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THE EARLY NOVELS OF HERMAN MELVILLE

by

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INTRODUCTION

Book-buyers and critics of the 1840's quickly became acquainted with a young man named Herman Melville. In 1846 he wrote, and Wiley & Putnam published, his first romance about the sea, Typee. It was moderately successful and sold about four or five thousand copies. More important, it established Melville as "the man who lived with the cannibals."

The only earlier book to describe the beauties and wonders of the Marquesas and Society Islands for Americans was Captain David Porter's Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific (Philadelphia, 1815) which recounted the experiences of the U.S. Frigate Essex in the South Pacific during the War of 1812. By the time Typee was published, this earlier book had been forgotten by most readers. Thus Melville "discovered" the South Pacific islands as a subject for a travel narrative. Hoping to capitalize on his literary reputation and, at the same time, to present some of the ideas on civilization and man in society that he had gathered, Melville quickly wrote a second book about the Pacific, Omoo. It was better written and more popular, if less original, than Typee. It, too, sold about four thousand copies.

Several people had suspected that the first two books were not so realistic as the author claimed. To answer them Melville wrote Mardi, which, he claimed, would show what kind of romance he could write. The book was an ignominious failure.
Less than a year after the publication of *Mardi*, Melville had completed *Redburn*. Forsaking the South Pacific, Melville wrote about a setting more familiar to his readers—the North Atlantic and England. *Redburn* is a more radical departure from *Typee* and *Omoo* than a change in setting would indicate. *Typee* and *Omoo* were two of the hundreds of travel books written in the early nineteenth century. Travel literature had been a staple on booksellers' shelves for over a hundred years. The new lands which were being discovered in Africa, the Pacific, and the Far East, as well as the more accessible but equally fascinating, mountains and plains of western North and South America were the subjects of these books. People in Europe and along the Atlantic seaboard wanted to know about the dress, customs, and habits of newly discovered peoples and about the hardships and exotic experiences of the civilized men who did the traveling.

The travel experiences of these men appeared in book form in two ways. A publisher might take the journal, notes, or letters of a traveler and publish them as a true account of a particular voyage. Every possible extravagant adventure, real or hearsay, was written up in detail. Often, the exaggerated account of some custom or people was merely travel lore that the author had read in some earlier account, accepted, and perpetuated as the truth.

Sometimes, in the tradition established by the great traveler-novelists of the eighteenth century like Smollett, the author used his firsthand knowledge of travel and foreign
countries as a background for a romance or picaresque tale.

Melville's *Typee* and *Omoo* are combinations of these two genre. *Omoo* is the closer to being an autobiographical account of Melville's voyages because *Typee* admitted more fiction and borrowed incidents. *Mardi* was an attempt at using travel background for Rabelaisian romance and satire. *Redburn* is something different from any of these; *Redburn* is Melville's bid for mass popularity. It is partially autobiographical because Redburn, like Melville, made his first trip to sea as a "boy" before the mast on a merchantman bound for Liverpool. Melville decided to use the theme of the gentleman's son and green hand on his first voyage. The theme was not new. It had been the subject of many boys' books about the sea, notably those by Captain Marryat. This theme was not enough for a book like *Redburn* or for an author like Melville. Halfway through the book the author was in a dilemma. His theme was exhausted because Redburn had overcome his greenness and had proved to be a first-rate sailor, but the story was only half over because the reader expected him to bring Redburn back to America and complete the adventure. Typically, Melville resorted to travel and social propaganda to fill out the book. The first three romances had had many chapters which digressed to discuss social evils. *Redburn*'s concluding chapters are a sustained fictionalized treatment of a social problem. We have no record that Melville was ever acquainted by personal experience with the plight of immigrants crowded onto ships for a long voyage. His indignation and his remarkable treatment of the problem were founded on either topical discussions
or reading. Whatever Melville's sources for *Redburn*, its technique and form are quite different from that in *Typee* and *Omoo*. Because it was interesting to read and essentially like other sea stories of the day, *Redburn* was a moderate success. It helped to restore the reputation of the author of *Omoo* and pointed out to Melville and his publishers that travel and fact reworked into fiction sold better than satire dressed up by allegory.

The last book to precede *Moby-Dick* was *White-Jacket*. In *White-Jacket* Melville returned to a South Pacific setting and his ostensibly accurate and unvarnished account of his travels from 1839 until 1842. This time, Melville tells about his return voyage aboard the U.S. Frigate *United States*. The form of *White-Jacket* is like the form of *Typee*. The propaganda is not turned into a realistic fictional account as it was in *Redburn*, but is openly editorial and rhetorical as it was in *Typee*.

These early books are not only an account of his travels; they are a fairly accurate indication of the books that Melville had read or consulted for references. The list of books in Appendix A that Melville bought or borrowed has been compiled from volume I of Jay Leyda's *The Melville Log* (Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951). Although it does not include every book that Melville read during the period in which he was composing these books, it will serve as a basis for understanding Melville's reading preferences.

It becomes apparent that the authors that Melville liked,
particularly Sir Thomas Browne, Shakespeare, Rabelais, and Byron, influenced both his style and his ideas. When Melville was writing *Typee* or *Omoo*, he consulted travel books. When he wrote *Mardi*, he read Rabelais and epic poetry like *Frithiof's Saga* and *Fingal*. The earliest travel narratives that he wrote were told simply, yet interestingly. The quality that appealed to Melville's critics and his publishers in *Typee* and *Omoo* was his racy, intimate, humorous, informal, but highly entertaining style. John Murray, his English publisher, believed that he was a writer or a journalist. In a letter written October 21, 1845, Herman's brother and literary agent, Gansevoort, hastened to say:

"The Author will doubtless be flattered to hear that his production seems to so competent a judge as yourself that of "a practised writer" -the more so as he is a mere novice in the art, having had no experience; for it is within my personal knowledge that he has never before written either book or pamphlet, and to the best of my belief has not even contributed to a magazine or newspaper. In regard to the other point to which you allude I can only give you the assurance of my full and entire belief that the adventurer, and the writer of the adventure are one & the same person."

We know of at least two newspaper stories that Melville wrote and had published before this letter was written. They are the two *Fragments from a Writing Desk* which appeared in the *Lansingburgh, New York, Democratic Press and Lansingburgh Advertiser* in May, 1839. There is a remarkable difference in style and sentence structure between these and *Typee*.

In the two extant *Fragments from a Writing Desk* Melville
attempted to write romantic adventures. In the second Fragment he creates a great deal of suspense when the cloaked woman invites the Chesterfieldian gentleman to a mysterious rendezvous. The crashing climax comes when the gentleman discovers that the beautiful woman in the Arabian Nights boudoir is DEAF and DUMB. The mystery and adventure lead to a ghastly irony. In Typee, Melville blended the humor and mystery more skillfully.

The creative skills that Melville displayed in the Fragments were the ability to create suspense (no matter how incongruously it was resolved), a talent for writing description, and the use of the first person narrative. They showed, too, that as an adolescent Melville lacked the experience and observation needed for the foundation of a good story.

There is almost as great a difference between Typee and Moby-Dick. The changes that took place suggest that Melville studied the long, tortuous, involved sentence structure of Browne and the rhythmical cadences and blank verse of Shakespeare in order to improve his style.

The quality that makes each of these five books most readable and enjoyable is Melville's ability to re-create the atmosphere of the sea and ships. The detailed descriptions of the duties of the men and the explanation of such operations as furling sails, keeping watch, or preparing meals gives the books a basis of reality. But Melville is not always expository; he often varies his style. Sometimes he is rhapsodic and poetic like his favorite poet, Lord Byron. In his earliest known literary criticism, Melville deprecates the modern
tendency to write dry, factual accounts of the sea like Two
Years before the Mast. He says:

From time immemorial many fine things have been said and sung of the sea. The days have been, when sailors were considered veritable mermen; and the ocean itself as the peculiar theatre of the romantic and wonderful. But of late years there have been revealed so many plain, matter-of-fact details connected with nautical life, that, at the present day, the poetry of salt water is very much on the wane. The perusal of Dana's "Two Years before the Mast" for instance, somewhat impairs the relish with which we read Byron's spiritual "Address to the Ocean." And when the noble poet raves about laying his hands upon the ocean's mane (in other words manipulating the crest of the wave), the most vivid image suggested is, that of a valetudinarian bather at Rockaway, spluttering and choking in the surf, with his mouth full of brine.

Mr. J. Ross Browne's narrative tends still further to impair the charm with which poetry and fiction have invested the sea. . . .

Melville did his best to make his accounts of the sea both poetic and charming to the reader. His chapters which are purely expository, like the chapters on cetology in Moby-Dick, contrast vividly with the descriptions of the sea of the picture of life aloft in the mainmast in White-Jacket. Sometimes Melville leaves both exposition and poetry to write about the most humdrum tasks in a humorous way that links him to Smollett and the other picaresque novelists of the eighteenth century. His humor is natural, nevertheless; it is not borrowed. It is similar to the backwoods humor of American writers like Mark Twain and William Gilmore Simms.

Melville probably did not plan to be a writer when he went
to sea. He may have had literary ambitions, but the *Fragments from a Writing Desk* are the only known indications of it.

When he came back to the United States, he capitalized on his adventures by setting them down in a book. He found both an English and an American publisher for his work. This first book, *Typee*, is much simpler in structure and more indebted to experience than *Moby-Dick* or *Billy Budd*. It is a travel narrative told in the first person; they are novels with a theme, a purpose, and a plot. *Typee* describes several natives who become individualized as friends of the narrator, but none of whom is a character indispensable to the story. *Moby-Dick* and *Billy Budd* include some of the greatest characterizations that Melville ever created: Captain Ahab, Pip, Starbuck, Billy Budd, and John Claggart. In many of the chapters of *Typee* there are bitter denunciations of Western civilization which express the ideas of a gentleman sailor who thought for himself. In *Billy Budd* and *Moby-Dick* some of these same ideas assume cosmic proportions. They lend importance to trivial incidents, rather than being merely reflections on these incidents. *Typee* is told in a simple, forthright narrative which is broken only occasionally by dialogue or rhetoric. *Billy Budd* and *Moby-Dick* have not only dialogue and rhetoric but they have chapters in which the form of a scene is used to give variety to the novel. They are in every way more important books than *Typee* and they are technically much better.

The question arises, then, how did Melville learn to write
so well. The primary answer, I believe, is by writing the books that came before *Moby-Dick* and by studiously reading and examining the ideas and styles of many men. *Typee*, *Omoo*, *Mardi*, *Redburn*, *White-Jacket*, and *Moby-Dick* show their author's continuous growth and development. The books do not show an unbroken, simple progression. Instead, they show early attempts at, and gropings after, the right combination of experience, reading, and fiction. *Mardi* is as ambitious as *Moby-Dick* but it was less successful. *Redburn* is more creative than *Omoo*, but it was a successful attempt to write popular fiction—a step forward that Melville may not have cared to take. *White-Jacket* is not progress but merely another example of travel narrative like the earlier *Typee* and *Omoo*. These attempts and experiments culminated in *Moby-Dick*. Melville never wrote a better novel.

Succeeding chapters will discuss this growth and development in more detail. Nevertheless, several generalizations can be made which will outline Melville's method of composition in these books. To begin with, Melville always had a solid basis of firsthand experience about which to write. His successful books were advertised as fact and attempted to achieve the realism of a journal. When he lacked the firsthand experience to discuss or dramatize a place or situation, Melville had no compunctions about reverting to secondary source material. This secondary material was usually earlier travel books. Sometimes he borrowed entire incidents as in *White-Jacket*’s fall from the mast in the concluding chapters of that book. Other times he borrowed only factual material and reworked it to
suit his needs as in Redburn's history of the Liverpool docks. Melville had a vivid imagination which could successfully elaborate on facts but which was a poor creator of incidents with which to fictionalize a theme.

Much biographical work has been done on the change experienced by the naive, well-behaved boy when exposed to facets of civilized and uncivilized life that he barely suspected existed. These changes caused young Herman to want to expose the falseness and hypocrisy that he discovered. In every book he wrote, Melville was propagandizing. He ridiculed and blasted established Christianity and its missionaries, but he defended the essential goodness of man—even the heathen cannibal. He castigated the Articles of War which governed the United States Navy because he believed in the rights of the individual in a democracy. He outspokenly opposed many social conditions that his readers took for granted.

In each book Melville has an omniscient, vaguely sketched narrator who usually bears a strange pseudonym: Typee, Taji, White-Jacket. Only Tom and Redburn have ordinary names and only Redburn is specifically given a fictitious character. He is the only one, also, who has a family. This observer and sometimes hero who tells the story always voices Melville's opinions. All of the story is told as if the narrator were present, but often he could not have seen or known about what he describes. Each of these narrators tends to be an observer rather than a participant in the action of the story. Each is a sailor and each is somewhat isolated from the other characters
in his story. It is this central narrator whom the critics have identified as Melville and about whom so many strange things have been written.

Melville's characterization is uneven because he is often working in the picaresque tradition and without a plot. Some of his people like Dr. Long Ghost, Jackson, and Jack Chase are well done but most of them barely achieve any individuality. The sources of these characters are difficult to determine.
It is more than probable that Dr. Long Ghost in *Omoo* was modeled after an acquaintance of Melville's. Cadwallader Cuticle, on the other hand, was modeled after Smollett's surgeon Mackshane in *Roderick Random*.

Very few of Melville's characters are women. Fayaway, Yillah, and Annatoo are the only ones of any importance in the early books. Yillah is only a romantic idealization of womanhood. She has no flesh and blood about her. Annatoo is very easily understood; she is a comic representation of a shrew. She is almost indistinguishable from an English or an American shrew. Although she may have uncivilized habits, such as picking up anything she finds lying loose, the reader does not easily think of her as a native. Instead he thinks of her as very like the Merry Wives of Windsor.

Fayaway is something altogether different. She is so perfect, and yet so lifelike, that many readers are certain that she must have been an island sweetheart of Melville's. But even Fayaway is not a person. She is seen only through Tom's eyes; she has no existence when she leaves his side.

In each of these books Melville organized his work by
chapters but the chapters appear to be only slightly unified. They are linked by theme and fit into a loose, chronological framework. This framework permitted him to alternate and combine story, rhetoric, incident, and exempla. Three of Melville's early works (before 1852) indicate by their structure either that Melville was undecided how the plot or incidents would work out when he wrote the early chapters, or that Melville changed his plan while the books were being written. These three books are, naturally enough, the three least autobiographical books: Mardi, Redburn, and Moby-Dick.

Charles Anderson has called Mardi "a good whaling story gone wrong." The reader who completes the entire book recognizes that the early chapters about the narrator's escape from a whaler with his friend, Jarl, are scarcely related to the epic journey in search of Yillah. In the first part, the people and setting are real and the chapters seem to pave the way for an active, adventurous plot. The days of floating in the little Chamois are almost like the scenes of life in an open boat in the much later story by Stephen Crane. The adventurous theme continues into the scenes aboard the mysterious Parki. Then, suddenly, the adventurers land on an island of unreality. Here Melville begins an allegory in which he attempts to cover many lands and many ideas. Jarl and the whaler are dropped from the book. Even the character of the narrator changes: he was first an anonymous sailor, then he becomes a demi-god of the islands called Taji.

The internal evidence for saying that Redburn and Moby-
Dick changed as Melville wrote them is less obvious. In *Redburn* Melville introduces the reader to a young man named Harry Bolton. Harry and Redburn take part in a series of wild escapades which Melville probably never experienced. Their comradeship continues as Harry is persuaded to ship before the mast with Redburn and make his way to the United States. In the outward voyage, Melville pictured the reactions of Redburn to the sea. Would it not be natural, then, to present on the homeward voyage the reactions of a boy quite unlike Redburn placed in the same situation? Melville must have had this contrast in mind when he wrote chapter L of *Redburn*.

But the theme is not elaborated. Instead, it is quickly concluded. The succeeding chapters ignore Harry, until, in chapter LVI, he is resurrected for a chat with Redburn. The creation of Harry Bolton and particularly the concluding chapters in *Redburn* seem to indicate that the original "greenhand" theme was to have been the theme of the last third of the book. The plan was changed, however, to provide for the timely social-protest theme of immigration and epidemics of ship fever. Melville could just as well have built his story around a series of fictionalized incidents—a wreck, a storm at sea, a boarding party of pirates, or some other equally harrowing and exciting adventures. This is what Marryat, Cooper, Scott, and many of Melville's contemporaries did. Characteristically, Melville preferred to use supplementary factual material which would give him an opportunity to put a message in his book.

In *Moby-Dick* the fragment about the sailor Bulkington is one indication that the story changed. Bulkington is intro-
duced in chapter III with the admonition to the reader to re-
member him. He occurs once again in chapter XXIII when Mel-
ville says:

Some chapters back, one Bulkington was 
spoken of, a tall, new-landed mariner, 
encountered in New Bedford at the inn. 

When on that shivering winter's night, 
the Pequod thrust her vindictive bows 
into the coldly malicious waves, who 
should I see standing at her helm but 
Bulkington! . . . Wonderfullest things 
are ever the unmentionable; deep memo-
ries yield no epitaphs; this six-inch 
chapter is the stoneless grave of Bul-
kington.10

There are other changes in the story which suggest that Mel-
ville's plan or ideas changed as he was writing the book. They 
will be explained in the chapter on Moby-Dick. Perhaps Moby-
Dick, like Mardi, began as the story of life aboard a whaler 
with the half-savage Queequeg as the humorous central charac-
ter. Perhaps, too, Melville had in mind some picaresque adven-
tures in the South Seas for his narrator, Ishmael, and his 
hero, Queequeg. Perhaps, with the introduction of Ahab and the 
character of Moby-Dick, the original intent changed. It may 
have been the influence of Nathaniel Hawthorne which helped 
Melville to see the possible levels of meaning in the story 
of a man's revenge on a whale. Sedgewick11 says that the idea 
of painting a titanic struggle between two great forces against 
the backdrop of the motionless, vast, and unhuman sea was first 
suggested in Mardi. No matter what Melville's original intent 
or how much Hawthorne helped him to utilize his material, the 
ideas that permeate Moby-Dick: the whiteness of the whale, the 
influence of Ahab over his crew, and the titanic struggle be-
tween good and evil, occur in earlier books by Melville.
The four partially autobiographical books cover almost every segment of Melville's voyages. Redburn tells of his first voyage. Typee and Omoo carry him as far as the Sandwich Islands. Then there is a long jump from the Sandwich Islands to Callao, Peru, where White-Jacket begins. In reality, White-Jacket merely condenses the most exciting events of a fourteen months' cruise in the Pacific into the shorter trip from Callao, home. In these books Melville describes his experiences aboard every type of ship: merchantman, whaler, and man-o'-war. By 1850 Melville had written about all of his experiences except for a few months spent in Honolulu as a clerk. He began collecting material for an entirely different kind of book about the Revolutionary War, Israel Potter. Before he began writing it, Melville started a sixth, and last book about the sea.

He combined the materials that he had already used into Moby-Dick, which is remarkably better than any of its predecessors. In the following chapters, I hope to show that a great deal of this superiority is the result of Melville's brilliantly blending the techniques, themes, characters, settings, information, and stylistic devices that he had used in his earlier books. Moby-Dick was the capstone of Melville's writing; it was a fortunate, but logical outgrowth of that writing.
NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION


5. Leyda, \textit{op. cit.}, p. xxxiii.


CHAPTER I

TYPEE

The first book-length narrative that Melville had published was a far cry from his two adolescent stories. Between 1839, when his *Fragments from a Writing Desk* appeared, and 1846, when *Typee* was published, Melville had been halfway around the world; he had matured in his thinking and in his reading. More important, he had experienced adventures which set him apart from his family and friends, and gave him something to write about. For the literary public of 1846, Melville became "the man who lived among cannibals."

When one reads something about Melville's life and then reads *Typee* he is impressed with the evidently autobiographical verity of the book. By and large this first impression is correct. *Typee* is a travel narrative of Melville's voyage to the Marquesas Islands and his escape on a whaler from the natives there. It seems to be the plain account of a gentleman sailor's experiences in a far country. As such, it was only one of many popular travel books published about the same time.

What is less apparent on the first reading is that *Typee* shows a rather skillful blending of autobiography and reading into a highly entertaining fictionalized travelogue. Charles Anderson in his book *Melville in the South Seas* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939) has traced Melville's path through the Pacific. Anderson is particularly interested in Melville's sources for the experiences and ideas in *Moby-Dick*; nevertheless, he has shown, too, many of the contributory
sources for *Typee*, *Omoo*, and *White-Jacket*.

In discussing *Typee* as a piece of creative fiction and in talking about Melville's travels in the Pacific, we should remember several seemingly disconnected facts. First, the South Seas was not an unknown place to Melville when he embarked from New Bedford. His uncle, John De Wolf II, had been to the Marquesas Islands and his cousin Thomas Melville, a midshipman on the U.S. *Vincennes*, had traveled the route to Nukuheva, *Typee*, Tahiti, and Honolulu before Melville left home.

Second, as far as we know, Melville kept no log, journal, or other record during his travels in the Pacific. Therefore, three years later when he wrote *Typee* he had to depend either on his memory of incidents or on the narratives of other travelers who had visited the islands before him. *Typee*, itself, gives the names of some of these voyages: Porter's *Journal of the Cruise of the U. S. frigate "Essex" in the Pacific*, Stewart's *A Visit to the South Seas* (made aboard the *Vincennes*), and Ellis's *Polynesian Researches*. Many other books which Melville consulted or read, he did not mention. Melville was widely read in travel books of both real and imaginary voyages and he used the information he gathered in them a great deal, but with certain limitations. He gained from them both factual matter (scientific discussions and history) and adventurous or comic incidents to supply action for his story. But he did not borrow other people's skepticism or credulity. His personal experiences enabled him to select the best and most
accurate accounts. He was thoroughly familiar with ships and the islands, with sea lore and native customs. Anderson says that his use of cannibalism to create suspense in his book and his descriptions of the natives' customs indicate an extended knowledge of the subject and the people, rather than the romantic influence of other writers.  

In addition to knowing whereof he wrote, Melville was an honest, thoughtful writer who chose his material to educate, rather than to astound his readers. Each of his early books is full of informative chapters. Best known, probably, are the chapters on cetology in *Moby-Dick*. When he wrote his two travel narratives, Melville was following a tradition which encouraged the use of such details. But he knew the value of thrilling scenes, too, nor was he above borrowing exciting incidents to enhance the interest of his story.  

Finally, his great appeal was in the colloquial, sailor-like language which he used in *Typee* and *Omoo*. Authentic accounts of earlier voyages had been written, but by minor ship's officers, clergymen, scientists, and explorers. They were fascinating but often uninspired accounts of day-to-day incidents of the voyage. They were often dry and dull when the subject itself was not interesting. Melville's *Typee* was something new. It was accurate, authentic, and fully as informative and learned as the other travel books, but it also gave a disarmingly friendly picture of life as the sailor sees it. The ship's terms which Melville employed were vivid and entertaining because they were new and often slangy. Most of all,
Melville's account reflected the enthusiastic love of the new and the different that is characteristic of a young sailor. 

_**Typee**_ is a combination of two eighteenth-century literary forms that were still very popular in Melville's day. One is the travel narrative; the other is the picaresque tale. _**Typee**_ is primarily a travel narrative. It reflects a traveler's interest in quaint native customs and local history. In asides, the author describes the geography, the flora and the fauna. The author, like any good traveler, also shows his familiarity with other travelers' reports of the same subject. The author of the travelogue adopts a Rousseau-like romantic attitude toward the natives he visits. To him, they are good, kind, happy, although primitive people who have closer to achieving an earthly paradise than the Western missionaries and French colonial administrators who came to bestow the blessings of civilization and Christianity on them. In the first American edition of _**Typee**_ (Wiley & Putnam, 1846) this anti-missionary, anti-French attitude created quite a storm. So, in the second American edition (Harper and Brothers, 1847) Melville omitted several of the most virulent chapters. 

The romantic delight of the author in the beauty of the Typee valley and the friendliness of the natives is difficult to reconcile with the fictional story Melville added to give unity to his adventures. This story is very simple: Tom, the hero and narrator of the book, is disgusted with life aboard a whaler, so, at the first opportunity, he and a friend jump ship. They plan to stay in the interior of the main island with the friendly Happar natives until their ship leaves Nuku-
heva. Then they will return to the island capital. Instead, they wander into the valley of the Typees, rumored to be cannibals. Gradually the fear of being eaten overcomes their pleasure in their surroundings. Toby, the friend, leaves to find help, but the injured Tom remains behind. Finally, a vagabond native arrives and agrees to help him escape. The attempt fails, but the narrator is soon rescued by a whaler desperately in need of a crew. Like the heroes of the picaresque novels, Tom is understood by the reader to be a rogue. He is a sailor on a whaler; he jumps ship and becomes an honored but loafing guest of the natives. He makes every effort to avoid the French and English authorities and shuns the semi-civilized harbor towns. Like Gil Blas or Don Quixote, Tom has his faithful follower—a fellow sailor named Toby who plays a major role in the story.

Nevertheless, Melville was also writing an admittedly autobiographical narrative. He advertised Typee as a true account of his adventures. Therefore, as a member of a respectable New York family, he had to play down the roguishness of his hero. This conflict occurs again in Omoo where Melville used the romantic and non-connotative Tahitian title to disguise the English meaning of beachcomber.

The groundwork for the adventurers' escape from the ship is laid in the opening chapter. Despite the rhapsodic pictures of life at sea expressed in his later books, Melville's reaction to six months aboard the Dolly is one of boredom and restlessness. He partially justifies his taking French leave
by appealing to the landsman's love of green grass and the fragrance of the loamy earth. They are, as he says, a landsick ship.

The fictional story is taken up only periodically in the book. In chapters I to III the justification for escape occupies about the first third of each chapter. In chapters IV through VI, Toby and Tom decide to escape from the ship. In chapters VII through X they cross the island and arrive at Typee valley. In chapters XI through XIV their anxiety increases and Toby escapes. Then, until chapters XIX to XXI, Tom is a contented guest of the natives. His visit is particularly pleasant because of the beautiful Fayaway. In chapter XXV his uneasiness begins to increase. In chapters XXVIII and XXIX he is almost forced to submit to the native custom and allow himself to be tattooed. In chapters XXXII through XXXIV Tom is rescued.

In the other chapters, Melville is writing a travelogue. Chapters I through XIV combine the story with a description of the islands. In them Melville discusses the geography and history of the islands, the quaint customs of the natives, and the island scenery. He tells, in some detail, about the French military occupation and he gives some amusing anecdotes about the natives. Admiral Du Petit Thouars had actually taken over Nukuheva just before Melville and Toby jumped ship. The ships of the French navy were still in the harbor. But Melville did not take any particular notice of the occupation, nor did he write in Typee as if he had. His facts and his anecdotes he
got from personal observation of the French occupation led by Admiral Du Petit Thouars, although the accuracy of his observations is borne out by the French account written by Max Radi-guet.⁵

In chapters XII through XIV, Tom and Toby make friends with a native family and move in with them. In these chapters the fictional story and the native setting are well integrated. The natives are interesting in themselves and yet are a part of the story. Melville continues to fill in important details of native life but only as they are necessary to the story. For example, the Typees have a brief skirmish with the Ilappars in which Toby is wounded. This provides an incident in the fictional story, it helps to complicate the wanderers' chances of escaping, and it gives the author an opportunity to describe the natives fighting and healing wounds.

Beginning with chapter XV, the story tapers off and Melville becomes more editorial and informative. He writes chapters on the breadfruit tree and the friendly native customs. Chapter XVII is a Rousseau-esque discussion of the inherent good of the natives contrasted with the wickedness of civilization. Then comes the interlude of the stranger who tries to help Tom escape. While Tom's uneasiness is calmed by Fayaway, Melville fills chapter after chapter with travelogue. He explains in detail how to make tappa, what beauty aids the island girls use, and what few animals they keep as pets. He explains how they fish, the kind of musical instruments they have, the simplicity yet effectiveness of their government, and their ideas on marriage. In general, he says, they are healthy,
beautiful, kind, and happy. He contrasts them with the natives of the Sandwich Islands who have been ruled by Westerners for several years. This editorial interpolation of observations Melville made after he left the Marquesas is in keeping in a travel narrative, but not in a fictional narrative.

The religious customs of the natives are the ones which cause Tom the most trouble. For it is as a part of their religion that the Typees are cannibals. All during the book Melville purposely leaves the reader guessing. Are these friendly natives really cannibals or have their enemies, the Happars, spread the rumor among the foreigners to win their aid in case of a native war? Tom does not know and neither do we. The taboos of the Typee religion help perpetuate the mystery. There is a forbidden ceremonial feasting ground littered with bones where such sacrifices could take place. On the other hand, the meat at the dinner to which Tom is invited tastes a great deal like roast pig.

Melville never does commit himself on the question of cannibalism. Although Tom and Toby are treated with every courtesy, they are not allowed to leave. And, although Melville outspokenly prefers uncivilized native virtue to the lot of the civilized Hawaiians, Tom still expects, any day, to be eaten.

Just when escape seems most hopeless to him, Tom agrees to allow himself to be tattooed. So far, Tom had maintained a distinction between himself and the natives. This distinction is an interesting variant of the romantic's attitude
toward natives. Melville had repeatedly said that the natives needed no civilization or Christianity to make them good or happy. But Melville did not extend this attitude to include the idea that native life and native customs would make Tom happier or better. Melville was tolerant of native customs for natives but he did not allow Tom to "go native" in rebellion against Western culture. This conflict was symbolized by the process of tattooing. Many sailors and beachcombers allowed themselves to be tattooed in the native fashion but Tom was against it. He made his resistance to being tattooed his resistance to being overwhelmed by the lush beauty and lazy life of the Marquesas Islands. In chapter XXX when Tom agrees to being tattooed he is admitting that escape has become almost impossible.

Unexpectedly, the stranger returns just as Tom's apprehensions of being eaten are strongest, and they escape from the Typee natives.

Even this early in Melville's writing career, he knew how unobtrusively to combine experience and fact with a romantic view of his own adventures. The techniques of fiction that emerge are the simple ones of building suspense to a climax (the problem of cannibalism) and the escape-pursuit-escape technique typical of adventure tales. I have discussed the book as if it were composed of two parts—a fictional, picaresque story and a travel narrative of the Marquesas Islands. Something should also be said about what parts of the book are autobiographical and what parts are derived from other sources.
The picaresque story is essentially true. Melville and a friend, Richard Tobias Greene, did jump ship at Nukuheva and live with the natives for four weeks—not four months. Toby did go for help and Melville did get a berth on a Sidney whaler without knowing what happened to Toby. But the cannibalism theme and the dramatic rescue in the last chapters were not, as far as we know, based on Melville's experiences. The sources for the descriptions of the island setting and the history of the missionary and colonial occupation were twofold: experience and the numerous source books that Melville consulted.

The characterizations in _Typee_ are generally adequate but not exceptional. Fayaway is done the best. Whether she ever lived is pure conjecture. Perhaps she was real, perhaps not; no one knows for certain. In either case, Melville made her come alive through the picture he gives of her in _Typee_. He describes his captivating friend smoking her little pipe, accompanying him and Kory-Kory for a sail, or swimming or dancing with the other young girls on the island. Perhaps the most famous image of her is given when

> One day, after we had been paddling about for some time, I disembarked Kory-Kory, and paddled the canoe to the windward side of the lake. As I turned the canoe, Fayaway, who was with me, seemed all at once to be struck with some happy idea. With a wild exclamation of delight, she disengaged from her person the ample robe of tappa which was knotted over her shoulder (for the purpose of shielding her from the sun), and spreading it out like a sail, stood erect with upraised arms in the head of the canoe. We American sailors pride ourselves upon our straight clean spars, but a prettier little mast than Fayaway made was never shipped aboard of any craft.
Fayaway is always seen, as here, through Tom's eyes. All her perfections and graces are as they appeared to Tom. She has no effect on the story except to take part in some pleasant scenes, and yet she is the best-remembered of all the women in the early novels.

Toby, the other character of importance, was modeled on a real person. His chief quality is faithfulness. He takes an active part in the adventure as long as he stays with Tom but he has no great influence on the outcome of the picaresque story. He, also, is seen only through Tom's eyes. He seldom has any opinions to express or ideas to suggest although he often displays a more adventurous spirit than Tom displays. He is the one who solves the problem of descending into the valley and he is the one who helps fight the Happars and goes for help. Toby is not a comic foil for an adventurous Tom as Sancho Panza was for Don Quixote. He is simply a rather poorly portrayed fellow adventurer. Curiously enough, it was Richard Tobias Greene's letter to the editor of the Buffalo, New York, Commercial Advertiser narrating his escape from Typee valley which finally convinced the reading public that Typee was true. The newspaper story gave Melville the opportunity to write a sequel to Typee which was incorporated into the later editions of the book.

Despite all its good qualities and the popularity of travel books in Melville's day, the quality which made Typee so immediately popular and which kept it so readable was the pleasingly informal and humorous style of the author. The incidents in
Polynesian history that Melville chose to relate are usually funny rather than tragic or heroic. Witness the tale of Mowanna's wife, the Queen of Nukuheva, who whipped off her borrowed finery to compare tattoos with a sailor in the French navy.

Similarly, the general tone of the narrative is comic, rather than exotic or adventurous. If he had cared to follow the tradition of the "extraordinary voyage" as he did in Mardi, Melville could have filled the pages with descriptions of lushly beautiful, tropical islands and strange people. Instead, his descriptions tend to understate the beauty of Polynesia; his accounts of vegetation, animals, and natives are exact, not exaggerated. Unlike many travelers, Melville was not overwhelmed by the islands that he visited. He was curious and observant but careful to be correct.

Because Typee is partly fiction, as well as travel narrative, Melville could have written a stirring adventure in heroic tone. He did not. His hero's adventures are remarkable enough but they are told in an unheroic manner. The most stirring scenes, such as the escape from the cannibals and the descent into the Typee valley, are excitingly told. These few scenes are more interesting because they provide the highlights in an otherwise lightly humorous tale.

Leon Howard, in his article, "Melville's Struggle with the Angel," (Modern Language Quarterly, vol I, p 195) credits Melville with using two, perhaps three literary devices in the books before Moby-Dick. The first was suspense as it might be achieved by raising melodramatic questions that had to be
answered by the book. The problem of cannibalism in *Typee* would be such a device. But in *Typee*, Melville never resolved the problem that he raised because satisfying the reader's curiosity would have destroyed part of his interest in the Typees. Howard called Melville's second device allusiveness, or the use of incident and phraseology for the purpose of giving intellectual significance to the story and achieving imaginative coherence. The third device Howard calls the intensification of action by representing the ship as a microcosm. This third device did not appear at all in *Typee*. One can find its beginning in *White-Jacket* and *Mardi*, however.

The allusiveness does not appear in *Typee*, either. By the time he wrote *Moby-Dick*, Melville had come to see the significance that a story might be given through the use of symbols. His tale of Ahab pursuing a white whale became much more than just that. He endowed the pursuit and struggle with philosophical implications which were far more important than the story alone could ever be. Melville made no attempt to deal with such problems when he was writing *Typee*, although he did have some ideas about civilized and non-civilized people as well as some personal experiences to serve as a vehicle for these ideas. Without something to allude to, Melville attempted no allusion. Nor did he achieve imaginative coherence in *Typee*. He attempted to unify the story by the simple device of having all the action and incidents lead to suspense about cannibalism. The suspense was ended, if not resolved, by Tom's escape from the natives.

*Typee*, like Melville's other early narratives, is inferior
to Moby-Dick in concept and execution. Nevertheless, as he was writing Typee, Melville encountered and solved many problems of literary craftsmanship. Typee showed him that a slight thread of suspenseful action was not sufficient for a long narrative; that he wrote better when he knew the situation, the background, and the people than when he imagined them; that the first person narrative was easy for him to write and best suited to the tales that he had to tell; and that the humorous tone of Typee was appreciated by his discriminating readers and could be used effectively to counterbalance the exotic adventures of his heroes.

Melville was still searching for a narrative form which was most appropriate to his style and abilities. Before he would find the distinctive combination that is Moby-Dick, Melville would try another picaresque tale and the extraordinary voyage. He would learn, also, to create characters and to unify his narrative by the theme of a quest.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

2. Ibid., p. 15.
5. Ibid., pp. 77 ff.
6. See also the discussion of tattooed renegade Lem Hardy in chapter VII of Omoo.
8. Ibid., pp. 126 ff.
CHAPTER II

OMOO

The immediate and popular reception given Typee by the reading public of the United States and Great Britain encouraged Melville to continue the story of his travels in a second book, Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas. In the author's preface, Melville says that Omoo opens, necessarily, on board the whaler Julia where Typee ended, but that Omoo has no further connection with that work. He is quite right. No characters except the narrator are carried over into the second book and this person, Tom, is given the new name, Typee. The setting is different and so is the narrative form.

Omoo is a better-written and more delightful book than Typee and it was received eagerly in 1847 by those who had enjoyed Typee. Perhaps some people were surprised at the differences between the two books. Typee is primarily a travel narrative. In writing it, Melville followed the form of the eighteenth-century travel book rather closely. There is the partially fictional account of Tom's personal adventures and the story of Toby but, otherwise, the book is an explanation and picture of life in the Typee valley.

Omoo is not a travel narrative; it is a narrative of adventures. The supplementary, explanatory material which enriched Typee and made it popular with stay-at-homes in America and England is cut to a minimum. At the same time the picaresque elements characterizing Tom's adventures are developed into a
first-class picaresque novel. Except for the sometimes false note of suspense in *Typee*, the generous reader is willing to accept *Typee* as a real-life adventure. The reader's generosity is stretched a little when it comes to *Omoo*. The circumstances leading to the mutiny of the *Julia*'s crew, their confinement in a native jail, Dr. Long Ghost's and the narrator's sojourn with the potato farmers, and the visit to Queen Pomaree's court all seem to be more fiction than fact. Melville and his publishers seem not to have attempted to claim any authenticity for these adventures as they had for *Typee*. Perhaps the public's assurance that *Typee* was fiction precluded any attempt to sell *Omoo* as true-life adventure.

Remarkably enough, it was. Several people, both in Melville's day and ours, have examined the available records and attempted to follow Melville's footsteps from Nukuheva to Honolulu. One of these men was Edward Lucett, author of *Rovings in the Pacific* (1851), who mentions having read Dr. Johnstone's medical diary and seen Herman Melville's name and treatment recorded there.¹ Lucett also speaks of hearing stories about the potato farmers and other island characters.² The anecdotes that Lucett relates substantiate most of the characteristics that Melville assigned to his characters and corroborate his picture of Polynesian life. The statements of the consul, Wilson, and of Captain Venton and Mr. German bear out almost exactly Melville's retelling of the mutiny and the mutineers' incarceration.³ Charles Anderson, on the basis of his research, says that *Omoo* is more nearly true than the other
books.

In his first narrative, Melville pictured several people but developed only a few characters. Toby was drawn from real life but, although he is active in the story and plausibly done, Toby never quite emerges as a person. The natives of the islands, even Fayaway and Kory-Kory, are sketches of people. They seldom achieve more than a single dimension because the narrator only tells the reader how they seemed to him. The characterizations cannot become three dimensional because the people never participate in the story of Typee. In general, the natives whom Tom met emerge as a type or a social group but not as people.

Melville peopled Omoo with a world of characters. As a group they are reminiscent of the sailors, traders, colonists, and missionaries encountered in Conrad's, Stevenson's or Maugham's stories of the Pacific islands. Each of the people seems to have had a real prototype whose chief qualities, as well as whose actions, Melville captured in Omoo. Perhaps because they were real, these people are enjoyed and remembered in a way that Typee's natives could not be. After all, a language and custom barrier prevented Melville from knowing and appreciating the variations in wit, temperament, and character that must have individualized the natives. No such barriers kept him from differentiating and enjoying Zeke, Shorty, Wilson, Dr. Long Ghost, and Jermin. The qualities which in real life made them "beachcombers and Sidney coves," naturally made them interesting in a picaresque story.

But recognizing and enjoying the qualities which would
make them interesting characters is only a part of Melville's skill. Melville was able to select or invent the characteristics appropriate to each man. He was also able to choose and arrange the incidents which were both interesting in themselves and natural to these personality traits. Not only did Melville understand Long Ghost's freakish sense of humor, the consul's petty exercise of power, or Zeke's and Shorty's eccentricities, he could also portray these qualities so well that the reader sees and understands them, too.

The method by which these and other qualities are brought out shows how well Melville was beginning to understand this craft of writing. These characteristics are first told about when Melville introduces his people, just as in many novels of the period. The reader is prepared in a general way to like or dislike, but always to understand the people. Then Melville allows them to act for themselves thus proving how right he was about them. Their actions are consistent because they are from real life.

Dr. Long Ghost is a likeable, if extreme, rogue. In Omoo, it is he and Melville who partake in the mutiny and are active, if sometimes secret, ringleaders of it. Long Ghost is introduced in chapter II as a former ship's doctor on the Julia who quarreled with the captain and resigned his post to become a passenger. Like Harry Bolton and Jack Chase, his early history "was enveloped in the profoundest obscurity; though he threw us hints of a patrimonial estate, a nabob uncle, and an unfortunate affair which sent him a roving." The man's real name, or at least one of his aliases, was John B. Troy.
haps something in his physical appearance caused Melville to exaggerate him into a "tower of bones," with a colorless complexion, fair hair, and unscrupulous grey eyes "twinkling occasionally with the very devil of mischief." Like Jack Chase, he was well read and had a gentleman's easy assurance. But Dr. Long Ghost was an eighteenth-century gentleman. "He quoted Virgil, and talked of Hobbes ... besides repeating poetry by the canto, especially Hudibras." Jack Chase was a Byronic romantic. Both men could sing, however: the Long Doctor "in a voice so round and racy, the real juice of sound."

His outstanding quality was his devilish sense of humor and the wit and intelligence with which he enhanced it. The doctor was not simply a practical joker; he enjoyed starting trouble for the pleasure the trouble would bring. In the earliest chapters, Melville recounts instances of the pranks Long Ghost played on the crew and Jermin. When the opportunity for mutiny came along, it was natural for Long Ghost to take a leading part. It was natural, too, for him to use his medical knowledge to confuse and befuddle Dr. Johnstone at Tahiti. Perfectly content to rove about the islands bumming, beachcombing, or sponging off his native sweethearts, Long Ghost preferred to remain at Eimeo rather than embark on a whaler and work his passage elsewhere. Thus he and Melville parted. Several years later, after the publication of _Omoo_, Melville had a letter from John Troy postmarked California.

Zeke and Shorty, on the face of things, are two equally
unbelievable people. Zeke is a taciturn, spare Yankee with "a twang like a cracked viol" \(^1\) made for manual labor; yet frank, good-hearted, shrewd, and resolute. Shorty is a little Cockney who "clipped the aspirate from every word beginning with one." \(^1\) They are both convinced that with industry and time they will make a fortune by growing potatoes to sell to the ships that docked at the Marquesas for supplies. Zeke and Shorty hired Melville and Long Ghost to work the plantation for them. But neither Melville nor his mischievous friend were designed to be farmers so they soon left the hospitable farmers to rove around the island living with, and off, the natives. Long Ghost planned that they should attach themselves to the court of Queen Pomaree's husband. By way of explaining this plan, Melville notes the numerous white or Negro attendants at the courts of King Tammahammahaha and the king of the Tonga Islands. Moreover, Queen Pomaree was seriously considering a war against the French who had seized her country. How appropriate for Melville and Long Ghost to become officers in her army, thought Long Ghost.

These three men are typical of the rogues and outcasts that the heroes of eighteenth-century picaresque tales encounter. They are caricatures rather than characters because their qualities are so distorted. Long Ghost particularly is like something out of one of Smollett's or even Dickens's novels. But these are the best character creations that Melville achieved in his early books.

The consul, Wilson, the ship's officers, and Dr. Johnstone
are equally well done in their way. They are less memorable because they are more ordinary, less exaggerated, and therefore less picturesque.

The experience Melville gained in portraying these real people as pseudo-fictional characters served him when he came to write his other books. He must have also learned something about creating character from the novels that he read. Characterization was not Melville's strong point. In fact, many of his books contain very few memorable people. Fayaway, Jackson, Jack Chase, Redburn, and Babbalanja comprise the only ones in the first books except for the people in Omoo. Here Melville recreated an entire world of different types. When he came to write his later books, he drew on his skill, if not the qualities of the people themselves, for help. Could there have been a Starbuck, a Flask, or a Stubb if there had been no Jermin or Venton?

Melville was working with an already completed picaresque tale. He chose to tell it in a style and tone that would attract, rather than repel, readers. At the same time, he made the tone one that readers would expect to find in such a story. Melville treated his adventure lightly. Even more than in Typee humor, not adventurous action, pervades almost every scene. The two most serious subjects—the mutiny and the missionaries—are sometimes treated seriously but not often. Even when Melville is angriest and is satirizing the hypocrisy of the missionaries and the colonial officers, he is doing it with tongue in cheek. This is the great difference between the tone of Omoo
and the tone of the other books. In the others, Melville often loses his story and his sense of humor when he begins to reform society. In *Omoo*, he seldom writes many sentences without inserting something that is genuinely funny.

During the mutiny, Dr. Long Ghost and Melville take a back seat. They are not the promulgators of the mutiny--the doctor because he considers himself a passenger and Melville because he so recently joined the crew. But once they see the mischief the mutineers have created, they wholeheartedly take part in it. This is especially true of Dr. Long Ghost who has nothing to gain or lose by mutinying. The same lack of seriousness colors the description of Wilson's and Jermin's efforts to pacify the crew. Melville, in the character of Typee, seems to look on and enjoy the fun. The consequences of the mutineers' actions never are made important. There is the distant possibility of trial for mutiny by some English ship but the actual punishment is incarceration in a native jail as lazy and undisciplined as the islanders. Eventually, the prisoners are released because it becomes too much trouble to keep them locked up.

The mutineers always seem to have the upper hand. They are like a school of small boys who have created a problem for the pompous, incompetent authorities to solve while the boys relax and enjoy the mischief.

Melville becomes more serious when characterizing any of the colonial officials. Or more accurately, his humor ceases to be pleasant and light and becomes bitter and satiric. The island
physician, Dr. Johnstone, is mocked by Long Ghost and the mutineers. The old gentleman called at the jail to treat any of the men who were ill (with every expectation of being well paid by the whaling firm). Long Ghost supplied each of them with a list of fictitious complaints that the doctor could not diagnose, much less treat. The prescription that Melville recalls the doctor gave him was the one listed in the real doctor's prescription account book.\textsuperscript{13}

There appears to have been a social void between the sailors and the colonial and missionary residents of the islands. This void became even greater after the mutiny because the sailors from the Julia were considered criminals as well. By casting their lot with the mutineers, Melville and Dr. Long Ghost were excluded from society that they might otherwise have enjoyed. Melville might have turned part of his resentment at being considered a worthless mutineer and beachcomber on the colonists. Several times Melville remarks on the misfortunes that kept him from associating with anyone but sailors and natives.\textsuperscript{14} At least once his bitterness becomes sadness when he describes the beautiful Mrs. Bell, the wife of an island sugar planter.\textsuperscript{15} Melville was so smitten with her cheerful good looks that he and the doctor called on the Bells just to see more of her. Their reception was polite; Mr. Bell offered them sherry and conversation but Mrs. Bell never once appeared. This was the only Western family on the island that ever entertained them.

Another person with whom Melville and the Long Ghost
became friends was the Irish priest at the French mission. Melville did not like missionaries as a group because he considered them hypocrites who ruined, rather than helped, the natives. In *Typee* he described the effect of the missions on the Sandwich Islanders and recounted incidents about various missionaries but he did not introduce any of them as characters because there were no missionaries in the Typee valley. In *Omoo* he again takes up the problem of the child of nature spoiled by civilization. Many of the chapters are devoted to describing and discussing the evils he observed on the island of Tahiti. He was quite frank in discussing the moral decadence that accompanied the white man's settling on the islands. Even the missionary, Father Murphy, had his young native girls to care for his house.

Yet, of all the religious men, the priest fares best in Melville's story. Perhaps it was because of his jovial disposition and his inviting the mutineers to his house for wine and conversation. Perhaps, too, it was because he had little influence over the way the natives lived. The Catholic church was small and relatively plain. On Sundays, almost none of the natives came to mass. Except for the native girls

...nothing could induce them to worship there. Such queer ideas as they entertained of the hated strangers! Masses and chants were nothing more than evil spells. As for the priests themselves, they were no better than diabolical sorcerers;...16

Father Murphy and his two brother priests lived well on the island although their supplies came from France rather than from their parishioners. If Father Murphy had one failing it
was that he drank too much.

The protestant mission run by an English family was more firmly entrenched. They had the biggest building on the island as a chapel.17 This was the place of worship for the natives and for the colonists. It had been built when religious enthusiasm first swept over the people. Since then it had fallen into decay which was hastened by the tropical climate. The service that Melville attended there drew a large but restless crowd. What incensed the novelist was the sermon. Melville considered the natives to be little children easily swayed by grandeur or emotion. He did not believe that they could understand and accept a religion such as the protestants in America knew. The sermons of the missionaries either dwelt on theological and moral problems that were beyond the comprehension of the natives, or made a crass commercial appeal for supplies.

The missionary that Melville heard speak dwelt entirely on how remiss the natives were in supplying his material needs. It was a lecture by a greedy, materialistic man. Perhaps because he remembered the sermon that way, or perhaps because he thought it more appropriate, Melville chose to have the sermon come from the lips of "an intelligent Hawaiian sailor"18 who translated the minister's Polynesian into a kind of English. Whatever the origin, it was a good idea. The sermon sounds as if it were given by an educated Westerner speaking down to ignorant savages—exactly the idea that Melville wanted to convey. A portion of the sermon (in Jack's phraseology) reads:
"Good friends, this very small island, but very wicked, and very poor; these two go together. Why Beretanee so great? Because that island good island, and send mickonaree to poor kannaka. In Beretanee, every man rich: plenty things to buy; and plenty things to sell. Houses bigger than Pomaree's, and more grand. Everybody, too, ride about in coaches, bigger than hers; and wear fine tappa every day. (Several luxurious appliances of civilization were here enumerated and described.)

"Good friends, little left to eat at my house. Schooner from Sydney no bring bag of flour; and kannaka no bring pig and fruit enough. Mickonaree do great deal for kannaka; kannaka do little for mickonaree. So, good friends, weave plenty of coco-nut baskets, fill 'em, and bring 'em to-morrow."

The sermon leads Melville into some reflections on the religious make-up of the Polynesians. His observations seem both accurate and dispassionate. The modern reader is struck by Melville's perception and by his acceptance of these people as they are. At a time when many of his contemporaries—and one would suppose his own family—would judge them by Western ideas of morality and right, Melville could judge them by an almost universal and timeless standard of behavior. In Typee Melville was almost pro-native; he admired the "noble savage" and was inclined to overlook his faults. In Omoo he accepts the islanders for what they probably were: friendly, childlike, hypocritical and, by Western standards, immoral. Part of the author's change in attitude came about because he was speaking of two distinct groups of natives, the Typees and the Tahitians. Part of the change was a maturing perception and understanding.

Melville's admiration of the savage, warlike, yet fun-loving Polynesian turns up in his later books. The Pequod's crew in
Moby-Dick included three savages. Symbolically, they were the harpooners in the whaling boats. Two of them, Daggoo and Tashtego, are striking specimens representing the African black and the American Indian. The third and most likeable is Queequeg, a Polynesian. The months of living with and observing the Polynesians, and the early chapters in Typee and Omoo on the way they lived culminated in the character of Queequeg. Like his friend Hawthorne, Melville worked and reworked his knowledge into the books that he wrote. Many of Hawthorne's short stories contain the germ of an idea or a situation which he brought to fruition in a later novel. In much the same way, many of the memorable scenes and experiences Melville recorded with wit and graceful style in his early novels he reworked and improved in his two best books, Moby-Dick and Billy Budd. The scenes and characters are better because they are part of a meaningful theme. The casual reflections and satiric jibes attain new significance because their impact is heightened by the universal application of the story. The loose, picaresque incidents are retold and interwoven into a story plot.

The opening chapters of Moby-Dick suggest that it may have begun as a story about a Polynesian sailor on an American whaler. The many humorous scenes and people suggest that it may have begun to be another picaresque tale like Omoo. Only this time the main character would be a native in our world, not a Westerner in a native world. Gradually, Queequeg and the humor become lost in another, far more important story— that of Ahab's search for the great white whale. Whatever Melville's original
intentions, the early chapters of Moby-Dick bear a closer resemblance to Omoo than to any other chapters Melville ever wrote.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Leyda, op. cit., p. 150.
2. Ibid., p. 157.
3. Ibid., pp. 141 ff.
5. Leyda, op. cit., p. xxxiii.
7. Ibid., p. 198.
8. Ibid., p. 198.
11. Ibid., p. 304.
12. Ibid., p. 304.
15. Ibid., p. 354.
16. Ibid., p. 269.
17. Ibid., p. 284.
18. Ibid., p. 286.
19. Ibid., p. 287.
Mardi was the most ambitious in narrative technique of any of Melville's novels written before Moby-Dick. The straightforward narrative augmented by striking description and sketches of characters that he had used in Typee and Omoo was too simple and too prosaic for the new work. Melville's third book was not a simple chronicle of more or less true incidents that happened to himself. Mardi was an attempt to present some philosophical and moral truths in a way that would attract and hold the reader's interest. It was an attempt to put into a comprehensive and orderly form many of the important ideas that had occurred to the young author. In this book, more than in either of its predecessors, Melville called upon his reading knowledge rather than his experiential knowledge. In his later book Pierre, he describes his attempt thus:

. . . Pierre was now engaged in a comprehensive compacted work, to whose speedy completion two tremendous motives unitedly impelled; --the burning desire to deliver what he thought to be new, or at least miserably neglected Truth to the world; and the prospective menace of being absolutely penniless, unless by the sale of his book, he could realize money . . . perceiving, by presentiment, that most grand productions of the best human intellects ever are built round a circle, as atolls ( . . . ), digestively including the whole range of all that can be known or dreamed; Pierre was resolved to give the world a book, which the world would hail with surprise and delight. A varied scope of reading, little suspected by his friends, and randomly acquired by a random but lynx-eyed mind, in the course
of the multifarious, incidental, bibliographic encounterings of almost any civilized young inquirer after Truth; this poured one considerable contributory stream into that bottomless spring of original thought which the occasion and time had caused to burst out in himself. Now he congratulated himself upon all his cursory acquisitions of this sort; ignorant that in reality to a mind bent on producing some thoughtful thing of absolute Truth, all mere reading is apt to prove but an obstacle hard to overcome; and not an accelerator helpfully pushing him along.1

Mardi begins well. The narrator and his friend Jarl, an incarnation of the early Viking, not wanting to sail into the cold Japanese waters in search of whales, take one of their whaler's boats and set sail for a chain of islands somewhere to the west. These early chapters are much like the nautical chapters of Omoo and Typee. The narrator escapes the unpleasantness of a whaler by jumping ship as he did in those books. The tone of the narrative promises mystery and adventure and the descriptions of the central Pacific and life on a whaling ship are authentic and detailed. The reader is pleasantly prepared to share the latest adventures of the gentleman sailor from New York.2

Nothing which is beyond the possibility of real-life experience is told except the plan to seize the boat while everyone sleeps. The explanation for this is disarmingly simple: the ship's discipline is so lax that all but three men sleep all night. When two of the three are Jarl and the narrator, escape is easy.

After Jarl and the narrator are in the boat, Melville sus-
tains his fiction by inserting some of his best early chapters on the sea. In "The Calm" he describes the phenomenon of rocking gently in the open ocean for hours on end waiting for a breeze to ruffle the sails. While sailing in this boat, the narrator sees and describes some of the schools of small fish that surround the open boat. More important, in chapters XIII and XVIII, he describes several kinds of sharks that inhabit these waters, among them the Tiger shark, the Algerine, and the white shark. These chapters on fish, like the chapters on whales in Moby-Dick, sound as if they owe something to scientific treatises on ichthyology. This is the first time that Melville writes about fish in this way.

Adrift at sea Jarl and the narrator discover a phantom-like brigantine, the Parki, board her, and abandon for a time the little boat, the Chamois.

The second section of the Mardi story is a humorous yet exciting story about the occupants of the Parki. They are a native named Samoa and his wife, Annatoo. After some suspenseful hours the boarders find out who is sailing the ship and become friends of the natives. The tale continues as Samoa relates to them the early misfortunes of the Parki. By this point Melville has sustained his fictional action fairly well for over thirty short chapters. The characters are distinct individuals but caricatures. Jarl is a large, blond sailor, quiet and unimaginative. The term Viking encompasses his character entirely. Samoa is much more successfully done. He is a half-civilized native, valiant in war but unable to control his wife. Annatoo is a large, plain shrew who spends
most of her waking hours stealing unattached objects and secreting them. These natives are as real as those in *Typee* but they are not examples of either the noble savage or the savage corrupted by civilization. They are humorous characters in a story. They possess both the good and the bad qualities of human beings and not merely the qualities attributed to uncivilized people. Their relations as man and wife, their dispositions, their friendliness and thievery are no more exclusively Samoan than Bostonian. Annatoo, particularly, is more like one of the Merry Wives of Windsor than she is like any islander in *Typee*.

Throughout these early chapters, the character of the anonymous narrator has gradually been revealed. In all his actions this narrator is like *Typee* or the narrator, Tom. He is the adventurous, self-possessed American sailor with the sensibilities of a gentleman that the critics have long identified as Melville.

The voyage of the Parki is ended by a storm following in the wake of a calm. Annatoo is killed, the brigantine is wrecked, and the three sailors sail away in the little Chamois. Here the nautical realism and the partially developed story end and the strange, allegorical epic begins. Here *Mardi* begins to fall apart and the reader's interest gradually flickers and dies. The idea that has so far unified the early adventure is the search for the islands to the west. In chapter XXXIX the sailors encounter the first inhabitants of Mardi. After a brief battle they rescue a young maiden, Yillah, about
to be sacrificed to one of the gods by the priest, Aleema; they kill Aleema. The abrupt and rapid change from the story centering about Jarl and Samoa to the epic voyage of Taji is accomplished in this one chapter. The suggestion that Melville was not certain what to have happen next after the storm is strengthened by a paragraph which says:

Here it must be mentioned, that from the various gay cloths and other things provided for barter by the captain of the Parki, I had very strikingly improved my costume; making it free, flowing, and Eastern. I looked like an Emir. Nôr had my Viking neglected to follow my example; though with some few modifications of his own. Besides this raiment of ours, against emergencies we had provided our boat with divers nankeens and silks.

This information could easily have been given earlier in the story. It would have led to the narrator's role of Taji. Instead, it is given immediately before the Mardian natives are introduced and after the storm. It appears to be an afterthought.

After rescuing Yillah they continue toward the islands, land, and live happily for a short while. Then Yillah mysteriously disappears. She has not been made a real person like Fayaway in Typee, or even like Annatoo. She is simply a vaguely sketched epitome of all that is good and beautiful. When the narrator, who is now a demi-god called Taji, and his friends embark on a search for her, the allegorical journey in Mardi begins.

Mardi is a more ambitious literary attempt than either of the earlier books. The surface story remains simple but the
form becomes more complex. While searching for Yillah, Taji and his friends visit every part of the chain of coral islands. Between sojourns on the various islands, they are pursued and intercepted by three maidens bearing floral messages from Queen Hautia. Later they are also pursued by the three sons of the dead Aleema. Each encounter with Hautia's messengers of the avengers adds a bit to the story of the search. interspersed are side trips to each island.

Superimposed on this epic tale of a search for Yillah is the allegorical or philosophical message that Melville wished to convey. Parts of the allegory are readily identified. Yillah symbolizes truth; the journey, a search for truth; each island in the chain symbolizes either one way to happiness or some country in the Western world. On each island there is a flaw, so Yillah is not there. The reality of the islands they visit is heightened by a judicious blending of factual bits of information and brevity. Each island is characterized by one incident. There is a sharpness and a clever use of details, but no depth to the pictures.

The first two books Melville wrote were travel narratives. He found models for them in the many books of travel that he had read. When he began Mardi, he looked about for a new model upon which to fashion his romance. He chose to make his romance a prose epic. As references, he borrowed or purchased Esais Tegner's Frithiof's Saga and Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem by James Macpherson. From them he probably got the idea for Jarl, the narrator's Viking companion. From them and other epics he borrowed the outward characteristics of an epic: the voyage in
search of something, the huge Norse-like banquet given for the traveler by King Donjalolo, the story-telling and side adventures which took place while they searched the world. While he was writing **Mardi**, Melville also bought or borrowed:

- Benjamin Morrell's *Narrative of Four Voyages*
- Thomas Jacob's *Scenes, Incidents, and Adventures in the Pacific Ocean*
- Darwin's *Voyage of H.M.S. "Beagle"*
- J. N. Reynold's *Voyage of U. S. Frigate "Potomac"*
- Bougainville's *Voyage*
- Hartley on *Man*, vol I, II, III
- Montaigne's *Essays*
- Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (two copies)
- Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (two vols)
- Rabelais vol III, IV
- Dante's *Divinia Comedia*, Cary translation
- DeFoe's *Fortunate Mistress*
- Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*
- Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*
- Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*
- Webster's *Dictionary* (two copies)

Internal references and allusions suggest that he had recently read **Manfred** and a version of the Faust legend.

**Mardi**, as Melville says in **Pierre**, is a composite of all or a part of many books. It is also one of his first books to show the poetic side of Melville. There are many scattered fragments of his poems. Most of them are not very good. They have little thought in them and are more exercises in rhyme and meter. When his invention gives out, Melville supplies lines of nonsense syllables. On the other hand, much of the prose benefits from the poetic images he used and from his strangely contorted cadences.

The style of **Mardi** is as much of a hodge podge as the ideas. A great deal of it, however, shows the influence of Sir Thomas Browne. In **Typee**, Melville's usual narrative style is like this:
I can never forget the eighteen or twenty days during which the light Trade winds were silently sweeping us toward the islands. In pursuit of the spermwhale, we had been cruising on the Line some twenty degrees to the westward of the Gallipagos; and all that we had to do, when our course was determined on, was to square in the yards and keep the vessel before the breeze.5

The same style was used in Omoo. But in Mardi, Melville's sentences are often like this:

West, West! West, West! Whitherward point Hope and prophet-fingers; whitherward, at sun-set, kneel all worshipers of fire; whitherward in mid-ocean, the great whales turn to die; whitherward face all the Moslem dead in Persia; whitherward lie Heaven and Hell! — West, West! Whitherward mankind and empires — flocks, caravans, armies, navies; worlds, suns, and stars all wend! — West, West! . . . 6

In Mardi Melville sometimes experiments with chapters of dialogue. There are three kinds that he uses. One, which is most common, is the ordinary dialogue of a romance. The second, which is not often used, is in the dialogue style of Plato. Melville uses this form at the end of Mardi when he discusses philosophy. A third kind is the dialogue of plays where a story is told in speeches without any narrative connections. This is the dialogue form used occasionally in Moby-Dick and in chapter CXXX of Mardi for dramatic effect. In both books, the continuity of the material before and after the dialogue chapters is perfect. One could easily proceed from the conclusion of chapter XXXVI in Moby-Dick to the beginning of chapter XLI and never know that anything intervened. This is the case in Mardi, too.

The first part of Mardi illustrates several times the
fact that Melville was consciously striving for striking effects, for unity, and for a literary style. For example, he thrice devotes a chapter to the description of a calm. The first time, in chapter II, the narrator is aboard the Arcturion; the second time he is in the Chamois; the third time, aboard the Parki. In chapter XXXVI these calms are climaxed by a howling gale that wrecks the Parki, kills Annatoo, and sets the other three adrift. "Such was the storm that came after our calm," Melville says. The three descriptions of the calm are not monotonous or repetitious. Rather, they build up to the crescendo of the storm. The first time, the narrator describes his increasing apprehension as the calm lasts longer and longer. The second time, the narrator describes the atmosphere and the water when it is quiet. The third time, he describes the effect of the calm on the four people aboard the Parki. This calm contributes to the strained relations with Annatoo and is responsible for some of the story.

In the descriptions of the calm and the storm, Melville is at his best. His command of words, the cadences of his sentences, and the clear picture he paints show how well he could write. Of the storm he says:

It was all a din and a mist; a crashing of spars and of ropes; a horrible blending of sights and of sounds; as for an instant we seemed in the hot heart of the gale; our cordage, like harp-strings, shrieking above the fury of the blast. The masts rose, and swayed, and dipped their trucks in the sea. And like unto some stricken buffalo brought low to the plain, the brigantine's black hull, shaggy with sea-weed, lay panting on its flank in the foam.
Of the calm he says:

On the eighth day there was a calm.

It came on by night: so that waking at
daybreak, and folding my arms over the gun-wale, I looked out upon a scene very hard
to describe. The sun was still beneath the horizon; perhaps not yet out of sight from
the plains of Paraguay. But the dawn was
too strong for the stars; which, one by one,
had gone out, like waning lamps after a ball.

When we remember that Melville had previously written
only two adolescent short stories and two narratives about
his own adventures, we can see how conscientiously he was
trying to write a good romance.

The allegory in *Mardi* is at once simple and complex. The
scope is almost as great as that of the *Faery Queene* but the
student who attempts to work it out is not so richly rewarded.
The multiple interpretations of political, religious, and
social allegory do not always fit the incidents or symbols
Melville used. For example, some islands have both a political
counterpart and a philosophical significance. Other islands
are not readily identifiable with anything. Nor, as in the
*Faery Queene*, is there a story which has an interest apart
from the allegory.

When he wrote the travel narratives *Typee* and *Omoo*, Mel-
ville used a simple technique which could be called compilative.
He told, first of all, an essentially true story of what had
happened to him and what he saw. Second, he added as much
travel lore and reading knowledge as he could in order to fill
out the picture of native life. Third, he added incidents for
their intrinsic story value. Fourth, he reflected on, and
wrote his reactions to what he saw, heard, and read. Quite often the four elements are not integrated but are developed in successive short chapters. In *Mardi*, although he was using the epic form to unite the book, Melville often simply compiled chapters and placed them one after the other. Hautia's messengers or Aleema's avengers serve to tie these unrelated chapters together.

Throughout *Mardi* there runs a strong vein of satire. *Mardi* is ostensibly a serious effort at allegory and romance but Melville did not take his ideas so seriously that he could not laugh at them. *Mardi* is an epic and a romance, but Melville satirized both in his book. The characterization of Jarl is a mockery of the epic Viking hero, just as the relations of Samoa and Annatoo are a parody of love and marriage. Even the rescue of Yillah from the priest is a satire on romance. Melville exaggerates the language of romance when he says:

> Then up rose the old priest, and gave us to know, that we were wholly in his power, and if we did not swear to depart in our boat forthwith, and molest him no more, the peril be ours.
> "Depart and you live; stay and you die."
> Fifteen to three. Madness to gainsay his mandate. Yet a beautiful maiden was at stake.
> The knife before dangling in Samoa's ear was now in his hand. Jarl cried out for us to regain the boat, several of the Islanders making a rush for it. No time to think. All passed quicker than it can be said... Ere I knew it, my cutlass made a quick lunge. A curse from the priest's mouth; red blood from his side; he tottered, stared about him, and fell over like a brown hemlock into the sea...
He concludes this graphic description of the battle and our heroes' retreat by saying:

And here it must needs be related that some of the natives were wounded in the fray: while all three of their assailants had received several bruises. 11

This satire occurs again and again as the narrator's journey takes him to strange islands. It is one of the most effective ways of showing the error of the people in Vivenza (the United States) and Hio-hio (Ohio). These chapters on the United States may be closely related to a series of political satires that Melville wrote for Yankee Doodle, or the American Punch. They were entitled "Authentic Anecdotes of 'Old Zack'" and appeared in seven weekly installments from July 24 to September 11, 1847. 12

Another example of satire is the messages exchanged between Queen Hautia's messengers and Taji. Melville used the popular idea of the language of the flowers. Instead of speaking to Taji, the girls pelted him with appropriate blossoms. Unfortunately, Taji did not speak their language so Mohi or Yoomy, his companions, had to translate. Perhaps Melville got his floral messages from a book called Floral Tableaux by James Andrews which he bought December 12, 1846. 13

The humor in the first story in Mardi which added interest to the incidents became satire which was designed to correct and improve the object satirized. The satire on the habits of the people of each little Mardian island is long, involved, and not always subtle. In the island of Kolumbo, Babbalanja says, "All-men-are-created-free-and-equal except the tribe of Hamo." 14 In successive chapters on the island of Vivenza
Melville satirizes the Washington political scene, Senator Alanno from Hio-hio, and the American reaction to the revolutions of 1848. He uses ridicule to oppose the slavery defended by Nulli (Henry Clay) and to oppose expansion to the southwest, the European colonization of Central America, and the miseries of the California gold rush.

The simplest way for Melville to make the subjects of his satire readily recognizable was to choose for them a name whose connotations or semantic origins would be instantly apparent. Thus Hamora is Africa, the Isles of Myrrh are the Spice Islands, King Bello is the King of England, and Serenia is heaven. Other names in the book suggest that they are either Tahitian words or very similar to Tahitian—Pimminee, Maramma, Valapee, and Taji.

Sometimes the name is not readily identifiable with a person or place, but the actions or conditions of the people on the island are. Thus it is easy to recognize Lords Piko and Hello as military officers from their actions although it is difficult to be certain whom Melville is particularly satirizing. The similarity of names suggests that Piko might be Zebulon Pike, but Pike's fame was at its height almost forty years before Mardi was written. Because so many of the names in Mardi and the other books have a special significance, it seems worthwhile to try to systematize them. Unfortunately, some of the more important people have inexplicable names. Why, for instance, did Melville name the poet Yoomy, or the narrator Taji? What is the origin of Azzageddi the devil within Babbalanja? The closest connection seems to be Azazel, an ally of
Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Some of the names Melville chose seem to have originated in, or been suggested by books he read while he was writing *Mardi*. For example, the name he chose for Europe was Porpheero. The closest word is the geological term, porphyry, which means a kind of rock texture in which large conspicuous crystals are inclosed in a fine-grained matrix. We can be more certain that Melville had this term in mind when we know that on March 7, 1849, he checked out William Phillips's *An Elementary Treatise on Mineralogy* from the Boston Athaeneum Library.15

The islands that the voyagers visit are not always identifiable as one of the Western nations--Dominora (Great Britain), Vivenza (United States), or Franko (France). Quite frequently they represent ideas. At first the travelers visit King Peepi and Donjalolo and discuss monarchy versus democracy. Then the travelers visit lands where strange religions abound. Many characteristics of Christianity are satirized: pilgrims, abstinence, holy men, and holy places. In Maramma, a blind man guides the pilgrims to the holy vale. On another island, the travelers meet a mercenary image maker.

From religion, Melville turns to social customs as a source of ridicule. He mentions an island of antiquaries, the "gentility" of Pimminee, and other social leaders. Then the travelers arrive in Diranda where Piko and Hello hold war games to keep down the population. From the satire of war, Melville begins his satire of politics, England, the United States, and contemporary events.
After chapter CLXIX the satire changes. The subjects are ideas rather than places or institutions. Long sections of the book are devoted to Babbalanja's voicing Bardiana's views on God, man, eternity, faith, death, predestination, free will, and stoicism. No longer are the voyagers seeing new lands. Instead they are conversing like Glaucon, Adeimantus, Polemarchus, and Socrates in *The Republic*. This satire and voyage is climaxed by the trip to Serenia, the Kingdom of Love on Earth. There Mohi, Yoomy, and even Babbalanja are persuaded that tranquility is the only happiness that man can know on earth. They remain in Serenia while King Media returns to his land to be a benevolent despot and Taji continues his search. This idea of Melville's that even heaven is not perfect was not a popular idea in nineteenth-century America. The book would have been more popular if it had ended as an endorsement of Christianity. But Melville was too opposed to the hypocrisy that he had discovered in Christianity to allow Taji to find Yillah in Serenia. Melville cannot suggest a better place for ideal happiness, so Taji is forced to continue his search alone. His last port is Flozella-a-Nina where Queen Hautia lives. He introduces his visit there by saying:

As if Mardi were a poem, and every island a canto, the shore now in sight was called Flozella-a-Nina, or The-Last-Verse-of-the-Song.¹⁰

Accompanying Taji on his quest of Yillah were two canoe loads of Mardians. Foremost among them is Media, a demi-god
like Taji. This native prince has been called a benevolent despot.\textsuperscript{17} With him are numerous native servants to row the boats and four companions to help pass the time. Each of these companions represents some form of intellectual accomplishment. Babballanja is a philosopher of the school of Bardiana. He is a skeptic, a satirist, and a non-conformist in his thinking. Like Taji he searches for truth, but unlike Taji, Babballanja has a blind spot—his preference for Bardiana. Mohi, or Braid-beard, is an old chronicler. He is schooled in traditional Mardian thought and history. He is always ready to contribute stories but he is not an original thinker. Yoomy is a poet; he has some knowledge but much less than Mohi. He is a romantic, Shelley-like poet.

While their boats sail from one island to another, King Media and his three companions present appropriate views on the countries and ideas that they encounter. Each of the three thinkers represents a part of Melville's intellectual make-up. But each one, the author realizes, has his limitations. It is important to note that during the long (and often tedious) journey through Mardi, Taji, as a force in the narrative, disappears. He gradually takes no part in the discussions and becomes only a recorder of incidents. Often Melville even forgets to mention him or have islanders greet him when they greet the others. Samoa and Jarl who also accompany Taji on the journey are killed by the avengers, thus leaving Taji free to continue his search alone.

In the Introduction, I mentioned that \textit{Mardi} is a whaling
story "gone wrong" and that there are some striking similarities between the realistic first part of *Mardi* and *Moby-Dick*. Chapter XIII, perhaps, best shows this similarity. It is a humorous, but informative chapter about the chondropterygii, or sharks, "and other uncouth hordes infesting the South Seas."

First Melville builds up the terror of the Bone shark which is as large as a whale and spotted like a leopard. Then he mentions the Müller and Henle classifications of sharks—the Brown shark, or sea-attorney; the dandy Blue shark; the cold-blooded Tiger shark. Then the narrator says:

> In substance, Jarl once assured me, that under any temporary misfortune, it was one of his sweetest consolations to remember, that in his day, he had murdered, not killed, shoals of Tiger Sharks. Yet this is all wrong. As well hate a seraph, as a shark. Both were made by the same hand...

Two paragraphs further he adds:

> But of all sharks, save me from the ghastly White Shark. For though we should hate naught, yet some dislikes are spontaneous; and disliking is not hating. And never yet could I bring myself to be loving, or even sociable, with a White Shark. He is not the sort of creature to enlist young affections. This ghost of a fish is not often encountered, and shows plainer by night than by day. Timon-like, he always swims by himself; gliding along just under the surface, revealing a long, vague shape, of a milky hue;...

These two ideas—the wrong in hating God's creatures and the spontaneous dislike of only the white shark—are similar to two ideas associated with the white whale, *Moby-Dick*. The idea of the mysterious effect of white, Melville elaborated
in the chapter "The Whiteness of the Whale." The wrong in
Ahab's hating and revenging himself on a dumb brute is one
of the principal ideas in Moby-Dick. But in Mardi these
ideas are only mentioned here and in chapter XVIII. They
do not, by allusion, give a mystical or cosmic power to a
dumb creature. They are simply a part of a description of
what the narrator saw and thought while floating in a little
boat across the Pacific.

There is another idea in Mardi which later occurs in
Moby-Dick. This is the conception of a whaler as a miniature,
floating world. The whaler in Mardi is the Arcturion; its
crew represents every race and nationality of sailors. Sim¬
ilarly, the Pequod has as her crew, representatives of all
the world.

Most of the themes in Mardi had occurred in its two
predecessors and would occur again in Redburn, White-Jacket,
and Moby-Dick. They include such themes as the rights of
the individual, the evils of civilization, the relationship
of God and man, and the role of nature in the cosmos. But
there is one theme or idea in Mardi which one does not find
in any of Melville's books except the much later (1852)
Pierre, or The Ambiguities. This is the theme of love and
marriage. It is treated in three ways: first it is satirized
in the humorous relationship of Samoa and Annatoo because the
courageous warrior and sailor is completely at the mercy of
his shrewish, thieving wife. When Jarl and the narrator board
the Parki they find that Samoa has taken refuge in the captain's
cabin while Annatoo has complete run of the ship.

Second is the idealistic relationship between Taji, the narrator, and Yillah. This relationship is not really pictured; it is only implied when Melville speaks of the beauty and idyllic bliss that surround the lovers.

Third is the relationship between Taji, who is seeking his perfect love, and Queen Hautia, who seems, like a siren or loreleia, to be luring the hero to give up his search and stay with her. She is also something like the ideal girl who becomes less ideal after one has to live with her. Throughout the book Melville seems to be expressing some disillusionment about women while symbolizing the goal of the book in terms of an ideal woman. The symbol of perfect love disappears almost as soon as she is won. In her place appears a symbol of womanly arrogance, cruelty, and the fatal power to ruin men.

Only in Pierre is this relationship between man and woman more carefull studied. It would be interesting to know to what extent Melville's recent marriage affected his attitude toward women as he expressed it in Mardi. Melville began Mardi in January 1847 and finished it in November 1848. On August 4, 1847, he was married to Elizabeth Shaw.

In spite of its often excellent writing, its humor, and its moral significance, Mardi was a miserable failure. Both publishers lost money on it and Melville's literary reputation suffered. Its chief flaws are easily recognized: it is too long, too rambling, and too shallow. It attempts to say too
much and suffers because Melville was not an original thinker and because he was not a skillful enough writer to endow his often commonplace thoughts with a striking setting. He had not yet understood how to use symbols and allusion to unify the thought in his book and make that thought appear more impressive because it was unified.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III


2. Charles Anderson devotes little space to Mardi but he does remark that he has been unable to find any parallel incident of fact for this escape. op. cit., pp. 326 ff.


5. Typee, p. 9.


7. Ibid., I, 137.

8. Ibid., p. 136.

9. Ibid., p. 55.

10. Ibid., p. 154.

11. Ibid., p. 155.


13. Ibid., pp. 229 ff.


17. Sedgewick, op. cit., p. 41.

18. Mardi, I, 45.
19. Ibid., p. 47.
20. Ibid., p. 48.
CHAPTER IV

REDBURN

The book which followed Mardi, Redburn: His First Voyage, is as unlike Mardi as any book by Melville could be. Where Mardi is allegorical, satiric, romantic, philosophic, Redburn is adventurous, comic, picaresque, realistic. Mardi takes place in a half-real island world somewhere in the warm South Pacific. Redburn's setting is the well-known world of New York, Liverpool, and the North Atlantic. In writing Mardi, Melville tried very hard to write a book which meant something. His erratic education, his ideals, and his experiences around the world enabled him to set himself apart from his civilization and see with angry, but honest eyes the evils and the virtues of the two societies that he knew. Strengthened by his reading, Melville wrote his views into Mardi. He had advanced beyond writing travel narratives or picaresque tales. Melville was becoming a creative artist and thinker. The financial failure of Mardi and its poor reception by the critics were a blow to Melville. His literary reputation suffered tremendously and he found himself in need of money to support his family and to repay his publishers. Therefore, in the summer of 1849 he wrote Redburn. He chose a popular theme: the son of a gentleman forced to go to sea before the mast. He used a great many autobiographical facts to give reality and authenticity to the story. Furthermore, Melville deliberately attempted to make Redburn a "best seller." He wanted
to have his book read by the adolescents and adults who reve-
eled in books like Mr. Midshipman Easy and Peter Simple by
Captain Marryat.

It is easy to say that Melville's craftsmanship suf-
fered when he stooped to writing popular adventure fiction.
It is especially easy when we read some of Melville's own
letters about the book. On June 5, 1849, he wrote to his
English publisher Bentley:

I have now in preparation a thing of a widely
different cast from "Mardi"; - a plain,
straightforward, amusing narrative of
personal experience - the son of a gentle-
man on his first voyage to sea as a sailor
- no metaphysics, no cosmic (?) sections,
nothing but cakes & ale. I have shifted
my ground from the South Seas to a differ-
ent quarter of the globe - nearer home -
and what I write I have almost wholly
picked up by my own observation under com-
ical circumstances. . . .I think it would
be wise to put it forth in a manner, admit-
ing of a popular circulation.1

This dismissal of Redburn as "nothing but cakes & ale" does
not do justice to either the book or Melville. In the first
place, Redburn is technically advanced beyond Typee and Omoo.
In them Melville primarily reworked personal experience into
travel narrative. They, especially Omoo, have an element of
the picaresque tale; but that flavor is inherent in the facts
of Melville's voyage. Redburn, if less ambitious than Mardi,
is more successful in its way. Redburn is an attempt at
creating a fictional romance which has a familiar, yet roman-
tically adventurous, setting with a hero who both initiates
the plot action and is affected by the action. Although it
was written rapidly and has numerous flaws as well as major
technical errors, Redburn was Melville's most successful attempt at writing fiction.

The character of Wellingborough Redburn perhaps best shows the technical advance Melville accomplished. For many years, modern students of Melville have considered Redburn to be a fairly accurate portrait of the adolescent Melville. They have accepted, too, the incidents which took place in the book as reworked versions of psychologically important events in Melville's life. Willard Thorpe was one of the first to suggest that Redburn deserved to be studied as art, not autobiography. Then, in 1951, William S. Gilman published an excellent, detailed study called Melville's Early Life and Redburn. By comparing the details of the story and character in Redburn with the known facts of Melville's early life, Gilman has shown to what extent Redburn is a piece of creative fiction. He has also explained a great deal about Melville's creative method.

Melville, Gilman shows, deliberately made his hero poor, small, young (about sixteen), proud of his family, and pitifully ignorant of sailors and shipboard life. Redburn's ignorance and innocence cause him a great deal of trouble at first. As a greenhand he must learn by paying for his mistakes. Melville masterfully chose the details that would increase Redburn's melancholy and pitiful state. Redburn leaves Albany, his home, alone and at night. He is so poor that he must force his passage on the river boat with a gun. Once in New York, Redburn signs on for a cruise with a deceptively, gentle-
manly Captain Riga and sets out to buy his gear. As a result of pride, poverty, and ignorance, Redburn turns up at sea outfitted in a leather hunting jacket that shrinks a little every time it gets wet and an elegant pair of hunting boots that are too tight. He has no knife, spoon, cup, or blankets.

Each of these details, Gilman shows, were chosen to create a consistent character in the reader's mind and to make the reader sympathize with the boy. Few of the incidents really happened to Melville when he set out for sea. Nor could Melville's ignorance have been so complete as Redburn's was because Melville had several close relatives who were sailors. One of them, Leonard Gansevoort, sailed before the mast on a Liverpool packet. He had returned and was visiting in Melville's home the day before Melville left for New York. Gilman presents many other details that show that Redburn is not just the young Melville but a carefully created character. This character is a literary relation of Peter Simple, Midshipman Easy, and even Richard Dana in *Two Years before the Mast*.

Once Redburn is aboard the ship Highlander he is less pathetic but just as ignorant. His ignorance becomes a source of comic humor. Like Peter Simple, Marryat's gentleman green-hand, Redburn is easily imposed upon and falls into every possible trap for the uninitiated. He even attempts to call on the captain in his cabin, unconscious of the social gap that exists between them.

Redburn in these early incidents is like Redburn pawning his gun for money in New York. The reader cannot quite pity
him because he is so comically stupid. But folklore and sea tradition can supply only a limited number of incidents. By chapter XI, Melville has begun to present the reactions of the naive, sensitive Redburn as he encounters the ugliness, evilness, and wretchedness of people that he never before knew existed. Redburn is much like Huckleberry Finn when he encounters the scum of the Mississippi River. The rules of polite society, Redburn’s guideposts in life, suddenly are inadequate. Can a boy who belongs to the Temperance League in Albany drink his daily ration of beer? If he does, has he done wrong? Why did not the League provide for situations like this where nothing but beer is obtainable? Redburn, like Huck, instinctively knows what is good and right. And like Huck, Redburn can understand and partially justify the evil in the men he meets. Again, like Huck, Redburn can excuse man in particular for his evil, but he never understands or attempts to justify the evil in society.

About the time the ship is off the coast of Ireland, Redburn has become a first-class sailor. He knows the terminology, shipboard etiquette, and how to perform his duties. His agility and spirit have made him a master at climbing about the rigging. He has grown up and successfully met the challenges of his new situation. Up to this point Redburn is a good sea adventure. But the theme of the book is exhausted and so is the plot. All the foregoing chapters, except a few about the sailor Jackson, have reached their logical conclusion. Melville has created only two reasons that would prompt
the reader to go on. One is the reader's curiosity about the fate of Jackson. The second is his curiosity about what will befall young Redburn as he attempts to trace his dead father's footsteps through the Liverpool of 1815. This is a continuation of the reader's sympathy for the pathetic young boy created in the early chapters.

This latter thread of interest is worked into an extensive history and description of Liverpool in the 1830's as Redburn and Melville saw it. When he embarks on this trip, Redburn is once again alone and pathetic, but sensitive to others' misfortunes. This section of the book and Redburn's education reaches a climax when Redburn discovers that everything, even the hotel where his father stayed, has been torn down or changed. The disillusionment is complete. Redburn knows that his attempt to identify himself with his father has failed.

It is after this climactic scene that the unity of the book begins to fall apart. Throughout the following chapters Redburn's character becomes less important and Redburn becomes more like the voice of Melville speaking out against injustice and evil. No longer is Redburn comic or young. He has suddenly, and inexplicably, matured into the adult Melville. No longer is he an actor in his book; he is an observer and recorder.

To keep up the adventurous tone, Melville introduces Harry Bolton, a once-rich, n'er-do-well, who takes Redburn on an Arabian Nights trip to a London gambling den. Nothing about
this incident, except Harry, is convincing. Gilman has pointed out the similarity of the gambling den to the oriental boudoir in the second Fragment from a Writing Desk. After gambling away all of his money, Harry is forced to accept Redburn's advice and sign on the Highlander as a boy before the mast. This development gave Melville the opportunity to use again the theme of the greenhand gentleman who must solve innumerable new problems and adapt himself to new people and situations. The difference between Redburn's and Harry's moral character allowed Melville to show what happens to the boy who cannot face the challenge. Like Harry, such a boy would cower at climbing the rigging, lose face with the crew, and become an outcast—unrespected and unlikely. This may have been the conclusion that Melville planned for Redburn. But it is the subject of only a few chapters of Melville's book (L, LVI, LXI, and LXII).

Instead of developing this theme and Harry's character, Melville chose to finish with a theme of social protest. The homeward-bound cargo of the Highlander is a steerage full of Irish immigrants. Nine of the last thirteen chapters are concerned with the unfortunate people crowded into the hold of the ship. They have inadequate provisions, poor sleeping and cooking accommodations, and an appalling ignorance of America and the length of the voyage ahead of them. Several of the immigrants are named or individualized, but only one, Carlo the street musician, achieves any importance. When the voyage is more than half over, several of the half-starved
people come down with typhoid fever. Redburn and some of the other sailors are sent down to clean up the steerage and try to keep the disease from spreading.

Throughout these chapters, Redburn is merely a spectator, or a portable point-of-view. His adventures and his moral development have ceased to be the central idea in the book. Instead, Melville had once again written against an evil of society. Perhaps, by making the situation real and horrible to his readers, he hoped to remedy the problem.

The social protest theme was gradually worked into the book. There is little or none until the ship docks in Liverpool. Then, next to historical sights and crowding the colorful docks, Redburn discovers beggars crouched beneath their printed tales of woe, paupers starving in a cellar, and Liverpool's citizens callously ignoring them. By the time the Highlander leaves Liverpool, the reader is prepared for Redburn to discover and excoriate the other evils caused by the well-to-do's indifference to the poor.

Just as Redburn's moral growth and search culminate in bitter disappointment, the evils of these immigrant ships culminates in colossal indifference. When the plague-ridden ship sails into New York harbor, no immigration or health officers board her to inspect her. Instead, the Highlander glides past the Staten Island hospital and the pale yellow flag of the quarantine officers into the East River and up the Hudson. When the Highlander docks, Captain Riga allows all the germ-laden passengers to leave, thus spreading the disease
among the inhabitants of New York.

These last chapters are the best unified chapters of social protest Melville had yet written. *Typee* and *Omoo* contained scattered, deadly chapters protesting the evil of missionaries and colonial administrators, but they were written into the narrative of travel. Furthermore, they were a direct result of Melville's experiences. In *Mardi* the social protest became an elaborate allegory. In *Redburn* it became a sequence of fictional adventures which gripped the reader's attention and wouldn't let go. *Redburn* does not editorialize as much as *Tom* or *White-Jacket*. Instead, he tells a vivid story of poor people caught and unable to escape. The story is told almost exclusively in a simple, brisk narrative style by Redburn, an eyewitness. There is little dialogue, a minimum of editorializing, and no attempt to relate the minor characters—Jackson, Harry Bolton, or Carlo—to the panic in the hold. Melville's technique was to concentrate on one subject to the exclusion of everything else.

The way Melville arranged the parts of his story in *Redburn* and his other books is unlike the arrangement used by other authors. In *Redburn* Melville used the chapter as the basic unit of his story. Each incident is told in one chapter. Sometimes a major incident requires several chapters, each devoted to one distinct phase of the incident. For example, chapter XLIV introduces Harry Bolton, chapter XLV takes Harry and Redburn to London, and chapter XLVI tells about their night in London. Each chapter deals with only one phase of the
adventure. Because there are no major and minor plots, no
group of major and minor characters, no interrelation of events
and people in this book, the chapter deals **with only** one subject.
Sometimes the chapter approaches several pages in length; some-
times it is only a few paragraphs long. In Redburn, each chap-
ter title summarizes what will take place. This kind of chapter
is like the chapters in the eighteenth-century novels Tom
Jones or Robinson Crusoe. But because Redburn is more simple
in structure than Tom Jones, Melville chapters remind the reader
of scenes in a play; they are arranged like scenes in a play, too.
In Redburn, the chapters may be grouped by subject: Redburn
leaves home, Jackson, Harry Bolton, the tour of Liverpool,
social protest. Or they may be grouped by tone: Jackson--tragic;
Redburn as a greenhand--comic; Harry Bolton--romantic and exotic;
the immigrants--angry, protesting. Melville arranged his
chapters so that the story moves forward in its logical order,
but the reader's interest is maintained by contrasting tone
and curiosity about uncompleted segments. The sixty-two chap-
ters in Redburn could be arranged like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Matter</th>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Tone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Redburn leaves home                           | I-V      | comic, tragic,
|                                              |          | melodramatic            |
| Redburn as a greenhand sailor                 | VI-IX    | comic, bitter           |
|                                               | XIII-XVIII |                      |
|                                               | XXIV     |                         |
| Jackson                                       | XII, LV  | tragic                  |
|                                               | LIX      |                         |
| Incidents aboard the ship--                  | XIX-XXIII| expository              |
| outward bound voyage                         |          |                         |
| Digressions on sailors                        | XXV-XXVI | expository, humorous    |
|                                              | XXIX     |                         |
Arrival in Liverpool
Guidebook tour of Liverpool
Irrawaddy tale
Social protest: Liverpool
Redburn's wanderings without a guidebook
Harry Bolton and London
Leave Liverpool
Carlo and the immigrants
Social protest: immigrants
Arrive home

Arrival in Liverpool
Guidebook tour of Liverpool
Irrawaddy tale
Social protest: Liverpool
Redburn's wanderings without a guidebook
Harry Bolton and London
Leave Liverpool
Carlo and the immigrants
Social protest: immigrants
Arrive home

In this list there are some chapters that are characteristic of Melville. The story of the Irrawaddy is one. Why include it except that Melville read it or heard about it somewhere, liked it, and used it to add a touch of romance to the essentially prosaic guidebook tour of Liverpool. In other books, notably *Moby-Dick*, Melville introduced similar stories of other ships but gave them added significance by his use of allusions.

Where did Melville get his material for this hodge podge called *Redburn*? From the dated list of books that he read, we infer that he did not borrow books of travel or epic adventure to give him background material, as he did when he wrote *Mardi*. 
But he used some books to help him. The internal evidence gathered by Gilman and others shows what some of these books were. I have mentioned Redburn's similarity to some of the boy heroes of popular naval adventures. Redburn is very much like Peter Simple, Marryat's hero. He experiences melodramatic scenes like Jacob Faithful, another Marryat hero. He also owes something to the generally known humor associated with greenhands aboard ship. The jokes played on him are stock parts of a folk tradition which occurred in periodicals and books time and again.

Willard Thorpe has shown that Melville undoubtedly made use of a guidebook of Liverpool. The book was probably *The Picture of Liverpool* (1803) which he could have inherited from his father. Numerous parallels, place names, and dates in *Redburn* indicate that Melville was familiar with his father's trip to Liverpool and that Redburn, in tracing his father's footsteps, was really following Allan Melville's. Gilman summarizes Melville's use of the guidebook by saying:

... Melville's use of the guidebook in *Redburn*, including the hotel incident, shows that here again, instead of reproducing his own experience, he is employing his familiar technique of adaptation and invention for dramatic ends.

Much of *Redburn*, of course, has an autobiographical basis. This experiential knowledge probably was the source for many of the early chapters, for some of the minor characters like Max, Jackson, and Harry Bolton, and for the description of the evil parts of Liverpool. Gilman has shown that the preacher in the square and the beggars' signs were really things that
Melville could have seen. The originals for characters like Max and Jackson are almost impossible to trace. They could be characters in a book Melville once read. They could have been real sailors that Melville met on his first or later voyages. Somewhere between the two extremes is the true explanation.

The vividness of Jackson's presentation and his close resemblance to another Melvillian creation, Captain Ahab, suggests that he could have been real. The log of the St. Lawrence never mentions a sailor dying as Jackson died on the Highlander and this is the only fact about Jackson that would have been recorded in the log.

Harry Bolton sounds as if he were a purely imaginative creation. His and Redburn's initial adventures as well as his unimportant role aboard ship indicate that Melville was not reworking experienced fact into fiction. Harry, in addition to serving as a contrast to Redburn, could be part of a sea tradition with which Melville later deals. Harry Bolton is a great deal like Jack Chase, the captain of the foretop, in White-Jacket. Both are English, both belong to well-to-do families, both are handsome, blond gentlemen with polite manners. Both have been unfortunate wastrels who ended their lives at sea. Most important of all, both were close friends of a fictionalized Melville, both argued endlessly over the respective merits of England and America, and both had beautifully sweet singing voices. Jack Chase was a hero and a leader of men. His singing voice was merely another quality
which made him a favorite with men and officers. Harry is pictured as Chase's opposite in moral fiber. His singing voice is the only virtue that redeems his cowardice in the sailors' eyes. Perhaps Melville once knew an Englishman with a sweet singing voice, not quite like either Jack or Harry, who ended his life at sea. The recurring qualities suggest that he did.

Scholarly research has yielded the sources for many of the scenes, people, and incidents in *Redburn* but it has not yet shown where Melville got the details for his vivid picture of life aboard a plague ship and for the picture of the immigrants in the hold. We know that Melville never sailed on such a ship. We know, also, that several minor, comic scenes involving the immigrants occurred in Nathaniel Ames's story of his sailor days, *A Mariner's Sketches* (1830). Charles Anderson has shown that Melville used Ames's book as a source for some scenes in *White-Jacket*. Perhaps Melville used other books to give him the details of the immigrants' accommodations, cleaning out the plague-ridden hold, and sailing safely past the quarantine inspectors.

If Melville did not experience such a terrible event, why did he write about it? The answer is probably threefold. The subject makes a good, action-filled story. The high incidence of typhoid fever and other diseases in port cities like New York and Boston was a topic of major interest. Newspapers and magazines wrote editorials about it while the legislatures established quarantines and immigration centers to prevent the spread of contagion. (See Appendix B.) But still, every sum-
mer, New York, Boston, and other ports suffered epidemics of communicable diseases. Melville was associated with some of the men who were speaking out against the illegal and fool-hardy actions of captains who did not want to be quarantined. In the *Literary Gazette*, published by Evert Duyckinck, this editorial appeared on page fourteen of the February 1847 (No. 1) issue:

The disease of ship fever, a severe form of typhus, is more than usually prevalent in New York, among its ordinary victims, the newly arrived immigrants. It is engendered on board of the crowded passenger ships during the long westward passages, from the herding together in the close steerages, of large numbers, like the slaves in the slave-ships, of meagerly clothed and fed men, women, and children ignorant of the danger to health and life from the neglect to the ordinary laws in regard to air, food, and cleanliness.

The editorial suggests as remedies the limiting of passengers according to the ship's tonnage, the diffusion of information to crews and officers, and the use of strict discipline to regulate the cleanliness and habits of the passengers.

These remedies are incorporated in the ideas Melville presented so graphically in *Redburn*. Several times Melville discusses current laws, especially in chapter LVIII, where the plague is at its worst. He says in part:

Of late, a law has been passed in Congress, restricting ships to a certain number of emigrants, according to a certain rate. If this law were enforced, much good might be done; and so also might much good be done were the English law likewise enforced concerning the fixed supply of food for every emigrant embarking from Liverpool. But it is
hardly to be believed that either of these laws is observed.

But in all respects no legislation, even nominally, reaches the hard lot of the emigrant. What ordinance makes it obligatory upon the captain of a ship to supply the steerage passengers with decent lodgings, and give them light and air in that foul den, where they are immured, during a long voyage across the Atlantic? What ordinance necessitates him to place the galley, or steerage-passengers' stove, in a dry place of shelter, where the emigrants can do their cooking during a storm, or wet weather? What ordinance obliges him to give them more room on deck, and let them have an occasional run fore and aft? -There is no law concerning these things. And if there was, who but some Howard in office would see it enforced? and how seldom is there a Howard in office! 12

The third reason for Melville's keen interest in the subject is autobiographical.

By the spring of 1832 he (Herman) had become a clerk in the New York State Bank, of which his grandfather, the General, was a founder, and his Uncle Peter a trustee. 13

Herman's first summer at the bank was punctuated by a dramatic flight to Pittsfield with the rest of the family to escape a plague of cholera . . . But after only five days of these country joys, Herman returned, at his uncle's request, to Albany. There he lived through the terrible days of July and August when over eleven hundred cases of cholera developed and four hundred people died. The mayor called for a day of "prayer, fasting, and humiliation" which was observed on August 3 with all stores closed. 14

Melville probably chose his subjects, fever and the plight of the immigrants, because they were a current problem about which many people were interested. In Redburn, even though the book is supposed to be about a voyage taken in the 1830's, the later chapters often approach a current point of view. At
one time, Melville says:

Let us waive that agitated national topic, as to whether such multitudes of foreign poor should be landed on our American shores; . . . if they can get here, they have God's right to come; though they bring all Ireland and her miseries with them.¹⁵

At another time he says:

It was something to be marvelled at, that the shocking fate which, but a short time ago, overtook the poor passengers in a Liverpool steamer in the Channel, during similar stormy weather, and under similar treatment, did not overtake some of the emigrants of the Highlander.¹⁶

What fate overtook these people Melville only implies because he expected his readers to be aware of it; it was of topical interest.

This is not to imply that Melville's protest was less sincere because it was topical. It is merely to point out that the material out of which part of Redburn was made was weekly newspaper material, and that Melville had a reason for selecting the subject matter that he used. The real voyage of the St. Lawrence took place in 1839. That ship did not carry any immigrants. Redburn was written in 1849 about an imaginary ship which did carry them. Between 1831 and 1840, three-quarters of a million people, many of them from Ireland and Germany came here. Between 1841 and 1850, one and three-quarters million people, most of them from Ireland, emigrated to the United States. As he later did in White-Jacket, Melville chose his theme to coincide with the reading public's interest.
NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. Leyda, op. cit., p. 306.
3. Ibid., p. 126.
4. For a contemporary story using the greenhand theme see "The 'Green Hand'.--A 'Short' Yarn." Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXIV (1848), 743 ff.
8. Ibid., pp. 136; 141.
10. Ibid., p. 200.
16. Ibid., p. 369.
Melville finished writing *Redburn* in the spring of 1849, while he was readying *Redburn* for his publishers, he started writing *White-Jacket*. It was begun in June 1849 and finished in August of that year. 

*White-Jacket* is a narrative of life aboard a man-of-war. It deals with Melville's adventures aboard the U. S. Frigate *United States*, or as he calls her, the Neversink. As the book opens, Melville has recently embarked on her as an ordinary seaman for the cruise back to the United States. The ship is lying in the harbor at Callao, Peru, where Melville— or White-Jacket—infers that he had joined her. Actually, Melville embarked on the *United States* in Honolulu, Sandwich Islands, in August 1843.

After leaving the whaler *Charles and Henry* which had brought him to the islands from Tahiti, Melville got a job as a clerk in Isaac Montgomery's store in Honolulu. He signed a contract with Montgomery to work there until July 1, 1844. But after six weeks as a shopkeeper, Melville was ready to return to sea. While he was in the islands, several important events happened. The Hawaiian king was deposed by the British consul and then reinstated by the commander of the British fleet. The Americans and Europeans on the islands were upset while for some ten days in August 1843 the streets were full of rioting and feasting. But Melville chose to ignore the entire Hawaiian setting in writing *White-Jacket*.
Melville was aboard the United States for fourteen months cruising to the Marquesas and Society Islands; Mazatlan, Mexico; Callao and Valaparaiso, as well as around the Cape to Rio de Janiero and Boston. He had already written about the Marquesas and Society Islands in great detail but he had never written about the South American coast or Hawaii. An account of his homeward voyage would have given him ample opportunity to do so. It would also have given him a chance to add bits about the islands or to refer to his earlier adventures; in short, to write a sequel. He chose, instead, to limit White-Jacket entirely to life on a man-of-war. Only once did White-Jacket, Jack Chase, and some other gentlemanly fellows leave the ship; this was to pay a brief and vaguely described visit to Rio de Janiero.

Melville condensed the fourteen months cruise to three months. Nevertheless, he included all the major incidents of the journey. The action of the narrative is quite simple. The ship leaves Callao harbor sailing southward for the Cape. Rounding Cape Horn, they encounter a stiff storm but manage to weather it out. Their next port is Rio where they spend several weeks at anchor. Then they sail for home and land in Boston.

In a letter written to his father-in-law Lemuel Shaw, October 6, 1849, Melville dismissed both White-Jacket and Redburn as books which he had written only for money.

... But no reputation that is gratifying to me, can possibly be achieved by either of these books. They are two jobs, which
I have done for money—being forced to it as other men are to sawing wood. And while I have felt obliged to refrain from writing the kind of book I would wish to; yet, in writing these two books, I have not repressed myself much—so far as they are concerned; but have spoken pretty much as I feel.

This book differs from its predecessors in several ways. It is not a travel book like Typee, a picaresque adventure like Omoo, nor an allegorical romance like Mardi. White-Jacket is an ostensibly true record of life aboard a man-of-war written for amusement and propaganda. The character of White-Jacket is a strange blend of the Melville who was writing the book and a humorous, shadowy man who comes from nowhere and has no real part in the story except to observe. Melville in Typee is both hero and narrator. Melville in Redburn is a patchwork, unconvincing creation. Melville in White-Jacket, like Ishmael, simply is. He observes and records with wit and spirit, or with vehement protest. He reacts strongly to abuse and injustice; he has friends; but only twice—once melodramatically and once unconvincingly—is he the hero and center of attention. The real hero of White-Jacket is Jack Chase, captain of the foretop. In Moby-Dick, the narrator has become the inscrutable Ishmael. In experimenting with narrators, Melville has gone from the picaresque hero to the omniscient spectator, a mere point of view.

White-Jacket is composed of several different narrative fragments. I have divided it into chapters dealing with the jacket, the story centering about Jack Chase, a series of seven or eight fictional incidents which were supposed to have
occurred during the voyage, and the informative and protesting chapters about life aboard a man-of-war. These last chapters occupy over half the book and give a very complete picture of life in the United States Navy.

The jacket which gives its name to the narrator and the book is both a source of humor and a mystic symbol in the book. As the narrator explains in chapter I, he was without a grego, or sailor's surtout, and could not get one from the purser so he manufactured his own. It was a white duck shirt which he quilted with old rags to make warm.

...—a strange-looking coat, to be sure; of a Quakerish amplitude about the skirts; with an infirm, tumble-down collar; and a clumsy fulness about the wristbands; and white, yea, white as a shroud. And my shroud it afterward came very near proving, as he who reads further will find.

Such, then, was my jacket: a well-patched, padded, and porous one; and in a dark night, gleaming white, as the White Lady of Avenel!

This jacket is the most important unifying element in the story although it is discussed in only five chapters (I, IX, XIX, XLVII, XCII). In chapters IX and XLVII it is treated humorously. In order to keep his few possessions from being stolen, White-Jacket sews into the jacket a myriad of pockets. They protect his possessions, but they also hold water so badly that the jacket never quite dries out. White-Jacket sees an opportunity to rid himself of his unlucky garment at a ship's auction, but no one will buy it. The jacket and the misery it causes its owner remind the reader of the leather hunting jacket worn by Wellingborough Redburn. In each instance,
Melville gives a comic picture of the owner's plight.

But the white jacket is imbued with an unlucky power that Redburn's jacket never had. The white jacket serves to set the author apart from the other seamen. It singles him out for extra duty and helps to keep him from being assimilated into the world of the ship. The narrator's breeding, outlook, and interests always differ from those of the ordinary seaman. The chief importance of the jacket is that it twice almost causes the death of the narrator. The first time (chapter XIX) a shipmate in the foretop mistakes the jacket for a ghost floating in the air and loosens the yard from under White-Jacket. The second time, in the most thrilling chapter of the book, White-Jacket describes his fall from the mast into the ocean and his desperate attempt to escape from the water-soaked jacket that is dragging him under. This is in chapter XCII, the last but one, of the book. White-Jacket's escape from the jacket is synonymous with his escape from the ship and the United States Navy.

There may or may not have been a real jacket. The purser's records show that the United States had an ample supply of pea jackets in her stores and it is quite probable that Ordinary Seaman Herman Melville was issued one. But in a letter to Richard H. Dana, Jr., written May 1, 1850, Melville said:

... it was a veritable garment—which I suppose is now somewhere at the bottom of Charles river. I was a great fool, or I should have brought such a remarkable fabric (as it really was, to behold) home with me.
If the jacket was indeed at the bottom of the Charles River it was because Melville threw it there. The thrilling fall from the mast described as happening at sea did not happen to Melville. He read about it in Nathaniel Ames's *A Mariner's Sketches* (1830), the same book he used as a source for the Irish immigrants' anecdotes in *Redburn*. Charles Anderson in *Melville in the South Seas* has reprinted Ames's account and it is surprisingly like Melville's account in *White-Jacket*. The difference is in the rhetorical sentences interspersed at the end. The Ames account is told in simple, action-packed declarative sentences:

I kept going down, down, till it appeared to me that the seven fathoms and a half, (the depth of water at our anchorage,) had more than doubled since we let go our anchor.

After a while I became stationary and soon began slowly to ascend. When I looked up, I saw high, very high above me, a dim, greenish light, which became brighter and brighter till at last I bounced on the surface like a cork.

I immediately swam to the accommodation ladder and went on board.

Melville duplicated this matter of fact narrative in his account:

I whipped out my knife, that was tucked at my belt, and ripped my jacket straight up and down, as if I were ripping open myself. With a violent struggle then I burst out of it, and was free. Heavily soaked, it slowly sank before my eyes.

Melville adds:

Sink! sink! oh shroud! thought I; sink forever! accursed jacket that thou art!

"See that white shark!" cried a horrified voice from the taffrail; "he'll have that man down his hatchway! Quick! the grains! the grains!"
The next instant that barbed bunch of harpoons pierced through and through the unfortunate jacket, and swiftly sped down with it out of sight.

Then he returns to the style of Ames's simple narrative:

Being now astern of the frigate, I struck out boldly toward the elevated pole of one of the lifebuoys which had been cut away...

There is a difference, too, in the use Melville made of the incident. In Ames's book it is only a thrilling, true-life adventure. In White-Jacket it is the climax of the book and a fitting end to the mystical symbol. Melville retained the tone as well as the details of Ames's account because its horrible fascination is increased by the matter-of-fact manner of the first person narrative.

Of interest, also, is Melville's linking of death, ghostliness, and the supernatural power of the jacket with the color white. He had hinted at the association in Mardi; he was to elaborate it in Moby-Dick.

There are two other incidents in White-Jacket which stand out because of their similarity to incidents in Moby-Dick and Billy Budd. Both incidents, moreover, have their counterparts in the log of the United States Frigate United States. The first concerns the cooper, Bungs, who made the casks that were towed by the frigate as life buoys. Some of the sailors suggested that he make them tighter but he staked his life on the soundness of his casks. The next day Bungs fell overboard and drowned because the casks were rotten.

In chapter CXXVI of Moby-Dick, a sailor going aloft to
look for signs of the white whale falls overboard.

The lifebuoy—a long slender cask—was dropped from the stern, where it always hung obedient to a cunning spring; but no hand rose to seize it and the sun having long beat upon this cask it had shrunked, so that it slowly filled, and the parched wood also filled at its every pore; and the studded iron-bound cask followed the sailor to the bottom, as if to yield him his pillow.

To replace this life buoy, Starbuck ordered the carpenter to seal and caulk Queequeg's coffin. It was this same coffin which bobbed to the surface to save Ishmael's life.

The second incident occurs when a sailor called Shenly dies and is buried at sea. As the body sank in the sea "all beheld a snow-white, solitary fowl, which—whence coming no one could tell—had been hovering over the mainmast during the service, and was now sailing far up into the depths of the sky."  

Similarly, when the Pequod sinks into the sea there is a sky hawk circling above the mast. But the bird of heaven instead of rising is drawn down into the sea with the ship. The effect, moreover, of a snow-white bird rising heavenward at a sailor's death is repeated at the conclusion of Billy Budd except that this time the whiteness is "the vapoury fleece hanging low in the east, (which) was shot through with a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision."

The abstract of the Log of the U. S. Frigate United States substantiates the irony of Bungs's death and the burial at sea of a sailor named Conly Dougherty. But the treatment given
the incidents shows how well Melville could integrate them with the rest of White-Jacket. Shenly's death in particular is linked with two subjects of protest in the book: the callous indifference toward individuals and the poor treatment given the sailors in sick bay.

White-Jacket is basically Melville's protest against the injustices and miseries of a seaman's life in the United States Navy. He undoubtedly expressed his own opinions and had some hope that White-Jacket would help remedy the seaman's plight. Nevertheless, White-Jacket, like Melville's other books, was written several years after Melville's experience. Why, after six years of civilian life, did he believe it necessary to level a blast at the navy? Part of the answer is that there was a rather general examining of naval laws and shipboard life about 1849. Numerous magazines and newspapers were advocating the abolition of flogging, the general improvement of seamen's lives, and the revising of the Articles of War. White-Jacket is one of those pieces of protest. It was written partly as propaganda and partly to catch the public's fancy.

Fully thirty-eight of the book's ninety-three chapters are directly concerned with explaining how a large frigate operates and what the men aboard her do. The chapters are equally informative and educational, but the author's tone changes as the book progresses. The overall theme of White-Jacket could be summarized as a protest against the undemocratic, anti-individualistic disregard for the ordinary seaman on
these ships. Melville does not whitewash the sailors. He admits quite frankly that the navy is the asylum for the perverse, the home of the unfortunate, and that every known vice and crime can be found there. He tempers his picture somewhat by showing that the hard life the sailors lead is directly responsible for what happens when they have some liberty. As a contrast to the sordid picture of the average sailor, Melville presents the noble Jack Chase, captain of the foretop. Chase is everything that the jolly tar should be. He is the kind of man, Melville suggests, of whom the navy should be composed.

Melville begins his description of the world on a man-of-war on a humorous note. He explains White-Jacket's bewilderment at being aboard such a large ship where he is assigned so many duties and so many numbers to remember. The humor continues as he describes the diversions of the crew, the kinds and duties of the officers, the meals, and even the thievery aboard ship. He humorously equates the duties of the men with their good or bad tempers. Then gradually the humor disappears as Melville begins to introduce his principal complaints: flogging and flogging through the fleet, the incompetency of the officers, the unnecessary and injurious ceremonies on a man-of-war, the undemocratic social void between officers and men, and the Articles of War.

Each of these complaints is taken up in detail as the normal occurrences of the cruise bring them to the fore. And the more Melville has to say about them, the more bitter his tone
becomes. The first flogging is the direct result of a comic incident concerning a dish of dunderfunk. The second near-flogging almost involves White-Jacket himself. He is saved either from the cat or suicide by Jack Chase and a corporal of marines. The third and last flogging concerns an old tar named Ushant who, with the spirit of English yeomanry, stands up to his captain because his personal right to wear a beard is threatened. Ushant's punishment leads Melville to discuss flogging through the fleet and keelhauling.

According to the log of the United States, Melville never came near being flogged. The incident simply dramatized the author's position and made Chase a hero again.

The incompetency of the officers receives much of Melville's ire. At first Lieutenant Selvagee, the lavender-water scented officer, is ridiculed and contrasted with Mad Jack, another lieutenant. Then in Rio harbor, the purser is proven to be a knave and the ship's policeman, the master-at-arms, a smuggler. Captain Claret himself (whose father fought at Brandywine) is pictured as an incompetent, a drunkard, and perhaps a vindictive coward. When the ship is caught in a terrible storm while rounding the Horn, the Captain gives the wrong orders. They are immediately countermanded by Mad Jack who seizes command in order to save the ship. Because Claret knows that he is wrong, he does not even reprimand the lieutenant for insubordination.

Then there are the midshipmen whom Melville dislikes because they are ignorant schoolboys in a position to give
foolish orders to seamen who have to obey. One of the bits of true naval history that Melville relates in his discussion of midshipmen is the unsuccessful attempt of a midshipman to lead a mutiny and seize the U. S. Brig Somers. This mutiny was the basis for Billy Budd, also. It occurred in 1842 while Melville was aboard the whaler Charles and Henry. The news reached the Pacific fleet about the time Melville was aboard the United States. However, Melville undoubtedly learned all the details after he reached home because his cousin, Guert Gansevoort, was a lieutenant aboard the Somers when the mutiny took place.

The final group of officers to be satirized is the ship's doctors. One of the sailors is shot by a sentry while the ship is in Rio harbor. Cadwallader Cuticle, the chief surgeon, and his assistants gather to perform an operation on the man. The fate of the poor sailor, his suffering, and the operation itself are insignificant in comparison with the naval and professional etiquette that must be observed, and with the importance of Chief Surgeon Cuticle. While the man is dying and in a great deal of pain, Cuticle steps aside from cutting to allow one of the younger surgeons to get a chance to learn how. The operation is eminently successful but the poor sailor dies— a fact that Cuticle dismisses with an invitation to an autopsy.

"'The body also, gentlemen, at ten precisely,' . . . 'I predicted that the operation might prove fatal; he was very much run down.'"25

The consummate irony of these three long chapters and the brilliantly drawn medical group are not Melville's entirely.
The germ of the situation was described by Tobias Smollett in chapter XXVIII of *Roderick Random*. There, the surgeon, Mackshane, attempts to amputate a sailor's leg but is politely overruled by his junior medical officers. Smollett's surgeon retires and leaves Roderick, Morgan, and Thomson to care for the sailor. Melville adopted the ironic tone and the satiric style of the eighteenth-century novelist and gave to Surgeon Cuticle, Mackshane's characteristics. He even duplicated the deferential attitude of the junior officers but did not stop the amputation as Smollett did. Melville continued the ironic tone and turned out a devastating portrait of naval doctors. Some details of the operation and the surgeon's name, Cadwallader, also come from Smollett's book.¹²⁶

Edward Rosenberry in his recent study of Melville's humor, *Melville and the Comic Spirit*, says of this sustained satire:

> ...Notwithstanding such defects as a superficial debt to Smollett and an excessively archaic whimsy in the naming of the doctor and his colleagues, the episode of Surgeon Cadwallader Cuticle and his infamous operation is a minor masterpiece. Here, for the first time on a comparable scale, Melville gave his characters enough rope to carry out on their own terms the tragi-comedy of their ineptitude, and ultimately to hang themselves by. The portrait of Cuticle, the professional egoist, is a beautiful thing. If his outside is drawn with the grossness of a Smollett, his inside is explored with the sensitivity of a Hawthorne.²⁷

The undemocratic social void is illustrated by the misery of the seaman, Mandeville, who is not recognized by a former fellow-officer even when he reminds the officer of their one-time comradeship. Melville adds a story about two brothers...
one a seaman, the second a midshipman. The seaman, a fellow aboard the Neversink, is afraid that his brother, who is an officer on a supply ship that is to pull into the harbor, will see him and be ashamed. Perhaps this incident was based on the fact that Melville was a seaman on the United States when another of his cousins, Midshipman Stanwix Gansevoort, came alongside the United States in the U. S. Store Ship Erie on February 18, 1844. Perhaps, like the seaman Frank, Melville knew that his officer-cousin was aboard the visiting ship and was ashamed to be seen. More probably, he learned that they had been in the same harbor after they both returned home.

Melville's bitterest denunciations are reserved for the Articles of War which is the backbone of the protocol and misery that Melville hated. He quotes the Articles, explains the occurrences in the French, English, or American navies that made them necessary, and concludes with an urgent appeal that they be changed. He admits that discipline and order are essential on a ship or in a fleet, but he says that good officers like Admiral Collingwood are capable of commanding that respect and getting that discipline without the aid of the cat, a troop of marines, or undue harshness. Furthermore, Melville advocates a democratic navy for a democracy, rather than the outdated lord and serf relationship inherited from the English navy.

Each theme of protest is expressed in bitterly propagandistic terms and then dramatized when White-Jacket ostensibly tells what happened to his shipmates aboard the Neversink. Ushant's punishment crystalizes the theme of the individual's
rights versus the Articles of War; White-Jacket's narrow escape climaxes the theme of flogging; Mad Jack's dramatic insubordination pin points Captain Claret's ineptitude, and so on. Melville made one attempt at symbolism in creating the jacket. He even attempts to imply by the emergence from the jacket, White-Jacket's emergence from bondage, from the navy, and from self-imposed restrictions. But this is the only object which becomes a symbol because of allusiveness. Moby-Dick is told primarily by means of symbols.

The White-Jacket incidents resemble a series of sketches loosely united by setting, theme, story framework, and a single narrator. They are not very different in form from the true incidents related by Ames in A Mariner's Sketches and show the simplicity of Melville's narrative sources. But the skill with which the individual incidents are handled and certain characters are portrayed displays the hand of a born storyteller.

The final important part of White-Jacket concerns the character and accomplishments of Jack Chase. Jack Chase belongs to the sea tradition of the "pretty sailor" or "jolly tar" just as does Billy Budd, and to a lesser extent, Harry Bolton. The characteristics of this legendary sailor are good looks, a good voice, gentlemanly—yet respectful—manners, and the ability to do his job especially well. Jack Chase is White-Jacket's hero, and the pride of the entire ship. Only a special few are chosen to associate with Chase in the foretop. As soon as Chase has assembled his crew he teaches them how to dress with a jaunty air, how to behave, and not to associate
with anyone they suspect of having served on a whaler. 
White-Jacket keeps the details of his early experiences to himself—admitting that he had served on a merchantman was bad enough in Chase's eyes. In addition to the qualities that made him a jolly tar, Chase had some in common with Harry Bolton. Both were English, both were stanch supporters of John Bull, both sang very well, both had run away from home, both belonged to good English families, and both had the free and easy manners of a Chesterfield gentleman. Moreover, Chase was well read in the contemporary Romantics. He had read Byron, Scott, and Camoens, and spoke of Pelham, MacBeth, and Ulysses. He was also a patron of the arts because he befriended and assisted the two literary men in the crew—Herman Melville and Lemsford the poet, who was really Ephraim, Curtiss Hine, the author of The Haunted Barque, a poem published in 1848.29

Chase is the person who always does the correctly heroic thing at the proper moment. Once he had deserted from the United States Navy to serve as an officer in the Peruvian navy, but when he came back to the United States the officers were so delighted to get him back that he was not punished for deserting. He is the one who stars in the ship's theatricals, gets the captain to give the men liberty in Rio harbor, and who saves White-Jacket from a flogging or suicide.

Unfortunately, Melville becomes so engrossed in editorializing and propagandizing, Jack Chase becomes less important. He is not dropped or forgotten as were people in other Melvil-
lian works. He simply is not continued as the hero. The conclusion leaves him a sailor in the navy.

Although it was written in haste and contains numerous imperfections, *White-Jacket*, like its predecessors, exemplifies that Melville was learning to tell a story. He created a symbol which partially unified the narrative, and by means of which he told his story. This telling of a story through symbols he perfected in *Moby-Dick*. Melville also employed a shadowy narrator whom we know only through his comments as he tells us a story. This type of narrator, Melville developed into Ishmael. The scattered incidents of the plot—Jack Chase's theatricals, White-Jacket's fall from the mast, and Cuticle's operation—show how well Melville had learned to illustrate theme through incident and to create character. *Typee* is told almost entirely as a first-person narrative. It depends for its effect on descriptions of people, places, and memorable incidents. It has little conversation, personal conflict, or even rapid action. In the first part of *Redburn*, Melville displays some abilities as a novelist. His hand is a bit shaky: he borrows too many incidents and bewilders the reader with a medley of garish and comic experiences. Nonetheless, he does create plausible sailors like Max and Jackson and he combines the characterization with excellent scenes of life at sea. These same excellences emerge from *White-Jacket*.

The chief fault of *White-Jacket* is its unevenness. The last half of the book is too bitter, too bombastic, and too overladen with reformation themes to be carried by the slight
narrative. The popularity of the book was chiefly due to the topical subject which made up for the lack of artistry. Melville simply did not take the time to turn raw ideas and knowledge into fiction. That he was capable of creating a better fiction Melville proved when he spent many months writing and rewriting his masterpiece.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1. Leyda, op. cit., p. 192.
2. Ibid., p. 171.
3. Ibid., p. 167.
5. Except for an Appendix to Typee on Hawaii.
7. Ibid., p. 361.
8. Leyda, op. cit., p. 316.
10. Leyda, op. cit., p. 185.
15. Ibid., p. 498.
17. Moby-Dick, II, 304.


In the preceding discussions of Melville's early romances and adventure narratives, I have attempted to show Melville's first attempts at style, form, characterization, and artistic technique. This concluding chapter will discuss the use he made of these techniques when he wrote his greatest book, Moby-Dick. There are many interpretations, explanations, and criticisms that have been and could be given of this book. There are many levels upon which it could be discussed. A critic could write much about the philosophic content and the "cosmic" implications of Ahab's pursuit of Moby-Dick. He could write, too, about the religious views expressed in the book; or about the relation of Melville's thought to that of other American writers of his day: Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, or Poe. This discussion will be limited to the technical aspects of the book. In this discussion I hope to show how Melville once again used the materials that comprised his early books and to what extent the excellence of Moby-Dick is indebted to his first attempts to express himself.

By 1850, Melville had written about most of his adventures in the South Pacific and aboard ship. His interest, in the meantime, had shifted to the Revolutionary War. Melville had a strong sense of family importance and he was quite proud that his grandfather had commanded Fort Stanwix during the Revolution. So proud, in fact, that he named one of his sons Stanwix. Because of his interest in the subject, Melville had bought and
and read many books about the war. Among other things, in
the fall of 1849 he acquired a pamphlet about the life of a
Revolutionary War hero from Cranston, Rhode Island, named
Israel Potter. He moved his family to an uncle's farm in the
vicinity of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in July 1850. He had
already begun work on his Israel Potter story the year before
when he was in England to sell the manuscript of *White-Jacket*.

But for some reason, when he returned from England in
February 1850, Melville laid aside the idea of Potter's bio-
ography and set to work on his sixth story about the sea. Be-
fore he again returned to the Potter manuscript, Melville wrote
the greatest book of his career, *Moby-Dick*.

Many of the earlier Melville romances show that Melville
was beginning to learn how to tell a fictional story, or rather,
how to retell true incidents he had experienced or read about
and synthesize them into a unified romance with some kind of
plot and a few believable characters.

*Moby-Dick* is the final, most perfect synthesis of the mat-
erial used in *Typee*, *Omoo*, *Redburn*, and *White-Jacket*. These
books give the first version of the material. They are the per-
sonal narratives which can be matched with autobiographical fact.
In them are people like Dr. Long Ghost, Toby, Jackson, and Jack
Chase whom scholars have tried to link with real people. In
the case of Long Ghost, Toby, and Chase, they have succeeded.

When he was writing *Typee* and *Omoo*, Melville was working
with what Newton Arvin called "a literary form that was already
fully evolved and perfectly well defined when he began to write."
He had numerous models at hand from which to learn how to handle the parts of his story. By and large, he dealt with his sojourn in the Marquesas and Tahiti as other, earlier travellers had told of their travels in Africa or the Americas. But Melville's superior narrative and descriptive power impelled him to fictionalize parts of his story. To *Typee* he added the unifying element of suspense. To *Omoo* he added his ability to sketch and capture on paper such picaresque characters as the Long Ghost and the Tahitian pilot, Jim.

In both books he displayed another ability which set his work apart from the ordinary travel narrative. Melville had an eye and an ear for picturesque scenes. Even in his earliest books he made much of the exotic settings and the colorful scenes that he saw. Where most of the authors of the narratives he read wrote as if they had seen only ordinary sights, Melville had an artist's eye and memory for the details that distinguished what he had seen from other places. The result, as far as many of his readers were concerned, was fiction, not true experience.

So he tried fiction. When he set about writing *Mardi*, Melville was forced to create his own literary form. He drew on miscellaneous forms and styles. The reader can distinguish in *Mardi* the eighteenth-century *voyage extraordinaire* of Swift and Rabelais, as well as echoes of their satire. In it, too, are mythical demi-gods of the South Pacific intermixed with the Gothic pseudo-Norse folk heroes. There are parts which derive from the travel narrative, and there are parts which owe much
The Poetry of Flowers and Fanny Osgood's sentiment. *Mardi* encompassed so many discordant forms that it became unwieldy and formless. As a literary creation and as a social and philosophical study it failed.

Literary form was again Melville's major problem when he turned to the adventures and experiences which became *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*. In each book he adopted a form already in common use. In form, *Redburn* is like Smollett's *Roderick Random*, Marryat's *Midshipman Easy*, and a host of lesser known picaresque sea adventures. *White-Jacket* is a return to the simple first-person narrative form used in *Typee* and by Dana in *Two Years before the Mast*.

Finding a satisfactory literary form, then was a problem for Melville. Without a serviceable, popular structure about which to organize his information, ideas, and story, Melville could go far astray. Unfortunately, there was no author known to him who had developed a form suitable for a model for the kind of books Melville wrote. The picaresque tale as handled by Smollett probably was easiest for him to adapt. Certainly the historical novel of Scott, the society novel of Thackeray, or the novel of social protest written by Dickens were not congenial in theme, development, or structure.

Melville was acquainted with many of the popular novels of his day, but he could find little aid in them for handling the theme of his next book, *Moby-Dick*.

When he wrote *Moby-Dick*, Melville finally found the proper technique for balancing his ideas and story. Once again, as he
had with Mardi, he set about creating his own literary form. This time he succeeded. The narrative form that the author chose was more modern and more appropriate than the voyage extraordinaire. He selected the narrative told ostensibly by a minor character, but really by the omniscient author. Using this narrator he could combine the elements of the first-person narrative with the freedom of the omniscient author to develop character and plot. Melville chose as narrator, the inscrutable Ishmael about whom we know little except that he is an American who is occasionally seized with a desire to escape the "damp, drizzly November" in his soul and go to sea. Ishmael is not provided with the background given to a protagonist like Wellingborough Redburn, nor is he a point of view in the James sense. He simply observes, records, and provides a mouth for Melville to speak with.

Wisely, Melville does not limit Moby-Dick to the experiences of Ishmael and Queequeg as he had limited Typee, Omoo, and White-Jacket to the experiences of the protagonist. This is partially because Melville did not live the story in Moby-Dick. It is also because the scope of Moby-Dick and the character of Ahab become great enough to take over the stage by themselves. In the other books, Melville was never quite able to take his story beyond the experiences of the narrator. He certainly never created a character like Ahab who dominated the action of the story. Finally, he had never before created a plot such as is common in romances. The incidents in his picaresque tales had been held together by the protagonist.
Omo o there is a conflict but no denouement, no climax—only a series of escapades. In *Typee* and *White-Jacket* Melville had created a little suspense to carry the reader's interest forward through the book. In *Typee* the suspense was about the natives' cannibalism; in *White-Jacket*, about the supernatural influence of the jacket. In *Mardi*, the single thread holding the incidents together is Taji's search for Yillah.

*Redburn* marked a decided advance in plot structure. The first third of the book creates a character, involves him in a situation where he is pitted against other people, and follows him as he solves the problem of adjusting to his new environment. But, as I have mentioned in chapter IV, Melville cannot end his book when he ends his theme because he is committed to telling about the entire first voyage of *Redburn*.

This plot was not original with Melville; it had been used again and again by writers of boys' sea adventures. Nevertheless, it was Melville's first attempt at developing a plot and he succeeded reasonably well.

In *Moby-Dick* Melville created a major conflict which was clearly related to his theme and to his philosophical reflections, as well as a series of minor struggles. He constructed the major plot and the minor plots so that they led to the titanic struggle between Ahab and the whale and Ahab and his crew. This was a major artistic achievement for Melville. His gropings in the earlier books finally resulted in a well unified novel.

*Moby-Dick*, like *Mardi*, has a mythical foundation. The
ideas common to all myths are here: the struggle of man with the tremendous power of dumb, unreasoning nature; the mystic influence of fire, storm, and ocean; the culture hero who defies the gods and reaps vengeance on himself.

Many of the scenes in Moby-Dick are given a savage, pre-civilization connotation. The demoniac actions of Ahab, the shattering of nautical instruments by the storm, the character of Fedallah and the harpooners—all these are divorced in time and space from nineteenth-century New York and Boston. The book deals with elemental problems and enhances their savage aspects by allusion.

Part of the myth is Western myth, Greek and Hebrew. Melville utilized well-known parallels in Greek mythology to add to the epic character of his tale. In Mardi, Melville retold legends of Hawaiian and Tahitian culture gods and heroes. They were quite appropriate to the setting but they appealed to no common ground of knowledge shared by the author and his readers. To them, these culture heroes were fairy tale creatures in an impossible world. To compare Taji to Odo, or to draw an analogy with Kamehameha's custom of driving defeated enemies from a ledge meant nothing; to compare Ahab with Prometheus, or Nantucket with Tyre meant something to the readers of his day. In Moby-Dick, Melville enhances his allusions and builds up the epic-myth value of his theme by using Greek references. He does a similar thing in using Hebraic, Biblical names for people and ships. Calling a ship the Rachel indicates its mission to search for its lost boats.
Another ingredient familiar to readers of *Mardi* is the prosaic, sea narrative opening. Both books begin in the same vein as *Typee*, *Omoo*, and *Redburn*, only better. In all of them humor, Phiz-like characters, and a light-hearted unmotivated quest for something leads the hero to sea. In the travel narratives based on his own adventures, Melville soon tires of the sea and seeks land. This happens in *Mardi*, too. The quest in *Redburn* and *Moby-Dick* leads him to sea. In the fictional romances, the original plot seems to change and the reader proceeds at a tangent to his original course. In *Redburn* and *Mardi* the shift is abrupt and disunity results.

In *Moby-Dick* the change, although almost as abrupt, appears less so because the reader's thoughts advance forward to greater considerations. Bulkington's six-inch chapter is the chief stumbling block to the smooth transition. Like the transition chapters in *Mardi*, it appears to be an afterthought. In *Redburn* and *Mardi* the opening humor continues sporadically throughout the book. In *Moby-Dick* the humor rapidly and continuously disappears. Replacing the comic tone is the tragic one centering about Ahab. The demoniac captain, whom the reader meets only after the Pequod is safely at sea, replaces Queequeg as the hero of the book.

Captains Bildad and Peleg are competent and logical people to outfit the Pequod and send her to sea. As long as there is a tie in space and time with the Nantucket, Rhode Island, of 1850, Ahab would be a discordant element. Once the Pequod is alone in a vast, cold ocean, he takes his rightful
place as captain. It has been suggested that Melville did not introduce the primary theme and characters of *Moby-Dick* in the beginning because they would have been difficult for the reader to understand and be interested in without a gradual build up. Perhaps, too, as I have suggested earlier, the shift resulted from Melville's changing his plans after he had begun the book. For whatever reason, Melville managed the transition in *Moby-Dick* more skillfully than he had managed the transitions in *Redburn* and *Mardi*.

Melville developed *Moby-Dick* around the theme of a quest, just as he had developed *Mardi*. Symbolically, *Typee* and *Omoo* also center about a quest—Melville's quest for self-knowledge and perhaps happiness. Newton Arvin sees the Melville in *Omoo* vacillating between becoming a genuine "Sidney cove" like Long Ghost, and returning to the life he had left in New York. Arvin says that he ended his quest by deciding to return, leaving Long Ghost behind in the islands.10

The quest theme, then, was almost characteristic of Melville's thought and narratives. It is characteristic of myths, also. The multiple levels of interpretation in *Moby-Dick* presupposes different interpretations of the quest theme. Essentially Ahab is looking for the particular white whale. In telling the story, Melville is looking for the answers to some pressing questions about the nature of God, man, the universe, and nature. Other American writers of the day, notably the Transcendentalists of Concord, concerned themselves with the same questions, but they never created a work of fiction which
asked these questions in the way that Moby-Dick asked them.

Melville presented his questions about God, man, and nature in terms of the forces in his story: Ahab, the crew (particularly Pip and Starbuck), and the whale. He saw the essential truths of the story reduced to the bare struggles of elemental creatures who are beyond being influenced by man-made rules of right and wrong. He told his story in these simple terms. This is the myth-making power of Melville's narrative.

At the same time, he was forced to cope with society's concepts of right and wrong and to relate them to his myth. He was able to unite the two reasonably well by the use of symbols.

The levels of interpretation in Moby-Dick are partially the result of what Leon Howard calls "allusiveness." Melville enhanced the epic, mythical, or allegorical quality of his story by using a multitude of objects as symbols. These symbols he linked to ideas, parables, and images in Western thought. The result was twofold: the objects took on added importance because of the connotations which made them symbols, and the symbols, taken as a whole, gave added meaning to the story, to the actions of the characters, and to the incidents which evoked them.

Melville was so successful in creating these symbols that some readers, bearing in mind his letter to Sophia Hawthorne (where he disclaims knowledge of the allegorical interpretations Moby-Dick is liable to) have suggested that he was not always aware of the multiple implications in what he wrote. Viewed in this way, his use of symbols and allusiveness become products
of his reading and artistic skill rather than of his philosophical thought.

As I have pointed out in discussing Mardi and White-Jacket, Melville had used allusion to create symbols in his earlier books. He had successfully used Redburn's clothing, the white jacket, and the white shark as symbols by discussing their distinguishing qualities and associating events with the objects. The white jacket became a symbol of death and a symbol of distinction resulting in the owner's isolation. Redburn's clothing, like the overcoat in Gogol's story, is a symbol of former affluence and the pride that accompanies it. These objects were among Melville's first elaborate use of symbols. In Moby-Dick he did a much more thorough job.

Here the allusiveness takes two forms. There are the ideas and objects to which Melville casually refers throughout the entire book. There are, also, the objects which became major symbols and sources of allusiveness. Both reflect Melville's reading and his experiences and each group follows its own pattern. The ideas in his minor comparisons are found in Greek, Norse, Egyptian, Babylonian, Hindu, and Tahitian mythology, and in the Bible, in Christian church history, and in the legends and lore of the American prairie and the American Indian. Obviously, any American writer of Melville's time could be expected to compare things in his books to incidents and people in the Bible, in various Western mythologies, and in America itself. He would have to because the common educational background of the writer and his readers would limit the scope of his refer-
ences. These things would constitute much of the knowledge reader and author share. Obviously, too, Melville use of Tahitian, Hindu, and certain American references reflects his special reading and first-hand travel knowledge and would not often be background common to the readers.

Nevertheless, the extent of Melville's allusions and the parts of the story to which they are linked suggest that Melville had more than casual allusions in his mind. He was specifically linking certain ideas in *Moby-Dick* with other ideas to convey particular connotations. To suggest the antiquity of whaling, he mentions Egyptians standing watch at mast heads and deifying crocodiles in the Nile; the Hindu Vishnu; St. George killing a dragon; the legend of Perseus and Andromeda; and Jonah's experiences with a whale. The royal sovereignty of Ahab is compared with the power of Belshazzar, King of Babylon; Ahab on the ivory tripod is compared to the bones signaling power among Norse chiefs. Much is made, of course, of the fact that the Biblical Ahab was a king of men.

Melville is always careful in *Moby-Dick* to make his allusions appropriate. Part of the problem in *Mardi* was that Bardiana or Mohi pointed out most of the symbolic stories and retold them; thus t'ey lost part of their significance. In *Moby-Dick*, however, Queequeg remarks on the story of Kokovoko because only a South Sea islander would know the legend well enough to refer to it. Similarly, reference to one of the elements evokes a parallel with a legend about the element in
Greek or Persian mythology. In discussing the ocean, Melville speaks of the Persians holding the sea holy; the Greek god of the sea; and the legend of Narcissus. He talks of the wind that blew in New Bedford by elaborating on the Euroclydon wind. He always links fire with Fedallah, the Parsee, and with the Persian fire worshippers. And when Melville dwells on the myth-making part of Ahab's story—when Melville views Ahab as the man withstanding nature and the vast power of nature—Melville compares Ahab with Prometheus.

The Biblical references are linked with the philosophical question of whether it is right to hunt God's creatures either for money or for revenge. Part of this overall discussion is Father Mapple's sermon on Jonah and the numerous references to Jonah in the book. Another part is the use of Biblical names: Ishmael, Ahab, and the Shaker self-styled prophet Gabriel, who sees in Moby-Dick a Shaker incarnation of God. Part of it, also, is the character of Captain Bildad, the Quaker, and his piously money-thirsty relative Aunt Charity. Scattered throughout the book are numerous references to Lazarus, Elijah, Ezekiel, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the islands of King Solomon, and the tower of Babel, the land of Canaan, and the deportment of the angels as recorded in Genesis.

The American references are a product of Melville's trip to Illinois when he was a young man of his extensive reading about the Indians. As Charles Olson has pointed out in his book Call Me Ishmael, the whaling industry in the 1840's in the United States bore a symbolical relation to the midwest-
ern plains and Melville was quite accurate in comparing the ocean to the prairie. Melville was the only major writer of his time to have the background to enable him to see that whalers reaped the harvest of the sea as pioneers reaped the harvest of the plains. Melville also alludes to Mississippi River steamers, the legend of the White Horse of the plains, people seated "like Ontario Indians on the gunwales of the boats," the hieroglyphic palisades on the banks of the Upper Mississippi, and to Crockett and Kit Carson as modern American culture heroes.

These are examples of how Melville used allusiveness to add to the importance of what he was writing about by linking his subject to the broad scope of Western thought. He made use of allusiveness in another way which was much more unusual and which required an even greater ability. He created a series of major symbols with which to tell his story. Each symbol was built about some object or custom ordinarily found aboard whalers. Ishmael explains the normal use of the object or the traditional way of acting and then Melville has Ahab twist or change them in order to acquire a special power over the crew. By doing so, Melville adds immensely to the impact of the story he was telling. The customs that Melville used as symbols were the specksynder, manning the masthead, ordering everyone aft, the gam, and many others. Each custom acquired a sinister connotation because Ahab modified or did not obey it. Among the objects which became symbols were the masthead, the chart, the lamp, the decanter, the forge, the needle,
and the hat.

Melville told his story through symbols because he thought in symbols. For example, the close friendship or kinship which existed between Ishmael and Queequeg is told by means of two or three vignettes centering about customs: sharing a bed at the Spouter-Inn, Ishmael's becoming the helper of the harpooner, Queequeg's tying himself to Ishmael while pitch poling, and, finally, Queequeg's coffin bouncing to the surface to save Ishmael's life when the Pequod sinks. The first vignette establishes an almost marital relationship between them (symbolized, in turn, by the counterpane tattooed on Queequeg); the second tradition binds Ishmael to perish with Queequeg; the third tradition and vignette elaborates on the "Siamese-ligation" or monkey-rope which binds them together. The fourth symbol originated in the tradition of towing something after the ship to give sailors who slipped overboard something to grab.

This symbol of the coffin's being towed to save lives shows, in part, where Melville gathered the material for his symbols. He began with the custom. To it he added the irony of a coffin's serving as a life buoy. Inherent in the details of the story was the Christian virtue of laying down one's life for one's brother. Queequeg was already dead, but an integral part of Queequeg saved his brother Ishmael's life. The entire incident, in turn, is like an incident which occurred aboard the U. S. Frigate United States and which Melville told in White-Jacket. It is the incident of the carpenter's losing
his life because the life buoy he set out was defective. If Melville had this incident in mind, and I believe that he did, he retained the irony and the custom, but refined the circumstances to create a symbol.

Sometimes the objects like Ahab's bone leg and the new one the carpenter makes him, or Ahab's pipe, symbolize Ahab's character and his relations with the crew. Sometimes Melville used sea traditions simply to create mystery or suspense: i.e., when the Manx man predicted that Ahab would be found to have a birthmark from crown to sole; when the appearance of the giant squid simultaneously indicates doom to the ship and the presence of spermwhales. Occasionally, as in the chapter on the whiteness of the whale, Melville creates a symbol of power, terror, and supernatural influence simply by associating with the color white a select group of ideas which convey imperial majesty, ghostly terror, animal savagery, and man-made terror.

Still another use that Melville made of allusiveness was to hint at things to come in order to create interest in the outcome of the story. This device was employed more in the first chapters than after the search for Moby-Dick really got under way. In chapter XXVII, Melville hints at the death of Pip and the theme of the Isolatoes—the men on the Pequod isolated from the world. In chapter XXVI, Melville hints at the moral defeat that is to overtake Starbuck even as he is telling about the man's courage.

This sense of symbol and the knowledge of how to use it was developed to its fullest in Moby-Dick. In a sense, the
entire story is a series of symbols lending themselves to endless interpretation and integration. Some symbols, like Ishmael's assisting Queequeg at the Loom of Time, are fraught with philosophical implications which Melville may have only hinted at and not completely grasped. This use of symbol is an excellent way to unite with the story information such as the scholarly Melville always had at hand. The two compliment each other, if judiciously used. But telling a story in symbols is not as skilled an art as telling a story by integrating the symbols into a plot. *Moby-Dick* was a great achievement in its way but it could not, and did not, lead on to greater books. Out of his experience, his travels, his reading, and his thoughts, Melville had written six books. The last of the six was the capstone of his effort. He could refine his knowledge into no greater symbols, and because he never again experienced such challenging situations, he acquired no new material from which to create new symbols. The two best short novels that he had yet to write were *Billy Budd* and *Benito Cereno*. Each is excellent for its type, but each shows that Melville never quite mastered the art of creating fiction by using characters, plot, sub-plots, conflicts, and climax to bring alive the importance and implications of the author's thought. Melville had to depend too much on a ready-made story and what he could borrow from other writers.

The greatest technical achievement of Melville in writing *Moby-Dick* was the creation of Captain Ahab. William S. Gilman, in the appendix to his book on *Redburn*, compares the character-
istics of Captain Ahab and Jackson, one of the sailors aboard the Highlander.\(^{16}\) The two men were alike in many ways. Each exercised a strange power over the crew of his ship. Jackson is described as the physically weakest seaman on the Highlander; yet, his word settled all disputes, his squinting eye forced everyone to obey his whim. None of the others in the crew could successfully challenge Jackson. Several tried, Redburn says, but their courage failed them when it was needed most. So they laughed when Jackson laughed and kept silent when he looked solemn.

Ahab exercised the same power over his crew and he cowed the few men who attempted to stand up to him.

Both men were consumed with hate. Jackson "seemed to be full of hatred and gall against everything and everybody in the world; as if all the world was one person, and had done him some dreadful harm."\(^{17}\) Ahab's monomania, his desire to revenge himself on the hated white whale turned him against the entire world. He had no love for wife or child, crew or self, great enough to subdue his hate for the whale.

Although they did not resemble each other physically, they both appeared to be partially malformed. Ahab had lost a leg to the whale and bore a long scar from head to toe. Jackson had tuberculosis and suffered from rheumatism. He was bald, yellow, and he squinted.

There is reason to believe that Melville was reworking a character out of *Redburn* into *Moby-Dick*. If he was not, he was nevertheless again linking three qualities into a single char-
acter: physical weakness and deformity, bitter hatred, domineering tyranny.

In *Redburn*, Melville devoted several chapters and some time to Jackson's character and his death, more than to any single character except the protagonist. In *Moby-Dick* Melville used Ahab to unify his story and to give it a purpose. The difference between the two men is the difference between the sketch of a real person which attempts to recapture live qualities on paper and the creation of a fictional character so real that he seems to be more alive than the living. We can imagine that Melville met a man like Jackson whose fantastic power and nobility twisted by bitterness would have commanded the admiration of young Melville. As a character in *Redburn* he is interesting, although not outstanding.

Ahab could be this real man raised to superhuman proportions. Few readers would believe that Melville had ever met a man like Ahab. Ahab sought revenge where Jackson sought relief from pain and weakness. Ahab's monomania was directed at a great, mystical whale; their struggle was a struggle of titans. Jackson's gall was spent on creatures as miserable as himself who refused to fight back. Ahab had a purpose and bent a shipful of people to accomplishing that purpose. Jackson had no purpose.

Two other components of a Melville romance which are familiar to his readers are the use he made of humor and fact. In many of the earlier books, Melville had included chapter after chapter of humor. It was one of the qualities that rec-
ommended *Typee* and *Omoo* to the reader. *Moby-Dick* has its share of humor, also, but instead of pervading the book, it eventually disappears. The first nineteen chapters about Ishmael and Queequeg in New Bedford are predominantly funny. They describe Queequeg's tattoos, Father Mapple's service, Queequeg's first encounter with a wheelbarrow, his clam chowder, and his fast. There are, in fact, very few serious things said in these chapters. They are intended to delight, capture, and keep the interest of the reader.

There is nothing mysterious, although much that is unusual, about Ishmael and the first hero of the book, Queequeg. Gradually the tone changes. The humor is mixed with apprehension and a supernatural propheticness. First an old sailor, in the manner of the Ancient Mariner, accosts Queequeg and Ishmael and twice warns them against shipping with Ahab aboard the Pequod. Melville introduces shadowy forms, too, who creep aboard the ship.

The voyage begins inauspiciously on Christmas Day with Captains Peleg and Bildad taking Ahab's place on deck. By now the tenor of the book has changed. The mood has shifted from broad humor to mystery. Next, it becomes informative and dramatic. One of Melville's stylistic tricks which he had always used was to change the pace of his narrative by alternating adventure, humor, information, poetic description, and satire. He had used it well in the earlier books, but his change of pace in *Moby-Dick* shows a great deal more forethought and skill. In the earlier books the progress of the story was often hampered
by indigestible portions of fact. In *Moby-Dick* Melville was working with a story which could better use the blocks of information to slow down the too rapid development of the plot while they contributed knowledge necessary to the understanding of the plot.

At the same time, the shifting tone has moved the spotlight illuminating the central character from the heathen Queequeg to Captain Ahab who has yet to appear in the book. The strange actions of old Elijah and the two owners of the Pequod, pointing up the unusual non-appearance of Ahab, have forced the reader's attention to focus on him. Melville is once more creating suspense to build reader interest. This time he achieves a greater effect because the overwhelming personality of Ahab and maniacal revenge are greater than the suspense leading up to them.

Melville had probably gathered the basis for the ballast of information that appears in such abundance in *Moby-Dick* in the years that he spent in the South Pacific. He probably had heard talk of a great whale known as Mocha Dick. We can be certain that in his reading about ships and the Pacific he had come across J. N. Reynolds's article on "Mocha Dick: or the White Whale, of the Pacific," that appeared in the *Knickerbocker Magazine* (May 1839) and Owen Chase's *Narrative of the Shipwreck of the Whale-Ship "Essex"* (1821). These narratives of whaling and the white whale were well known to general readers of their day—not just to antiquarians or students of the subject. Melville adopted these tales of shipwreck and the great whale
and made them one of the principal ideas in his sixth book.

The present-day editions of *Moby-Dick* indicate even to a casual reader the hours of reading and research Melville engaged in before he finished his book. As he had done in writing *Typee*, *Omoo*, *Redburn*, and *White-Jacket*, Melville included a great many chapters devoted exclusively to factual information. In his earlier books the factual information had been included as a part of the narrator's tale. In *Typee*, Tom describes in meticulous detail, albeit with a discerning eye and a charming wit, how the natives live in Typee valley. Frequently, the story plot in *Typee* was well integrated with these bits of information, but it was not always so. In *Redburn*, Melville shows he could combine information about ships with a story and begin to make the two come from the eye and mouth of the narrator. In *White-Jacket*, Melville dispenses with any concentrated attempt to integrate his observations of life on a man-o'-war. He had a propagandistic purpose, he was writing rapidly and heatedly, and he turned out many chapters scarcely related to the story of *White-Jacket*.

In *Moby-Dick*, Melville completely separated the chapters on cetology from the remainder of the book. As many readers have discerned, it is possible to read only the chapters on whales, or only the story of Ahab and omit the learned discourse on his adversary.

The opening pages of the volume are partially taken up by an Etymology and Extracts. In the Etymology, Melville supplies
the reader with thirteen names for the giant monster and with possible origins of the English word whale. The Extracts quote seventy-eight sources referring to, or discussing, the whale. The Etymology Melville humorously ascribes to "a late consumptive usher to a grammar school," the Extracts, to "a sub-sub-librarian." Both sections indicate that Melville had read extensively and noted well what he had read. The sources of the Extracts parallel the books we know he had in his library and show the variety of his interests. He quotes, here, from the Bible, from Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, Hobbes, Sir Thomas Browne, Dryden, Pope, Goldsmith, Jefferson, Burke, Blackstone, Lamb, Hawthorne, Cooper, and Daniel Webster. He quotes too, from the many travel narratives, from books about the sea and ships, from medical and legal texts, from poetry and missionary reports, from sixteenth- and eighteenth-century writers, and from Nantucket sea chanties. The sources do not exhaust the references to whales, but they show in what kinds of books the "sub-sub-librarian" chose to look.

The discussions in Moby-Dick on whales, or cetology, occur in chapters XXXII, XXXIII, LVI-LXI, LXXIV, and LXXV. They are a learned and relatively complete biological discussion of the subject. Melville had displayed an interest in, and partial knowledge of, biology in his earlier books. Typee and Mardi particularly mention and describe flora and fauna. These descriptions are the casual observations of a curious traveller. Moby-Dick on whales is an exhaustive study of the subject. The difference is undoubtedly the result of two things: Melville's
greater interest in whales and the greater significance of whales in *Moby-Dick* compared with the significance of the sharks in *Mardi*, for example.

Closely related to the chapters on whales are the chapters on whaling and the explanations of life and customs aboard a whaler. In these chapters, Melville combines the story with the information. Melville knew that the story he was telling would have little interest for most of his readers unless he included much background material. A large part of the book, therefore, is devoted to explanatory material. But the greater, more important part tells the story of Captain Ahab, the whale, and the ship's officers and crew. Sometimes obscured by the powerful struggle, but creating a vividly real stage for Ahab to occupy is the world of the whaling ship.

Melville knew from first-hand experience much of what he was telling. But he read widely in books like J. Ross Browne's *Etchings of a Whaling Cruise* (1846), *Tales of a Whale Voyager to the Arctic Ocean*, and *Miriam Coffin or The Whale Fisherman* for additional information. This material he integrated into a coherent story of one ship's crew searching for a single whale under the demonaic influence of its captain.

He had told a great story—great because of its intrinsic narrative interest, great because of its hero, and great because of the manner in which it is told. He had sifted, used, combined and reused his thoughts and knowledge in writing the book. These symbols were the final artistic expression of what Melville had experienced. He had discovered and perfected a style that suited
him. In it were the cadences of the poet, the scene painting of the artist, the drama of Shakespeare and the Bible, and the humor and portrayal of reality of an American satirist. In this book, also, are vivid characterizations of men, glimpses of the extremes of good and evil of which they are capable, and an understanding of some of the impulses and desires that make them act as they do.

Part of Moby-Dick's continued appeal is in the philosophical and moral ideas, and the social and democratic ideas that prompted it. Part of its appeal today is in its use of symbol and the harsh, unrelenting doom which the author compels Ahab to draw down on himself and his ship. Modern critics who see greatness in the personal symbols of Joyce and Eliot, in the symbolism of James and Dostoyevsky, appreciate the complexity of the symbols in Moby-Dick. They and others acclaim Melville for seeing part of America's economic and social greatness in the men who go down to the sea in ships. Melville undoubtedly understood the importance of these men at a time when everyone's eyes were pointed westward toward California's gold.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

1. Leyda, op. cit., p. 315.
2. Ibid., pp. 378; 395.
5. Ibid., pp. 79; 81.
6. Ibid., p. 90.
9. Ibid., p. 93.
10. Ibid., pp. 86 ff.
13. Ibid., pp. 105 ff.
17. Redburn, p. 78.
19. Moby-Dick, p. x.
20. Ibid., p. xii.
APPENDIX A

Listed below are the books that Melville is known to have bought or borrowed between 1845 and 1852, the years during which he was writing the six books discussed in this paper. The titles and dates are taken from volume I of Jay Leyda's *The Melville Log* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951). The publishing house sometimes given in parentheses refers to the account through which Melville purchased the books.

1845

August 28, 1846  *The Philosophy of Mystery*, Walter C. Dendy

September 8, 1846  *Cowper's Poems* (Wiley & Putnam)

December 3, 1846  *Proverbial Philosophy*, Martin F. Tupper (Wiley & Putnam)

December 12, 1846  *Views Afoot*, J. Bayard Taylor (Wiley & Putnam)

December 18, 1846  *Floral Tableaux*, James Andrews (W & P)

Christmas 1846  *Curiosities of Modern Travel* (W & P)

New Testament and Psalms (Wiley & Putnam)

Cyclopaedia, Compiled by E. Chambers, Gent. (London, 1728 ?)

February 1, 1847  *Etchings of a Whaling Cruise*, J. Ross Browne (Harper & Brothers, 1846) (Harper's)

March 9, 1847  *Sailor's Life and Sailors' Yarns*, Capt. Ringbolt (New York: Francis and Co., 1847)

March 10, 1847  *A History of New York* by Diedrich Knickerbocker (Washington Irving) (New York: 1824)

March 18, 1847  *Littell's Living Age*, vol III (November 3 - December 23, 1844)
March 19, 1847  Undine, Sintram and His Companions, LaMotte-Fouque (New York, 1845)

April 10, 1847  Anatomy of Melancholy, Burton (London, 1801)
Webster's Dictionary (Harper's)
Narrative of Four Voyages, Benjamin Morrell (Harper's)
Scenes, Incidents, and Adventures in the Pacific
Ocean, Thomas J. Jacob (Harper's)
Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle, Charles Darwin (Harper's)
Family Library, three volumes (Harper's)

May 7, 1847  Voyage of U.S. Frigate Potomac, J. N. Reynolds (Harper's)
Vicar of Wakefield, Oliver Goldsmith (New York, 1845)

December 2, 1847  Proissart, Ballads & Other Poems, P. P. Cooke (John Wiley)

January 17, 1848  Melville becomes a member of the New York Society Library; borrows:
Voyage, Bougainville
Hartley on Man, vols. I, II, III

January 18, 1848  Montaigne (John Wiley)
Shakespeare, seven volumes (John Wiley)

Late January  Melville given:
Old Wine in New Bottles, Dr. A. K. Gardner
borrows from E. Duyckinck's library:
Rabelais, vol. II
Barnard's Narrative

February 8, 1848  Fortunate Mistress, Daniel Defoe (John Wiley)
Biographia Literaria, Coleridge (John Wiley)
Anatomy of Melancholy, Burton (John Wiley)
borrows from E. Duyckinck's library:
Sir Thomas Browne, vol. II London, 1835-6)
Rabelais, vol. III (London, 1844?)
Frithiof's Saga, Esaias Tegner
Sir Thomas Browne, two vols.
Rabelais, vol. IV

June 22, 1848  Dante, Cary's trans. (John Wiley)
June 27, 1848  An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Various ... Portraits of Shakespeare, James Boaden (London, 1824)

After July 1848  from E. Duyckinck's library:
Angela, Anne Marsh

September 1, 1848  Vanity Fair, Thackeray (Harper's)
September 11, 1848  transfers membership in New York Society Library
to George Duyckinck
November 13, 1848 asked to review for The Literary World: Romance of Yachting, Joseph C. Hart
November 16, 1848 Webster's Dictionary
December 19, 1848 The Moral, Social, and Professional Duties of Attorneys and Solicitors, Samuel Warren (Harper's)
March 6, 1849 Specimens of English Dramatic Poets, Charles Lamb (John Wiley) borrowed from Boston Athenæum: An Elementary Treatise on Mineralogy, William Phillips (Boston, 1844)
March 19, 1849 Classical Library thirty-seven volumes (Harper's)
March 31, 1849 borrowed from Boston Athenæum: Memoirs of Chateaubriand, (London, 1848)
March 31, 1849 Melville reviews in The Literary World: The California and Oregon Trail, Francis Parkman
April 2, 1849 Macaulay, two volumes (Harper's)
April 13, 1849 borrowed from E. Duyckinck's library: The Holy State and The Profane State, Thomas Fuller (London, 1841)
April 1849 The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr. Peter Bayle

April 25, 1849 Macaulay, two volumes (Harper's)

Before April 28 1849 Melville reviews The Sea Lions, J. Fenimore Cooper

May 25, 1849 Prayer (two copies) (Harper's)

June 1849 Life in A Man-of-War, or Scenes in "Old Ironsides" during Her Cruise in the Pacific by a Fore-Top Man, Henry James Mercier and William Gallop (Philadelphia, 1841)

After July 20, 1849 borrowed from E. Duyckinck's library:
Edinburgh Review, vol. XLI (1824-5) vol. XLVII (1828)
Twice-Told Tales, Nathaniel Hawthorne (Boston, 1837)
Voyage to the Moon, Bergerac

July 23, 1849 Miniature Lexicon of the English Language, Lyman Cobb (Harper's)

October 1849 The Poems and Ballads of Schiller, (Leipzig, 1844)

October 14, 1849 Holidays Abroad, Mrs. Caroline M. Kirkland

October 20, 1849 Melville read an account of Venice in Murray's Guide Book and a chapter from Pickwick Papers, Charles Dickens

October 1849 Melville read some of Lamb's essays

Early fall? The Life and Remarkable Adventures of Israel Potter, (Providence; J. Howard, 1824)

December 4, 1849 bought copy of Telemachus

December 8, 1849 Views and Panorama of the Rhine & Up the Rhine, Thomas Hood (?)

December 15, 1849 Confessions, Rousseau

London, Knight

December 15, 1849 "reading a few chapters in Tristram Shandy, which I have never yet read" (Melville's Journal)

December 17, 1849 Shakespeare

December 18, 1849 map of London (1766)
The Poetical Works of Thomas Chatterton, (Cambridge, 1842)
Guzman de Alfarache, Mateo Aleman, three vols.
December 19, 1849
Sir Thomas Browne (1636)

December 20, 1849
The Life of Samuel Johnson, Boswell ten vols.
Anastasius, Thomas Hope
Caleb Williams, William Godwin
Vathek, William Beckford
Corinne, Mme de Staël
Frankenstein, Mary W. Shelley

December 21, 1849
Posthumous Works, Chalmers eight vols. (Harper's)
Fairy Tales (From All Nations)

December 22, 1849
The Opium Eater, De Quincey

December 25, 1849
The Auto-Biography of Goethe; Truth and Poetry: from My Own Life; The Concluding Books

January 1, 1850
Fifty Comedies and Tragedies, Beaumont and Fletcher
Works of Sir William Davenant, Kt.

January 1850
Confessions, Rousseau
The Works of Ben Jonson
The Life of Samuel Johnson, Boswell vol. I, III
The Works of Sir Thomas Browne
Final Memorials of Charles Lamb, Thomas Noon Talfourd

February 1850
Melville returns to George Duyckinck:
Picture of London, George F. Cruchley
borrows from E. Duyckinck:
Roderick Random, Tobias Smollett
Flower, Fruit, & Thorn Pieces, Jean Paul Richter (London, 1845)

March 16, 1850
Melville's review of The Red Rover, Cooper published anonymously

March 23, 1850
Bible (Philadelphia, 1846)

April 17, 1850
Melville takes out a new membership in the New York Society Library

April 29, 1850
borrows on his new membership:
Arctic Regions, Scoresby
Do. N. Whale Fishery

May 21, 1850
Hints Toward Reform, Horace Greeley (Harper's)

Summer (?) 1850
borrowed from E. Duyckinck's library:
German Romance, Carlyle (Boston, 1841)
Miss Barretts Poems (London, 1844) two vols.
Britannia's Pastorals, Browne (London, 1845)
In Memoriam, Tennyson (London, 1850)
Democratic Review, one volume
Arturus I volume
Merrimack, Thoreau (Boston, 1849)
Margaret, Judd (Boston, 1845)

July 10, 1850
The Natural History of the Sperm Whale, Thomas Beale (London, 1839)

July 16, 1850
A History of the County of Berkshire, Massachusetts... by Gentlemen in the County, Clergymen and Laymen (Pittsfield, 1829)

July 18, 1850
Mosses from an Old Manse, Nathaniel Hawthorne

July 21, 1850
A Summary View of the Millennial Church, or United Society of Believers, Commonly Called Shakers. ...(Albany, 1848)

September (?) 1850
borrows from E. Duyckinck:
German Romance, Carlyle (Boston, 1841) 2 vols.

September 25, 1850
The Book of Common Prayer

October 7, 1850
Melville transfers his right in the New York Society Library

December 30, 1850
charged on Shaw's membership at the Boston Athenaeum:
An Account of the Arctic Regions, with a History and Description of the Northern Whale Fishery, by William Scoresby

January 1, 1851
The Animal Kingdom Arranged in Conformity with its Organization, volume 10, The Class Pisces, Baron Cuvier (London, 1834)

January 8, 1851
Iphigenia in Tauris, Goethe; trans. by George J. Adler (New York, 1850)

January 22, 1851
Twice-Told Tales, Nathaniel Hawthorne, first and second series

March 4, 1851
Narrative, Owen Chase
A Narrative of the Mutiny on Board the Ship Globe of Nantucket, in the Pacific Ocean, Jan. 1824... by William Lay and C. Hussey (New London, 1828)

March 6, 1851
The New England Primer (popular reprint)

March 1851
The Mariner's Chronicle, Being a Collection of the most interesting narratives of Shipwrecks, Fires, Famines, and other Calamitous incident to a Life of Maritime Enterprise (etc), Archibald Duncan (Philadelphia, 1806)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 1851</td>
<td><em>The House of the Seven Gables</em>, Hawthorne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1851</td>
<td>&quot;Ethan Brand&quot; in the <em>Dollar Magazine</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1851</td>
<td><em>The Complete Horse-Man and Expert Ferrier</em>, Thomas de Gray (London, 1670)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 30, 1851</td>
<td>Melville subscribes for a year to <em>Harper's New Monthly Magazine</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 5, 1851</td>
<td>Duyckinck sends Melville a quotation from &quot;Norman de Wardt&quot; (Wynkyn de Worde's <em>Boke of Kervynge</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 10, 1851</td>
<td><em>History of the United States of America</em>, Hildreth vols. IV and V (Harper's)</td>
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APPENDIX B

The *timeliness* of Melville's social protest theme, immigration, in *Redburn* is shown by the numerous state and federal laws that were passed between 1847 and 1850 to regulate the conditions under which the immigrants were transported. The November 1847 issue of the *American Review* discussed the need for an immigration law. A second article appeared in this magazine in April 1848 after one law had been passed. The article said in part:

... Their (the immigrants') physical energy exhausted, they enter on ship-board to breathe a foul air, and to subsist on meagre food, till a fever is generated, which here soon carries them off. ... Prior to the spring of 1847, our general and state laws were wholly inadequate to protect either the immigrant or the city... The condition of embarkation and of transit has often heretofore been most melancholy for the immigrant. ...(Speaking of the captain) Is he not culpable who permits 300 passengers to be crowded into the steerage of one of these vessels with no suitable companion-way for egress to the deck, and with but one fire and one caboose for all their dietary, when the inevitable result must be disorder, personal filthiness, half-cooked food, and contagious fevers? ... Such was the state of things at the opening of 1847, when the Common Council of the city, by a Committee, represented to Congress the necessity of some legislation by that body for the protection of both immigrants and the city. It resulted in the passage of the bill entitled, an Act to regulate the carriage of passengers in merchant vessels, approved March 22nd, 1847... (The provisions of the act are summarized.) ... The Common Council soon after deputed its Committee to the Legislature of the State, with the basis of an Act which has since become a law. It constituted an independent Commission of Emigration, and transferred the entire control of foreign immigrants from the Almshouse to this body.
The following is the number of immigrants arrivals at the port of New York, in the last five years:—

In 1843 - - - - - - 42,989
" 1844 - - - - - - 59,838
" 1845 - - - - - - 78,789
" 1846 - - - - - - 112,479
" the first four months of 1847 to 1st May - - - - 100,000
From the 5th of May, 1847, to January 1848, 129,062. The Number treated for fevers and other diseases in the last period is 8,354. ¹

The article concludes with a discussion of the frauds perpetrated on the immigrants according to a pamphlet of one hundred, fifty-six pages published by order of the House of Assembly of the 11th of October, 1847. The author also includes the provisions of the Grinnell bill then before Congress.

This last bill became a law on May 17, 1848, before Redburn was published. But according to internal evidence in Redburn, Gilman says that Melville did not know about the 1848 law. ²

Another very concise summary of the situation was reprinted as a footnote in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (vol LXIII, no. CCCXIII) June 1848. It is the Report of Executive Council, Canada, Parliamentary Papers, May 5, 1848.

Free-Trade in Emigration.—The numbers who embarked in Europe, in 1847, for Canada, were 90,006; viz., from England, 33,228; from Ireland, 54,329; from Scotland, 3,752; and from Germany, 7,697. Of the whole number, 91,882 were steerage passengers, 684 cabin, and 5,541 were infants. Deducting from this aggregate the Germans and the cabin passengers, the entire number of emigrants who embarked at British ports was 89,738, of whom 5,293 died before their arrival, leaving 84,445 who reached the colony. Of these, it is estimated that six-sevenths were from Ireland. Among the thousands who reached the colony, a large portion were labouring under disease in its worst types, superinduced by the extremity of famine and misery which they had suffered previous to embarkation. Of the 84,445 who reached the colony alive, no less than 10,037 died at arrival—- ³—leaving 74,408. But of these no less than 30,265 were admitted into hospital for medical treatment. Thus
it will be seen that more than one-seventh of the total embarkations died, that more than one-eighth of the total arrivals died, and that more than one-third of those who arrived were received into hospital. . . .

NOTES TO APPENDIX B


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