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"Spin the Yarn": Unraveling the Weaving Imagery in *Moby-Dick*

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“Spin me the Yarn”:

Unraveling the Weaving Imagery in *Moby-Dick*

In his 1851 novel *Moby-Dick*, Herman Melville questions the meaning of life and Platonic Truth in a series of seemingly disconnected vignettes, tightly interwoven by pervasive weaving imagery. Does such objective Truth exist, and if so, can man ever comprehend it? In his exploration, he employs, among other symbology, a weaving motif, showing how life is woven together like a tapestry so vast that man simply cannot step back far enough to see the whole. Man can only ever comprehend the threads immediately near him, and since these tiny fragments bear only genetic resemblance to the whole, the meaning of the universe remains incomprehensible. Any tapestry consists of threads that seem incompatible, yet when woven together with skill, reveal a striking and harmonious pattern; *Moby-Dick* is no different. Just as a weaver selects divergent threads, Melville uses a variety of narrative modes and literary allusions to spin his frightening tale of man's ultimate disconnect from humanity. Since storytelling is integral to whaling culture, it is the appropriate setting for Melville to spin the mother of all yarns, while revealing the complex metaphorical relationship between storytelling and Creation. Functioning on the thematic, structural, and narratological level, analyzing the oft-overlooked weaving imagery facilitates yet one more attempted understanding of this textual icon.