

Melville's Gay Father and the Knot of Filicidal Desire

By Myron C. Tuman

The relationship between four seemingly unconnected concerns—stuttering and fatherhood, filicide and homoerotic desire—are carefully teased out in Myron C. Tuman's literary study of the strange, distant bond between a series of fathers and their mostly inarticulate sons. It moves across a wide body of romantic narratives, alternating between Melville and a host of other writers, from Joseph Conrad to Vladimir Nabokov, from Giambattista Vico to Sigmund Freud.

Billy Budd and Melville's story "Bartleby the Scrivener" are used to anchor the analysis, which encompasses the knotted tale of an innocent child in the hands of a filicidal protector, whether in Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* or the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac.

For all the literary discussions, *Melville's Gay Father* begins and ends with a decidedly non-literary interest in the waywardness of male desire—a concern with not just what we can learn from the travails of literary fathers (Vere, Aschenbach or Okonkwo), or from their authors (Melville or Thomas Mann or Chinua Achebe), but more generally what we can learn about the knotted lives of all men.

The Author

Myron C. Tuman is perhaps best known for his work in literacy theory and technology. His latest work is a literary analysis of the filicidal impulse in a series of fictional fathers, along with a look at two perplexing and possibly related psychological issues: stuttering and anorexia. He has continued his pedagogic interests in technology with his new Web project, ReadingLinks.com. In 2003, Tuman became the first Belle and Leonard Toups Chair in English at Nicholls State University, located in Thibodaux, Louisiana.

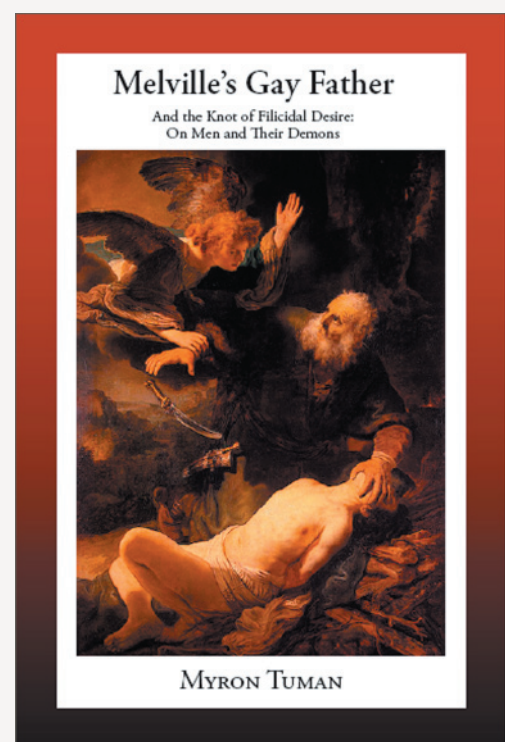
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