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HERMAN MELVILLE'S NOVEL "MOBY DICK" VS. FILM "AVATAR: THE WAY OF WATER": EVOLUTION OF ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

РОМАН ГЕРМАНА МЕЛВІЛЛА «МОБІ ДІК» VS. ФІЛЬМ «АВАТАР: ШЛЯХ ВОДИ»: ЕВОЛЮЦІЯ ЕКОЛОГІЧНОЇ СВІДОМОСТІ

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In this article H. Melville's novel *Moby Dick* (1851) is compared with American science fiction epic *Avatar: The Way of Water* (December 2022). Despite temporal and medium-based differences, *Avatar 2* is analysed as a paradigmatic alternative of the novel as it reinterprets the key themes from *Moby Dick*. The comparison of these two works is focused on the interconnection of human and marine ecosystems and its purpose is to reveal the continuity of ethical and philosophical tradition in American culture. What unites these two works, so different at first glance, is water element. In the novel the ocean became both the background and the major instrument of uncovering the essence of each character. The same is true about "*Avatar 2*" which introduces original mythology and philosophy of world creation. Both works centre on aquatic environment, involve intelligent water creatures, and explore human destructive impact on nature, simultaneously emphasizing the importance of water element as a key source of life and existential quest. From this perspective, both works are studied within the frames of Ecocriticism and Blue ecocriticism. The thematic interconnection between these two works is further reinforced by their exploration of philosophical and moral-ethical issues, thus introducing the quest for meaning in a vast and mysterious environment. Both *Moby Dick* and its film replica, *Payakan*, are surveyed as incarnations of nature's spiritual power, profundity, and intelligence. It is noted that this attempt of parallel hermeneutic analysis of literary and film narratives illustrates inseparable unity of word and image, demonstrates rapid spread of cinematic opportunities to materialize human imagination and to enhance the importance of individual experience. It is concluded that Melville's philosophical attitude to futility of human aggression may be regarded as the first step to understand deeper the ecological challenges of contemporary epoch. The authors of the film have gone further when accentuating the necessity to change radically our perception of Nature – from the object of "conquest" to the object of reverence as a spiritual unity of all forms of life in Universe.

Key words: *Avatar: The way of water* (2022), H. Melville, *Moby Dick* (1851), Ecocriticism, Blue ecocriticism, Intermediality.

У статті порівнюються роман Г.Мелвілла *Мобі Дік* (1851) та американський фантастичний фільм «Аватар: Шлях води» (2022). Всупереч часовій та медійній розбіжностям, Аватар-2 розглядається як парадигматична альтернатива прозового твору, оскільки цей фільм по новому інтерпретує ключові теми *Мобі Діка*. Порівняння цих творів, сфокусованих на взаємодії людської спільноти й океанічної екосистеми, дозволило дослідити тяглість етичної та філософської традицій в американській культурі. Наголошується, що для обох мистецьких феноменів водна стихія є ключовим джерелом життя й екзистенційного пошуку. У романі океан

стає не лише головною декорацією, на тлі якої відбуваються усі події, а й чинником виявлення сутності кожного персонажу. Аналогічну функцію виконує океан у фільмі, який пропонує оригінальну міфологію і філософію світобудови. Саме тому обидва твори досліджуються у рамках екокритики та блакитної екокритики. Водночас відзначається, що розгляд філософських і морально-етичних проблем, націлених на пошуки сенсу життя у містичному просторі буття, увиразнюють тематичну близькість літературного тексту і кінематографічного відеоряду. Мобі Дік, так само як Пайакан, втілюють духовну енергію, глибину й інтелект. У статті наголошується, що паралельний герменевтичний розгляд даних мистецьких творів надає можливість встановити нерозривну єдність слова і образу, продемонструвати швидке зростання можливостей кіно яскраво втілювати уяву й наголошувати важливість індивідуального досвіду. Проведене дослідження дозволяє зробити висновок, що океанічне мислення Г. Мелвілла доводить безперспективність людської агресії. І це перший крок до усвідомлення викликів сучасної постмодерної доби. У фільмі, натомість, вже акцентується необхідність радикальної зміни наших поглядів на Природу – від об'єкту завоювання до об'єкту шанування як вияву духовної єдності всіх форм життя у Всесвіті.

Ключові слова: Аватар: Шлях води, Герман Мелвілл, Мобі Дік, екокритика, блакитна екокритика, інтермедіальність.

Introduction. Nowadays, natural survival potential of mankind still poses more questions than we are capable of answering. Quite justified anxiety as to the future of human progress, in particular, and our planet, in general, accentuates the necessity to introduce qualitatively new ecological thinking. Negative tendencies of 'environmental degradation' attract the key attention of world public. In the final document of the sixth Global Environment Outlook GEO-6, focusing on the theme 'healthy planet, healthy people', it is emphasized that there exists a threat of "climate change, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, excess nutrient run-off, land degradation and ocean acidification" [1, p. 21]. As it is stated, there is a major risk that such a situation will lead to a destructive cycle of degradation and that the ocean will no longer provide many vital ecosystem services, for example, livelihoods, income, health, employment, and aesthetic, cultural and religious values. The urgent measures to be taken are analysed in this document, though one has a premonition that all this won't radically change the existing situation. Sven Anders Johansson from Mid Sweden University is sure that "it is hard not to understand this need to do something, at the same time as it is hard not to see certain naivety in this will to contribute" [2, p. 65]. Despite this declared naivety the scholar is straightforward enough to raise the question: "Why should we study visual arts, music, literature or film when facing ecological disaster?" [2, p. 66]. His answer is no less direct – "because art is the place where this event may be understood. If ecocriticism is an academic form of activism, of 'doing something', art our best option to get out of the anthropocentrism which prevents us from even understanding the current situation" [2, p. 74]. The scholar emphasizes that the pivot of this option – is Adorno's concept of Natural beauty which is "a promise, something to hope for, something yet to come. Natural beauty contains an opening towards something that we still do not recognize, something constantly waiting to spring forth" [2, pp. 69–70]. We may regard these ideas as aesthetic prerequisites to our discussion. There's no doubt that all kinds of Arts, including film and literature are perceptive to substantial negative transformations of global environment and examples are not few when we find adequate artistic reflection of the above process. In such a context the task to analyse and compare some civilizational aspects of Melville's novel "Moby Dick" and film "Avatar: The way of water" seems rather interesting.

Theoretical framework and literature review. Herman Melville's novel "Moby Dick" and James Cameron's film "Avatar-2", despite their temporal and medium-based differences, share much in common due to their thematic emphasis on environmental issues, human-nature connections, and the significance of water as a key source of life and ecological balance. That is why the novel and its cinematographic version are studied in this article within the frames of ecocriticism and blue ecocriticism. With this end, some ideas of contemporary philosophers and scholars (S. A. Johansson, D. Abram, S. Dobrin), dealing with the problems of ecology in general, and water (blue) ecology are encapsulated into our study [2–4]. At the same time, it is obvious that water element became not only the existential background for both the film and the novel but also a subtle instrument of probing deep into the

psyche of the characters, offering a profound insight into ethical and philosophical dimensions. The works by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin [5], Samuel Chase Coale [6], and Austrian psychologist Viktor Frankl [7] contributed to our analysis of these issues. James Cameron's visual storytelling serves as a paradigmatic alternative, a sort of artistic re-imagining of Melville's textual narration, preserving its main dilemmas and incorporating them into modern cinematic and ecological discourse. The peculiarities of such intermedial transformation are surveyed with the help of prolific ideas of French philosophers Gaston Bachelard [8] and Gilles Deleuze [9].

Research design and methods. Given the specific character of our investigation, comparative and historical approaches as well as methods of receptive aesthetics and ecocriticism are applied in the course of investigation. Simultaneously, the intermedial comparison of *Moby Dick* and *Avatar: The Way of Water* helps to survey the dynamics of ecological thinking in its shift from anthropocentric to hylozoistic ideas. Special attention is also paid here to the principles of blue ecocriticism which extend the frames of traditional environmental criticism by emphasizing the vitality of oceanic world in the context of its aesthetic, philosophical, and ecological messages.

Setting the goals and tasks of the article. This study aims to analyse the novel "Moby Dick" and the film "Avatar-2" through the prism of blue ecocriticism, focusing on the interconnection of human and marine ecosystems. One of the objectives of this work is to reveal the continuity of ethical and philosophical tradition in American culture.

The outline of the main research material. In December 2022 American epic science fiction film directed and produced by James Cameron was released for wide public. Being a sequel to *Avatar* (2009), it required quite a good lapse of time to find its way to the screen. The epic holds viewer's attention not only because of fabulous scenes and miraculous details. The whole range of visual effects was brilliantly demonstrated in its prequel which stirred imagination by its rich colour scheme as well as extraordinary aesthetics of characters and representatives of flora and fauna. To our mind, the sequel even enhances the impressionistic effect of the first part of *Avatar* as it reveals the ability to generate powerful impulses of empathy to the aborigines and aquatic world of Pandora and poignant hatred to newcomers. At the same time, the audience immediately feels that everything occurring on the screen directly addresses our realities, thus deepening involvement into the action itself. The film over, the splash of viewer's emotions gradually grows into thoughts and dwellings over the problems raised here. And they are quite numerous: the urgent need to preserve our much suffered planet, commercial greed, moral pathology, violence as *modus vivendi*, family values, moral dignity and so forth. All these things are on the surface, they are fairly well understood, and what saves them from being naive or even trite is logical correctness of their artistic articulation. Philosophical basis in this film is being perceived gradually, before its kinship with other ideas, observations and concepts, piled up in the universal treasury of human experience, comes to the fore and becomes evident.

Re-evaluation of these ideas leads to understanding of new tendencies in mass culture and profound changes in its depths from the goals of mere entertainment to realisation of our responsibility for the destinies of Earth civilization. The epic introduces original mythology and philosophy. Yet, we may survey even deeper roots of some basic messages of *Avatar: The way of water*. Following the traditions of primitive animism, the representatives of naive materialism believed that 'psychic' is a characteristic feature of the whole physical world. If the whole Nature is moving, it means that it lives, since the motion itself was ascribed to psychic primary source. In other words, the Nature is alive. This idea permeates the teachings of some ancient Greek, Indian and Chinese thinkers. Usually this type of philosophical outlook is defined by the term *hylozoism* which in translation from the Greek means *living matter*, *living substance*. On the initial stage of budding philosophical thinking such notions as alive and dead, psychic and physical were perceived not as opposites but some organic unity.

Nowadays, the ideas of hylozoism received a new impetus in ecocriticism and blue ecocriticism, focused on marine problems as the most urgent for humankind to solve. As it is formulated by

S. Dobrin, the representative of blue ecocriticism, “the ocean can be a strange place, an alien place, a wild place. Historically, we cast the ocean as the wildest nature, the untameable, and the unpredictable. But, in the same breath, we cast the ocean as a place of salvation. Contemporary environmental conversations and some oceanographic discussions describe the ocean as the place from where human salvation will likely emerge in the wake of environmental destruction” [4, p. 1]. Dobrin refers to some thoughts expressed by ecologist T. Morton in his article ‘*Ecology without Nature*’: “Ecological writing keeps insisting that we are ‘embedded’ in nature. Nature is a surrounding medium that sustains our being” [4, p. 140]. In the same vein David Abram, philosopher and ecologist, proposes a more personal approach to the above problem in his new form of hylozoism rooted in the phenomenology of sensory experience. Basing himself upon contemporary cognitive and natural science, he puts forward his version of cosmology in which matter is alive. Mankind should respect this world of plants and animals, valleys and mountains, rivers and oceans surrounding us. The echo of this idea is also evident in Sidney Dobrin’s epigraph to his work *Blue Ecocriticism and the Oceanic Imperative*: “When my brothers and I were young, my mother stood with us on the beach facing the ocean and introduced us: This is the ocean. Respect her, and she will treat you well. Disrespect her and you will face rage like you cannot imagine” [4].

Present ecological situation is so grave that D. Abram can’t avoid irony when he tries to find a solution: “We’d best keep our arguments girded with statistics and our thoughts buttressed with abstractions, lest we succumb to an overwhelming grief-heartache born of our organism’s instinctive empathy with the living land and its cascading losses. Lest we be bowled over and broken by our dismay at the relentless devastation of the biosphere” [3, p. 17].

Avatar 2 is, in essence, an artistic return to hylozoistic outlook. The old concept of human being as the paragon of perfection, the king of Nature, has already turned into anachronism. H. Melville in his novel *Moby Dick or the White Whale* lucidly hints that such a concept is rather doubtful. This moment becomes the cross point between the modern film epic and the book of the middle of the 19-th century. Drawing on his own whaling experience Melville goes beyond the limits of its commercial pragmatism, makes an attempt to perceive genetic nature of human communication with the sea. First and foremost, the American Romanticist tried to study “the existence of high powers” in their immanent essence, analyse the character of their influence on human beings, and outline at least the contours of transcendental phenomena. Yet, it was philosophical profundity of the book that became the stumbling block for numerous Melville’s contemporaries to comprehend this masterpiece adequately. Its avant-garde message was fully understood much later, long after his death.

In the 20-ies of the XX century, the novel saw the revival of interests of readers, critics, and scholars. The whole complex of ideas in this work and its narrative structure are inseparably intertwined with the elements of water which became not only the existential background of *Moby Dick* but also a subtle instrument of delving into the psyche of its characters. Artistically and professionally convincing details, a wide circle of associations, allegories and symbols helped the author to create an impressive landscape of events which stirred and provoked readers’ imagination. Receptive aesthetics of the water element in the novel is very much reminiscent of *Avatar 2*, though, of course, there exists rather substantial difference: in the novel the ocean is cold and severe while in the film it is at the same time bright and full of danger. The boundless aquatic space frightens and attracts like a magnet. It’s impossible to overcome or tame this fluid universe, the only way to survive in this milieu is to get in love and merge with it. Thales of Miletus, by the way, claimed water to be “the beginning of all things”, and the Cosmos for him was “alive and full of Divine powers”. In this sense the very choice of the name “Avatar” is rather grounded from different points of view. On the one hand, it is reference to our contemporaneity, with its video and internet games, on the other – to our civilizational past, as a Hinduism manifestation of a deity or a released soul in a bodily interpretation. But there can be found still another precondition for such a name, which is closely connected with the archetype of water. G. Bachelard in his work *Water and dreams* points out with reference to the idea of Swiss nineteenth

century scholar J. J. Bachofen that “the vowel ‘a’ is a vowel of water. It dominates in such words as aqua, apa, wasser. It’s a phoneme of world creation with the help of water. It is this ‘a’ that defines initial matter. With this letter the poem of Universe begins. This is the letter of soul’s rest in Tibetan mysticism” [8, p. 215].

Thus, following this idea, the name ‘Avatar’, having the only vowel ‘a’ repeated three times, is fully adequate to the second part of the film’s title – ‘the way of water’. From the point of view of cinematography the image of water in *Avatar 2* corresponds to all the requirements of this art. According to Gilles Deleuze, “it is firstly because water is the most perfect environment in which movement can be extracted from the thing moved, or mobility from movement itself” [9, p. 77]. French philosopher claims that ‘this is the origin of the visual and auditory importance of water in research on rhythm’ [9, p. 78]. Professional filming of this environment, visual, acoustic, and rhythmical at the same time, predetermines lasting aesthetic pleasure. As S. Dobrin explains: “Sight, and by association image and the visual, is physiological and interpretive, material and conceptual, technological and natural’ [4, p. 177]. We may attribute to this enumeration the notion *psychological*, since our perception of this sight (image) is very important, as it revokes not only aesthetic emotions but ethic ones as well.

Watching the film frees the spectators from the necessity to generate intertwined sets of images. They are already created by film makers. That is why the audience simply enjoys the artistic produce. But reading the novel requires attention, concentration, and efforts to turn the word into an image-motion. What complicates the task of reading the text of *Moby Dick* is the fact that its narrative line is blurred and constantly interfered with numerous diversions and deviations of informative character: details of whale’s anatomy, peculiarities of their processing, the methods of whale-hunting, philosophic considerations, parables, and dwellings on the destinies of mankind. And all this is depicted against the background of seascapes, powerful, severe and implacable, charged with enormous emotive and poetic potential which attunes the readers to a solemn liturgy of the elements. In chapter ‘*Symphony*’, for example, the ocean is delineated in poetic and lyrical undertones, in others – with a domination of philosophical or psycho-metaphoric categories, as vulnerability of an ocean of human soul, the existence of which was mentioned by Hellenistic Platonist philosopher Plotinus (c.204/5-271 AD). However paradoxical it may seem, this fuzziness and blurriness as well as informative overloading of the narrative line helped to create a prolific basis for its intermediary challenge, triggered the idea of its artistic re-interpretation in the epoch of new technologies and vast opportunities of computer graphics.

Melville’s text combined different strategies within the frames of a complex narrative structure, in which self-sufficient and authentic plots are interconnected, the main line being that of ‘Ahab – Moby Dick’ as it releases “great impulses of energy imparting dynamics to all other compositional blocks of this novel” [10, p. 7]. In *Avatar: The way of water* this line corresponds to the line ‘Quaritch – Payakan’, and hunting Payakan becomes the culmination of this epic. If we compare Ahab and Quaritch as the first components of the main narrative lines in the novel and the film we’ll be able to see quite a lot of similarities between these characters. Both of them are monolithic in their all devouring passion, all their actions and deeds are directed towards one goal – to exterminate their enemy. Both of them become the carriers of some mission. Ahab declares to Starbuck: “Ahab is always Ahab” [11, p. 524], claiming that his biblical name isn’t only his essence, but also mission laid on him in advance. Riotous captain says about himself: “I disobey my God in obeying him” [11, p. 527]. His aggression as if prescribed to him from above. He is a messenger of Destiny. “This whole act’s immutably decreed. It was rehearsed by thee and me a million years before this ocean rolled. I am the Fates’ lieutenant; I act under orders” [11, p. 524]. For Melville such anthroponymical precedence testified to his breakthrough to cognitive nihilism, understanding of transcendentalism not in narrow frames of Christianity, but within much wider paradigm of ontology, as a realization of the fact that there may be quite a different order, unknown to us, and including some phenomena which surpass existing religious categories and principles.

To some extent, Quaritch, a recombinant, implanted with the memory of a deceased Colonel Miles Quaritch, may be regarded as a cinematographic replica of Melville's Ahab. The pivot of his memory is hatred and unsurpassed desire to revenge. Though Quaritch's enemy is not a whale but Jake Sully, a blue-skinned humanoid. Quaritch wants to lure Jake out and with this purpose he gives order to kill whales – Tulkuns. In Cameron's film Quaritch's name, as well as Ahab's, becomes precedent as it incorporates all the psychological features of Colonel Quaritch Miles from a prequel "Avatar". This name personifies the predetermined character of recombinant's further behaviour. But here this precedence corresponds not to the transformed biblical content but to the idea of a substantial gap between technology and ethics: one can enliven the person's memory and his consciousness but can't improve it.

We may observe even greater resemblance between Moby Dick and Payakan. Both whales are considered to be dangerous killers, though such an attitude is gradually changed in the novel and in the film. It is claimed, that Melville borrowed the name Moby Dick from the article of J. N. Reynolds 'Mocha Dick: or the white whale of the Pacific', published in magazine *The Knickerbocker* in 1839. American editor and explorer gathered information about an albino sperm whale slain in 1838 after he came to rescue of a distraught cow whose calf had been killed by the whalers. There are two versions of the name Mocha. The first is explained by the fact that this white whale was first encountered off Mocha Island sometime before 1810. The second is connected with Peruvian cult and Mocha is mother's name which symbolizes the light essence. In such a context Dick is associated with father's nature and reveals dark essence. Thus, the mysterious white whale was regarded as a mixture of two essences – Good and Evil. However, the whale in Melville's novel is not aggressive; he rather reflects Ahab's aggression and hatred what testifies to emblematic character of his white colour. We may interpret Moby Dick as personification of author's desire to avenge all those who participate in merciless slaughter, called whaling. Starbuck, for example, accuses Ahab in madness, as it is he who pursues Moby Dick, and not the opposite. Here we feel implicit undertones of Melville's empathy to whales.

Payakan, an analogue of the White Whale, also differs from other peaceful Tulkuns (whale-like species). He has broken the law in his attempt to avenge the whalers having killed his mother. He is an outcast and is considered to be dangerous by so-called aquatic Metkayina clan of Pandora. But despite such attitude of reef people this Tulkun-criminal saves the life of Lo'ak, Sully's second son, and befriends him. This detail reveals deep affinity with Melville's main personage through the concept of human perception, which in reality can be completely inadequate. However paradoxical it may seem, this inadequacy may be understood through the element of mystery, which was subtly introduced by American Romanticist and later developed in *Avatar 2*.

Melville delineates the whales as mystical, mysterious creatures, monstrous Leviathans, living in the depths of the Ocean and symbolizing the spirits of Nature. In chapter 68 the peculiarities of Cachalot's skin are described in all the details. It is mentioned here that it is marked with some special signs which cover not only the upper transparent film of whale's skin but as if are scratched on the cachalot's bones. Ishmael, the narrator of the novel, thinks that these signs can be regarded as hieroglyphs. Later the author states that he himself saw hieroglyphs on the backbone of a whale skeleton exhibited for worshiping by aborigines on one of the islands. These hieroglyphs refer to ancient Egyptian civilization. It is mentioned in the book that "the sperm whale from the point of view of physiognomic is a Sphinx" and what unites cachalot with sphinxes is "the silence of pyramids" [11, p. 335]. It is also emphasized in the book that the White whale personifies some primordial spirit which had existed long before Prometheus. Ishmael is impressed by the power and grandeur of Moby Dick and perceives his whiteness not as *morbidity* but a miracle. The White whale springs out of water like a "Grand God" whose marble body for a definite moment bends like "the ark of Virginia bridge" and this white brightness is extraordinary beautiful "against the dark blue background of the sea" [11, p. 512]. He is like an incarnation of some transcendental power. We may agree with Ameri-

can scholar Charles Coale who claims that Melville used Egyptian images to underline “inscrutability of human being and the surrounding world” [6, p. 29]. The white whale becomes the symbol of such inscrutability. To our mind, Moby Dick is ‘*morbidity*’ because he seems to be morbid, but his true nature can’t be comprehended.

The same idea is evident in Cameron’s film. Here the Tulkuns are also regarded as mysterious creatures. Norm Spellman, the scientist, points out that Tulkun’s intellect surpasses that of human beings. These creatures are ancient and mysterious and Lo’ak notices some strange drawings reminiscent of hieroglyphs on Payakan’s skin. And a bit later, when he wants to find out the reason of his refuge, Payakan opens for him the entrance to his belly, where in complete darkness the boy sees burning hieroglyphs which help him to install mental connection with tulkun’s memory [12].

It is symbolic that it is Payakan who helps Jake and aquatic clan to defeat the invaders. Like Moby Dick he attacks the main whale-hunting boat and liquidates the majority of soldiers and whalers. Thus, the image existing in human perception is completely disproved. The whale-killer gets quite a new interpretation and acquires features of a patriot as he assists the reef people to defend their life space. Having come through the stages of exile and fighting, Payakan frees himself from his criminal status. And this fact is a substantial contribution to Melville’s concept of this image.

One more important link between the book and the film is the purpose of hunting whales / tulkuns. It is business interest, super profits. Melville’s attitude to this process is ambivalent. It is both sin and commercial reality. On the one hand, to kill a whale means to annihilate a whole world; on the other – to obtain a great number of products useful for people. In the nineteenth century whale hunting was a dangerous undertaking, a challenge to the powers of nature, nearly a heroic deed. But it was commercial profit that made the basis of this heroism. That is why the writer accentuates the profound incompatibility of whaling and Christianity, and in his dwellings he constantly returns to this problem. In *Avatar: The way of water* business goals of ‘tulkuning’ acquire even much more disgusting forms. First, because they slay Tulkuns with only one purpose – to extract anti-aging serum, bringing mega profits as only the richest can afford to buy it. Second, because they kill Tulkun mother with a small Tulkun. And this mercenary act arouses a huge wave of hatred to invaders, greedy and merciless, with degenerative features, killing majestic and wise creature, completely defenceless. Not only this episode but many others create unique dramatic field, and the source of this powerful device is Manichean idea of constant fighting of Light and Darkness, universal Good and Evil. In this sense we may refer to G. Bachelard who believed that “for the material element to engage the whole soul there must be a dual participation – participation of desire and fear, participation of good and evil; peaceful participation of white and black” [8, p. 23].

Thorough analysis of these two works allows considering not only environmental issues, but human problems as well. Here we may speak about existential trends in psychology, relating to the search for sense of life. A well-known Austrian psychologist Viktor Frankl is convinced that: “man’s search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a ‘secondary rationalization’ of instinctual drives” [7, p. 121]. He is sure that nowadays psychotherapists deal, in essence, not with frustration of the pleasure principle “on which Freudian psychoanalysis is centred”, and not with frustration of the “will to power on which Adlerian psychology, using the term striving for superiority is focused” but with the frustration of existential needs. Today more patients suffer from a profound feeling of loss of meaning, sense of life, conjugated with feeling of emptiness, which is why Frankl is speaking about ‘existential void, vacuum’. Both the book and the film, each in its own style, give the direction for searching the remedy: to overcome this danger of depression and despondency one has to plunge into the depth of harmonious relationship with nature, and, by doing so, to regain the stamina of life, its joy and the sublime pleasure.

We may trace certain implications of this idea in Melville’s novel through the character of Ishmael, the protagonist and at the same time the narrator of the main line. Biblical Ishmael, according to the text of the Bible, does not belong to God elect people. What concerns his fictitious counterpart, he

after the crash of “The Pequod” is saved by the crew of the ship “The Rachel”. We know that Biblical Rachel belonged to God elect people. This fact is rather significant, as the author as if presents his hero with the prospect of divine salvation. We may regard this plot line as Gospel of Ishmael since his salvation may be understood not only as physical one, but spiritual and existential as well.

In contrast, the protagonist of the film obtains not religious but ontological salvation when he is accepted to the community of aquatic Metkayina clan of Pandora [12], and his life cycle gets a new perspective. At first, sea civilization seems hostile and inappropriate milieu for Jake and his family who must adjust themselves to this fluid substance. But as mankind came out of ocean, and humans consist mainly of water, they are, in essence, the drops of ocean and that is why this universe becomes their home, their “Paradise regained”. Their return is like the return of a prodigal. Thus, the water frontier in the novel and the film is a complicated road to a new global ethics.

Conclusions. Some thoughts and ideas of American Romanticist outrun his time and broke into the space of a new informational epoch, finding fertile soil in contemporary cinematographic milieu. Nowadays, information sphere turned into original social reality which quickly increases in scale and scope, changing the content of history. In Melville’s times one couldn’t even imagine such things. Nevertheless, his artistic insight helped the writer to feel the essence of global communicative perspective for mankind which corresponded to boundless space of human soul. He united the human ocean with the ocean of Nature and involuntarily created qualitatively new universe with its own laws, a nineteenth century replica of Internet, where it’s possible to travel instantaneously changing the portals. The intermedial comparison of these two works reveals dynamics of ecological consciousness in its shift from a critique of industrial anthropocentric view of natural surroundings to a post-industrial ecological ethics. Melville’s environmental perception is convincingly developed by James Cameron and his colleagues. Yet, the questions of real comprehension are sorted out by film directors in a different way. It is not an attempt to demonstrate futility of attacking the Nature, as it is emphasized by Melville, but it is the idea of unification with it. And in such a situation the responsibility of people for everything around them acquires major attention. As it is accentuated by a well-known French palaeontologist and philosopher P. T. de Chardin: ‘Man is not the centre of the universe as once we thought in our simplicity, but something much more wonderful – the arrow pointing the way to the final unification of the world in terms of life’ [5, p. 224]. He claims that one of such ways of unification is “all-embracing love” which helps to feel oneself a part of totality, harmonious and beautiful. To conceive this dynamic substance human beings should exploit their sensory experience, disclosing a „material field that is animate and self-organizing”.

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