if we censor Ahab, we can censor that part of ourselves that identifies with Ahab's madness. Also, there are the unanswered questions of Ishmael, but again, our response to Moby Dick is not as frightening, if we can supply an allegorical framework that answers the questions. Thus we find critical approaches that attempt to justify the universe for Melville in order to avoid the unsettling experience of facing Moby Dick, without seeing a resolution in the novel. If there is a merit to Lawrence Thompson's approach, referred to in Chapter II, it is that he attempts to rectify the tendency to tame Melville's novel, but in the process he goes to the opposite extreme and, in effect, imposes another allegorical framework on Moby Dick.

An example of an approach that attempts to resolve the

complications in Moby Dick can be seen in the following interpretation:

And in the middle of the nineteenth century Herman Melville, examining God's universe in his day, found in the ocean the symbol of the near chaos which he felt that sensitive and thoughtful men were having to live in: fluid, shifting, largely uncharted, vast, full of dangers and terrors.

In this vast, uncontrollable ocean, each man has one small, green, gentle island full of peace, to which he can never return if once he pushes off. Yet, Melville declares, it is better to push and perish than to so circumscribe one's existence as to try to remain on it forever.⁸

Further, Booth immediately sees Melville's novel in terms of the question of evil, thus seeing the literary work as a moral tract.. Booth's conclusion is that Moby Dick answers the problem of evil by suggesting that evil exists because the gods are not strong enough to control it, leaving more responsibility for man.⁹ Thus we feel with Ahab, but we will be more intelligent as we turn to our own struggle with the universe: "And after the White Whale does drag him down, we can turn with new determination perhaps to our own less heroic but we hope more intelligent wrestlings with the individual terrors and evils of life, attempting to do man's part, which must be done if the battle is to be won at all, to learn what is the highest good, and to make it prevail."¹⁰

Even though Booth's article is not a key discussion of Moby Dick, it is relevant here in that it provides an example of allegorization that is present in a subtler form in other allegorical interpretations. Significantly, Booth points out that we do feel with Ahab, but it is noteworthy that in his

conclusions, he does not dwell on this point. Thus Booth moves towards some of the terrorizing implications of the novel, but rather than responding to them openly, Booth resorts to his allegorical framework which protects him from the implications of the novel. Phrases such as "Attempting to do man's part" and "the highest good" are an example of the weak generalizations of the allegorical framework that stand in the way of any open confrontation or direct response. Thus a further effect of approaching a literary work in terms of an allegorical framework, is that the reader remains essentially unmoved by what he reads..

The desire to control, the desire to avoid the unsettling confrontation, the desire for justification in metaphysical terms, these could all be seen as motivations for the ascendancy of allegorical interpretation. As we saw, these motivations were evident in the Renaissance, and I would suggest that they are still evident today.

The distrust of the literary work stems from the usual state of tension between art and morality, or for that matter, any established tradition. As Frye suggests, because of the hypothetical nature of art, the artist usually suggests an alternative to any established tradition or morality.¹¹ Following this argument further, we might suggest that one of the functions of art is to provide a medium for the expression of thoughts and emotions that might otherwise remain repressed. Thus the reader tends to distrust the tale, and would often rather not be exposed to it, without the protective guide of the allegorical framework provided by the

allegorical critic. Also, an interpretive framework acts as a preservative for the established cultural or sociological tradition, because it directs the reader's response in the appropriate direction.

One might suggest that allegorical interpretation itself might have a changing tradition, and, therefore, not be restrictive. If we must have interpretation, this would certainly be desirable. But even "new" allegorical interpretation can be restrictive in that it translates literary expression into discursive statement, and I would suggest that literary expression responds by seeking its own unique freedom as soon as the new allegorical tradition is presented. In other words, there is little hope for harmony between allegorical interpretive criticism and literary expression, even if the allegorical criticism is part of a new tradition.

APPENDIX

FOOTNOTES

¹Stephen Gosson, "The Schoole of Abuse," in English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance, ed. O. B. Hardison, Jr. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963), p. 87.

²Ibid., p. 87.

³Sir John Harington, "A Preface, or rather a Briefe Apologie of Poetrie," in Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G. Gregory Smith (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), II, 208.

⁴Thomas Nashe, "The Anatomie of Absurditie," in Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G. Gregory Smith (London: Oxford University Press), 1964), I, 328.

⁵Ibid., p. 333.

⁶See Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry, rev. edn. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1963), pp. 69-73, for a discussion of the allegorization of classical myths in the Renaissance.

⁷Nashe, p. 331.

⁸Thornton Y. Booth, "Moby Dick: Standing up to God," NCE, XVII (1962), 38.

⁹Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 43.

¹¹"Levels of Meaning in Literature," pp. 258-259.