



National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Canadian Theses Service

Services des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

CANADIAN THESES

THÈSES CANADIENNES

NOTICE

The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30.

**THIS DISSERTATION
HAS BEEN MICROFILMED
EXACTLY AS RECEIVED**

**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE
NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE**

SELF, SOVEREIGNTY, AND CULTURE IN THE MAJOR FICTION
OF HERMAN MELVILLE

by

Lewis Stephen de Paul

A thesis
presented to the University of Ottawa
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
— in
English

OTTAWA, Ontario, 1986



Lewis Stephen de Paul, Ottawa, Canada, 1986.

Permission has been granted to the National Library of Canada to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film.

The author (copyright owner) has reserved other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her written permission.

L'autorisation a été accordée à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de microfilmer cette thèse et de prêter ou de vendre des exemplaires du film.

L'auteur (titulaire du droit d'auteur) se réserve les autres droits de publication; ni la thèse ni de longs extraits de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation écrite.

ISBN 0-315-36480-7





UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

ABSTRACT

In 1851 Herman Melville defined the visible truth as "the apprehension of the absolute condition of present things as they strike the man who fears them not ... the man who, like Russia or the British Empire, declares himself a sovereign nature." The concept of a self in relation to the surrounding cultural environment took various forms throughout Melville's literary career. His experiences in Polynesia brought him into contact with natives whose own selfhood had been altered by the contact with Europeans. The records of Melville's South Seas wanderings, Typee and Omoo, consequently dramatize the construction of an imperial self from out of the fragments of a broken cultural order, what Claude Levi-Strauss calls bricolage. When Melville turned his attention to America as a subject for his fiction, he imported this image of a free-floating self amid cultural bricolage to his concerns with the Western world. This importation was gradual, first retaining Polynesian form in the allegories of Mardi. But White-Jacket, Moby-Dick, and Pierre are fictions of a self whose internal consistency is threatened and later redefined in an American world of Isolato selves.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. J.J. Healy, my supervisor, for his guidance and encouragement in the writing of this dissertation. I have benefitted enormously from the many hours of discussion and the close attention he has given this project. I would also like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for its financial support, which permitted me to spend an important year of research and writing at the University of Virginia.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii

PART I -- T O P O S

CHAPTER 1 Melville and the Language of Ambiguity: Self, Sovereignty, Culture	2
CHAPTER 2 Culture in Abeyance: <u>Typee</u>	35
CHAPTER 3 Interiorizing History: <u>Omoo</u>	97
CHAPTER 4 The Transcendental Imperative: Bursting the Heavens of Mardi	137

PART II -- P O L I S

CHAPTER 5 On the Procreation of Commonwealth I: The Genteel Polity of These States	211
CHAPTER 6 On the Procreation of Commonwealth II: <u>Moby-Dick</u> and the Moral Hierarchy of America	275

PART III -- T E C H N E

CHAPTER 7 <u>Moby-Dick</u> : Melville's Pacific and the Possession of a Pacified Territory	314
CHAPTER 8 "Primitive Elementalizing" in <u>Pierre</u> : The Fragmentation of Self and Culture	391
BIBLIOGRAPHY	433

PART I

T O P O S

Men form one great mat

-Merina proverb

Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why so great a portion of mankind, after nature has long since discharged them from external direction (naturaliter maiorennnes), nevertheless remains under lifelong tutelage, and why it is so easy for others to set themselves up as their guardians. It is not so easy to be of age. If I have a book which understands for me, a pastor who has a conscience for me, a physician who decides my diet, and so forth, I need not trouble myself. I need not think, if I can only pay--others will readily undertake the irksome work for me.

-Kant, What Is Enlightenment?

In truth, the Typees, so far as their actions evince, submitted to no laws human or divine--always excepting the thrice mysterious taboo. The "independent electors" of the valley were not to be brow-beaten by chiefs, priests, idols, or devils.

-Melville, Typee.

Chapter 1

MELVILLE AND THE LANGUAGE OF AMBIGUITY: SELF, SOVEREIGNTY, CULTURE

The concern of man about the meaning of his existence in the field of being does not remain pent up in the tortures of anxiety, but can vent itself in the creation of symbols purporting to render intelligible the relations and tensions between the distinguishable terms of the field.

-Eric Voegelin, Order and History, I.[1]

In one of the most frequently quoted letters he wrote to Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville stated, "By visable truths, we mean the apprehension of the absolute condition of present things as they strike the eye of the man who fears them not, though they may do their worst on him, --the man who, like Russia or the British Empire, declares himself a sovereign nature (in himself) amid the powers of heaven, hell, and earth." [2] The phrase the "absolute condition of present things" has found its way into the lexicon of Melville criticism at the expense, I think, of the notion of the sovereignty of the self which completes Melville's statement. The aim of this study is to re-orient the existential, epistemological, and ontological implications of the first part of Melville's declaraton in the cultural context suggested by the metaphor of the self as a cultural entity existing among other powers.

The implied connection between existence (here, of "present things") and subjectivity hints at the much deeper paradigmatic character of Melville's habits of reflection at this point in his artistic career. In speaking of reflection, I am suggesting the priority of Melville's structured mode of perception in relation to the finished texts of his fictions.

I mean "priority" in two senses. On the one hand, those structures naturally pre-exist the fictions in which we find them expressed. Melville used fiction to chart and to render visible the course of his reflections upon experience as an individual after the fact. But there is another sense of priority that places Melville's habits of reflection in a larger context of the history of Western culture. In the growth of his artistic talent from Typee to Pierre, or The Ambiguities Melville pored over the surface features of civilization, be it Polynesian or Western, with an increasing curiosity about the underlying foundations on which humankind builds culture. At all points in his literary career, however, Melville used fiction as a concrete means of constructing various paradigms situating the self in a changing relationship with culture. Through this changing relationship Melville bestowed depth on both the self and the culture in which it resides. While the most complex of these paradigms occurs only in the later novels, its early shape is discernible even in the Typee and

Omoo. From novel to novel, Melville learned to investigate with a greater degree of refinement the historical dimensions of the self and the culture in which it resides. In his early Polynesian novels, this investigation revolved around the declaration of a sovereign self within an alien culture. Tommo, for example, moves through the social world of his Marquesan captors with a mobility which conveyed to Melville the impression that man was relatively detached from and unaffected by the Polynesian world. But later, in Moby-Dick and Pierre particularly, the distance between self and cultural environment shrinks, and the sovereignty of the self becomes endangered. Both Ahab and Pierre Glendinning experience their cultural surround as an imprisoning restriction on their speculative liberty. In this later period, the act of standing firm against the "powers of heaven, hell, and earth" becomes an existential imperative only vaguely suggested in the writings of the early Melville.

Through the course of his literary career, then, Melville portrays in his fictions different relations between the self and culture. Tommo moves across the surface of the flat plane of Marquesan culture. Ishmael resides inside an American culture familiar to him. Pierre Glendinning sinks into the depths of history beneath his own Western culture. The following chapters are intended to map out the development of these paradigms of self and culture. One



path into Melville's paradigmatic mode of reflection is provided in the examination at the outset of a non-fictional model; it is there that we can see Melville's arrangement of the visible things of the phenomenal world as the evidence of deeper structures of meaning, unencumbered by the labyrinthine complexities of his novels. For that model we need to look toward the end of Melville's career as a novelist with a popular following, when he embarked upon a journey which was the actual, physical realization of the literary roving of all his fiction. Like the adventures of the intellect depicted in his novels, this real-life odyssey became what none of Melville's earlier voyages had been, a quest for the structures underlying a human existence which Melville's culture (as all cultures do) codified and obscured into forms of mediation. Between 11 October 1856 and 5 May 1857 Melville temporarily came into contact with those structures in the form of the antiquities of the Mediterranean world which he regarded as the very foundation stones of Western civilization.

The journey, which included visits to Rome, Constantinople, and Jerusalem, also took Melville to Cairo in early January 1857. In Journal Up the Straits, as his packet of travel notes came to be called, Melville recorded his impressions of the Pyramids, for him monuments of Western culture's origins. In those precise geometric structures, rising out of austere desert flatness, writes

Melville, "was conceived the idea of Jehovah." The entry continues in tentative fleeting prose: the pyramids are "something vast, indefinite, incomprehensible, and awful. Line of desert & verdure, plain as line between good and evil. An instant collision of alien elements Theory of design of pyramids. Defence against the desert. Might have been created with the creation." [3] But Melville found that he could not exorcize the image with these words alone. Several pages later in the journal he returns to the same subject, as if this time to weigh the impact of the site upon his consciousness:

The lines of stone do not seem like courses of masonry, but like strata of rocks In other buildings, however vast, the eye is gradually innured to the sense of magnitude, by passing from part to part. But here there is no stay or stage. It is all or nothing. It is not the sense of height, (or breadth or length or depth that is stirred), but the sense of immensity, that is stirred [The Great Pyramid] refuses to be studied or adequately comprehended. It still looms in my imagination, dim & indefinite. [4]

The concerns meshed in this instance of reflection have in some respect inspired this study. For this reason, the strands of Melville's thought warrant sorting out. What I think is interesting about these words is that they record "an instant collision of alien elements" in their own right. For here is a moment of contact between Melville's sharply tuned imagination fully present to him and a site which has accumulated a great deal of historical, epic, even

mythological fallout. Detectable in the prose of these journal entries is Melville's reluctant and unsure recourse to a language which he knows will fail him. Nonetheless, the words still elicit from the event of encounter the submission of the pictorial sense of the site to their author's hermeneutical probings. Something gives way under the pressure, and the language here attempts to register in the immensity of these monuments the visible tracings, underpinnings, and the resistance to interpretation of the tangible, real human history encoded in their blank face.

Melville compresses the abstractions of deity, peoples, and history into material presence with such language. It is a strange call to reckoning, a demand upon this site of origins that it yield something of itself. The words seem to mimic the exposed strata of pyramidal stone; they too become weighty, dense. A century before George Steiner, Melville has centered his concerns with human existence and self-awareness on the line between utterance and silence. It is all or nothing: either language bears the burden of this horrific human legacy of enslavings and emancipations or it crumbles into eternal silence. This is a silence before events which can find a register in language itself as an event. Language therefore must become, for Melville, a material a tissue that allows silence to resonate, to become the consecration of the universe, as it does in Pierre.

In this wagered utterance gods, human community, and history condense as if from out of the air. From among the gods has come Jehovah. The civil territories are Egyptian and Israelite both. And the history is eventually Judaic, and by its extension across more history and across vaster spaces, it will be Christian and (for Melville) American. All of these--the godhead, the community in which this god is mediated, and the history of its mediation--while they are no more susceptible to levelling than are the pyramids themselves, are ideations, which have been drawn into a vortex of Melville's subjectivity and constrained in what Glifford Geertz would call "local knowledge." [5] That subjectivity is capable of turning the visible world of "present things" inside out in an instant of reflection. For Melville, in Kierkegaard's words, wants the individual to be "the category through which ... this age, all history, the human race as a whole must pass." [6] This telescoping of individual and historico-cultural context involves a paradox; the sovereignty of these self-enclosed cultures, subsumed by Melville's subjectivity, is thrust back into the expansiveness of his encyclopaedic artforms.

The dialectic between the outreaching imagination and the consolidated core of Melville's subjectivity, a sovereign self, derives from the concrete forms of dislocation Melville himself experiences in life. His 1856-57 sojourn is emblematic of this sense of displacement. The journey

from America to the pyramids is for Melville a journey to the first grounds of his own American culture. But Melville's nineteenth-century American commercial republic at the same time is situated at the pole opposite to that of ancient Egypt on the continuum of Western history. Implicit in the voyage and expressed in his Journal is Melville's profound sense of dislocation in the face of this temporal distance. Standing at the foot of Great Pyramid forces Melville to acknowledge a threefold displacement. Removed at this instant from the lush green world of his America, Melville sees himself sharply outlined against the desert flatness, a human shape among exotic and primordial dead shapes. Historically sealed off in his present from the Egyptian and Hebrew builders, he surveys the ruins of their civilization long after its demise. And finally, compelled to write in a language which imperfectly represents the cosmological dimension of divine wrath from whose hidden source all humanity has been displaced, Melville can do no more than echo the lament of a fragmented post-Babel world. Even amid the awe of the moment, Melville--true to his own declaration to Hawthorne--remains unafraid in his attempt to unravel the lost world commemorated by these stones.

The interior space occupied by these reflections lies in particular relationship to both the world of the "absolute condition of present things" and the mental world of enigmatic lost history which carries its own moral

absoluteness in its suggestion of Jehovah. These reflections derive from a kind of suspension between the present things, institutions, and assumptions that maintain Melville's Judeo-Christian culture and the prior space of history in which that same culture coalesced in antiquity its visible truths. This suspension defines Melville's reflections in 1857. Yet this is merely the end point. Melville comes to this situation of suspension through a course of reflection which created a series of fictional isolatoes--figures such as Tommo, Taji, White-Jacket, Ishmael, and Pierre. Their various dislocations taken cumulatively bring Melville to his contemplations of the Great Pyramid. Their isolation anticipates Melville's suspension between the compressed self and the expanses of history and "visible truth." This dialectic of compression and expansion can be most conveniently defined in the form of a diagram:

DISPLACEMENT	EXPANSIVENESS OF ART-----> MOBY-DICK			
geographical:	Egypt----->	Israel---	America-->	Pacific
historical:	Jehovah---	Moses----	Christ---	Ishmael
referential:	structure->	utterance>	phenomena>	Fiction

The downward movement in this diagram, from one kind of dislocation to another (geographical, historical, referential), does not merely describe the way that Melville chose literary themes and subjects. Rather it shows the progressive blurring and compression of Melville's

experiences of displacement into a single act of consciousness, whose constituent parts if separated out survive only as rarefied abstractions. My point here, the point from which this study stems, is that from Melville's perspective the notion of human existence emerges gradually over time and in a series of paradigms which progressively collapse the geographical and historical orders of dislocation into the referential. Put another way, the course of Melville's reflections finally resigns all matters of human existence to all that can be said within the confines of experience mediated by culture. In this respect, the dislocation of the self into the codes of reference provided by a culture is really in effect a relocation of the self in the forms of mediation that compensate for the fragmentation of the pre-Babel world of unity and coherence.

We also know from the form that Melville's novels take as aesthetic objects--their curious resort to "open" structures of fact and fiction such as travel narratives, documentary fiction, as well as the inclusion of the dramatic devices of Renaissance tragedy--that in contrast to the highly compressed subjectivity growing out of the cumulative effects of these various dislocations, Melville's artistic expression is expansive and comprehensive. On the diagram above, I have tried to represent this tendency as it appears in Melville's contemplations on the ancient Egyptians in the

Journal entry concerning the pyramids. The lateral movement (i.e., Egypt, Israel, America) traces the dispersal of Melville's subjectivity across a world of cultural analogues related to one another metaphorically, symbolically, and typologically. This expansive movement, occurring at the same time as the compression into the self, takes Melville into ever-widening areas of concern.

Once again, Melville's reflections on the pyramids display in microcosm this paradigm of compression and expansion in cultural terms. His vision of the site shows a degree of "lateral" expansion which documents synchronically the fruition of Western civilization: Egypt, Israel, and America are geographical, coeval analogues of dislocation. Historically too, however, Melville's interlude of reflection shows teleological analogues of human existence in the persons of Jehovah, Moses, and Christ. But at root, that is in their radical compression into the referential relocation implicit here, Melville hints at the movement of reflection from the structure of his utterance, through utterance as the medium of reflection, outward to the phenomena the words embrace. The downward compression of these lateral expanses describes their final collapse into the cultural precedence of the referential capacity of human language in human history, which for Melville is dominant as domain. This collapse explains the urgency inherent in Melville's depiction of sovereign self in its triumphant

stance against the powers of heaven, hell, and earth. It also suggests that the conception of the "absolute condition of present things" takes shape in the reckoning with the historical depth of all objects in Melville's view. My diagram also suggests the relevance of Melville's paradigms to the consideration of Moby-Dick, the fullest realization in artistic expression of Melville's habits of mind. In Moby-Dick it becomes apparent that the geographical dislocation of the Pequod in the Pacific Ocean is subsumed by Ishmael's recognition of his historical displacement, of his being an historical man. But a consequence of this realization is also the dispersal of Ishmael's selfhood into a massive and expansive domain of historical fact and fiction, truth and myth. Ishmael enters into a visible Pacific that bears the traces of the invisible. Truths attain visibility in the perception of such traces.

What I have suggested thus far is that Melville's habits of reflection can be instructive in the reading of his major novels, providing a number of guideposts: 1) dislocations of various sorts are integral to Melville's understanding of human existence; 2) this notion of existence, although radically sensitive to these dislocations, compresses them into a ground of final reference, of primal context; 3) this compression increases in intensity as Melville's novels grow in complexity of concern.

What may not be so obvious in this initial examination of Melville's reflection is the degree of anxiety Melville infuses into the fictions he builds from his experience of the world. The constant reliance in his works upon the juxtaposition of factual documentation and "purely fictional" elements suggests that Melville knew the limitations of conventional modes of fiction. The kind of novel he wrote does not merely depict human affairs, conflicts, and resolutions. It negotiates the human out of the multiple displacements which characterize the existence of man under stress. This is on the one hand the negotiation out of a thematic "collision of alien elements" to be sure--good and evil, ancient and modern, visible and invisible. On the other hand it is also a negotiation in formal terms of the factual and the fictional domains of a culture's language. More than depicting the analogies of real experience in the characterizations of Tommo, Ishmael, and the rest of his heroes, Melville strives to portray in a fiction of displacement an account of estrangement and a grammar of reflective placement. He attempts, in other words, to sketch the dilemmas and life of human culture as a predicament from a position outside its boundaries. This is a project that by definition broadens considerably the scope of fiction.

In this tendency to make art function as a direct representation of an aspect of the external world, Melville

uses the language of fiction as the site in which man and world reside. Melville's art in this respect addresses some of the concerns of the American Renaissance in general. Emerson's assertion that "Words are the signs of natural facts" is perhaps the most emblematic statement in the period of the tremendous faith of these writers in the ability of a formal sign-structure to cease behaving merely as an instrumental carrier mediating the things of human perception. Their optimism allowed language to leap back into the Nature from which it is long descended. Larzer Ziff's words on the subject are both substantially accurate as well as faithful in tone to Emerson's aphoristic statement when he says that in this period "The American language and aboriginal force had to draw close." [7] Implicit in this kinship of language and Nature is the drawing away from the sense of human history which affirms the growth of culture as the mediating filter blocking man off from the natural world. For Nathaniel Hawthorne, a compromise was possible in the fusion of nature and history together into the perception of a single revelation. The Scarlet Letter, for example, redeems Nature in the contemplations of history. Nature becomes for the reader in the Customs House an enchanted clearing in the historical American consciousness.

The writers of the American Renaissance sought to recover in art the primal unity of the act of inscription and the

external object inscribed, as a result of the widespread influence of popular interest in the translation of the Egyptian hieroglyphics by means of the Rosetta Stone. [8] This accounts at least for the recurrence in the images of pyramids, sphinxes, and hieroglyphics throughout the major works of the American Renaissance. It also serves to reinforce the centrality of the place and the kinds of concerns with which Melville was concerned in his contemplation of the pyramids in 1857.

Melville's project of fiction differs somewhat from the mainstream views of the period in directing the "inscribed" world into a cultural paradigm which permanently deflects the natural world from the fictional realm into a kind of suspension after trapping it in that realm. This explains his fiction's opaque quality of self-consciousness.

This is the special feature of Melville. It is the suspension, the referential area that we want to look at eventually. It is true that such fictions are compromised versions of human experience. But then Melville is different from Emerson and Hawthorne who see referentiality of language first and whose perceptions are informed by Wallace Stevens-like abstraction. Melville, by contrast, seeks the primacy of the world in the viability of various languages of cultural mediation--in the language of the anthropology of his time, in the philosophical terminologies

of Descartes and Kant, and later in Christianity. His novels become the lament for the loss of these external contexts. The empire of fact retreats into the empire of a consuming, expansive self. It is the justification of this suspended self Melville seeks finally in the cul-de-sac of Pierre.

Consequently we are bound to notice something vaguely unstable about Melville's novels as self-contained "texts". Moby-Dick exemplifies this instability in its refusal to remain within the categories of conventional characterization, plot development, and consistency of tone and form. Melville's confession to Hawthorne that he could not write in that "other way", the way of the convention of romance, is a leviathan understatement. Even in a more tolerant attitude toward deviations in form suggested in modern critical vocabulary, Moby-Dick resists categories of description. As Walker Percy has suggested recently, a term such as "intertextuality" with its reference to hybrid forms may address only superficially both the practice and the zeal with which Melville plunders his culture for associative references, formats, histories, and anatomies. Percy himself views the "intertext" of Moby-Dick as Hawthorne, without whose "haunting figure at his shoulder" Melville could not have written the novel.[9]

Beyond purely formal innovation and aesthetic melding of genres, Moby-Dick displays what might be termed Melville's imperial enthusiasm about the culture he engages. It attests to the inadequacy of the neutralizing connotation inherent in the term intertextuality. The novel resists the containment by the culture which relegates it to the specific function as art. It is an attempt to envelop that culture, to become it in the form of one massive agonized representation. A very real struggle for cultural domains or "spaces" inheres in the kind of reflection that underlies all of Melville's novels.

Of course any suggestion that Melville's fiction can be solved or decoded in terms of its structures or those generated to explain it would be misleading and reductive. Melville was neither Levi-Strauss, nor Freud, nor Marx. My choice of the term "paradigm" is meant to convey Melville's reflection and his fiction in their structural yet non-systematic character. For example, the story of Job is paradigmatic in the sense that it outlines a structured relationship between man and God, but no one would speak of this paradoxical relationship as a system. Similarly, Melville himself characterized his creative subjectivity at one point as that paradigmatic agent through which opposites such as pride and scorn, and love and hate

must mate,
And fuse with Jacob's mystic heart,
To wrestle with the angel--Art.[10]

His impassioned wrestling with the inexplicable nature of human experience within the paradoxical compression and expansion of cultural paradigms defines in precise terms Melville's art.

2.

The questions I pose and attempt to answer in this study are these: How does Melville grow into this paradigmatic conception of human existence, and how did his literary career provide him with the opportunities and materials for the finding of a language allowing him to reflect in precisely these ways? I want now to turn to what can be, at the beginning, only a provisional and tentative survey of Melville's novels from Typee to Pierre, or The Ambiguities with a view to revealing the terms upon which I shall rely in subsequent chapters in the pursuit of these questions. It should be immediately evident upon consideration of the canon of his novels that Melville benefitted from exposure to the raw materials of several different cultural milieux. The "Charged" "field of being" into which he moved progressively through his literary career assumed different dimensions --breadth and depth-- along the way.

It seems to me that in the study of Melville's fiction we must first acknowledge the three large distinctions in place made by the respective choices of subject matter evidenced by the settings of the novels. Typee, Omoo, and to some

extent Mardi constitute a group of Polynesian novels, whose subject matter engaged Melville in an account of his own Pacific experiences and in readings of works by explorers of the South Seas islands.

With the allegory of Vivenza in Mardi Melville celebrates his return to America. It is significant that Redburn, White-Jacket, and Moby-Dick should evidence a transformation of the cultural surround generated by Melville's experience of and readings about the Pacific world into one decidedly American in nature. Even the transatlantic subject matter of Redburn consolidates around a very American perspective of the European world.

In Moby-Dick, the demise of the Pequod, Melville's grand ship of American culture heralds one more shift in existential terrain. In Pierre and the fictions that follow it, Melville has widened the horizons of man's cultural experience to include within them the whole of Western civilization's legacy of Christian revealed religion, of aggressive technological force set against Nature, and of the moral pretenses governing both of these. In terms of subject matter alone, then, Melville's literary career involved the constant expansion from--or more to the point, the repeated growing out of--one field of concern into another.

But Melville's project in fact is not restricted to the descriptive presentation of these various landscapes. If it had been, he would have likely continued to produce purely documentary books concerning his travels. In addition to depicting the cultural landscapes of various peoples he encountered, Melville over time learned to dramatize the anxieties inherent in the inhabitation of those surrounds. This activity of the imagination is not merely descriptive, but also (and for Melville) increasingly cognitive in nature. To put it another way, what is also evident in Melville's progression from the Pacific romance to the American romance, to the critique of the Western cultural surround (very much a shattered romance) is a corresponding change in the knowing subject of the respective novels.

We need therefore to speak of types of cognitive centers in Melville's fiction--usually but not always first-person narrators on whose shoulders falls the task of orienting the self in the region in which it has been displaced. For the sake of brevity, here, we may derive from the Polynesian world the Tommo-type, from the American world the Ishmael-type, and from the Western world the Pierre-type. The questions now become: given the differing capacity for each of these characters of knowing the world, how does each inform, and how is each informed by his cultural surround; within its respective field of local knowledge, what kind of self is each of these cognitive centers capable of becoming?

These questions are really only refined expressions of Melville's general concerns throughout his artistic development about the nature of man, the domain in which man finds himself, as well as about the metaphysical domains bordering on the human universe.

The cultural space into which Tommo is displaced is, first of all, not one which either he or Melville recognizes as being cultural in any real sense. For the confrontation in Typee involves Tommo's restrictive understanding of himself as one individual facing a group of other individuals of whom he expects the sociality of his own American upbringing in many instances. The relationship between Tommo's acts of cognition and the Marquesan savage's yielding of knowledge is staged in a drama of suspension throughout the novel. Even Tommo's shocking discovery, in the concluding pages of Typee, that the Marquesans really are cannibals after all does not reveal much in factual terms about Typee culture. In this respect, the paradigm of contact between cogito and world that can be known emerges in Melville's writing initially as that between individual and an entire culture held in suspension largely because of Tommo's own resistant subjectivity. For example, that he can regard Typee social life in terms of "bachelor" houses, "valets", and of jolly good fellows overall suggests the thickness of an inevitable barrier central to this cultural contact. Yet, as I will show in detail in the next chapter,

in spite of this abeyance, vital images of Marquesan culture manage to jut through the barrier, indicating the accidental aspect of some of Melville's insights. This also indicates the degree to which Melville is still not fully in control of his material early in his career.

By contrast, the Melville who writes Moby-Dick some years later has benefitted from an enormous body of reading, and he has by that time also shifted cultural spaces. It is now a commonplace that the Pegud is an America afloat. This being the case, the cognitive centre of the novel as well as of the Pegud, Ishmael, is a distinctly American narrator-hero who achieves what Melville calls the "possession" of knowledge concerning infinite Pacifics. Where the relationship of self to cultural surround in Melville's "Polynesian" period posits the roving individual in a cultural space largely resistant to him, the Melville of the "American" period has by 1849 recast the relationship into one between a cultural self, that is a personified American political-social community--a WE, not an I--set against a larger cultural surround, a THEM comprising the European world of stored knowledge from which the American idea and social experiment have sprung.

With the change of setting for his fictions Melville also changes the sensitivity and the scope of the perceiving self. This is a change in the ability of the individual to

embrace a wider sense of the surrounding world. The Ishmael-type of cognitive centre is by definition a collective entity. We see him emerge in Mardi as Taji the rover, who finds himself displaced into his American homeland in the distorted social landscape of Vivenza. But he develops more solidly in Redburn and White-Jacket, assuming in these books the posture and the anxieties both of an American displaced geographically and historically from the European culture of origins.

In White-Jacket the dialectical relationship between the narrator-hero, wearing his Lockean tabula rasa garment, and the surrounding cultural landscape also bespeaks the American amputation from, as it were, the European tree of knowledge. Melville's act of mythologizing that fragmentation through the Neversink, the U.S.S. United States of Melville's own sailing days, renders the dialectic of self and other individuals part of a larger, now historical trauma of displacement. Louis Hartz has characterized the emergence of new societies in Western civilization as the radical introspection of the fragment state in terms which are pertinent to White-Jacket: "Once the fragment state has escaped the European challenges to past and future, once it has achieved its curiously timeless place in Western history, an unfolding takes place which would have been inconceivable in the restricted atmosphere of Europe." [11] For Melville that unfolding finds utterance

in the declaration that "The Past is the text-book of tyrants; the Future the Bible of the Free." [12] This evidences a cognitive focus upon the historical fortunes not of an individual but of a collectivity of national promise.

The Pequod, by contrast, provides its respective cognitive center, Ishmael, with a widened sense of cultural surround; in Moby-Dick the genteel polity of the United States, in all its grandeur as post-Enlightenment idea-construct, evolves and expands into the mythological, world-embracing potential of America, seen through Ishmael's eyes as the epistemological repository of "cetology."

The emergence of the Ishmael-type from the Tommo-type depends not only upon a change of locale and local knowledge, but as well upon a change in the solidity of the knower. The Tommo figure is stubborn in his assertions, impervious to the Outside that always screams savage and brute contradictions back at him. The Ishmael figure lives in a less hostile world, one in which the historical displacement from the origins of culture, humankind, and the natural world constitutes a first fact of human existence. The geographical dislocation of the rover-castaway is now incidental to his archeological, temporal concern. In a corresponding way, the Ishmael-type is a more porous construct in epistemological terms. The Outside and the interior knowing subject interpenetrate. This explains why

Ishmael seems to deteriorate into the "stuff" of his cetological culture.

It also explains the traumatized condition of the Pierre-type for whom selfhood and cultural space seem locked in the violence of sovereignty. The hero of Pierre, or the Ambiguities, for example, expresses the dilemma of the Melville of the Western period. Pierre Glendinning is a self whose identity has been inflated to the limits of MAN conceived in terms provided by Western civilization. His cultural surround has become the entire cosmological order; he lives as an individual within the overlapping domains of man, Nature, and gods. Melville faces the traumatic consequences of the absorption of a self, a Nature, a God into the rocklike intractability of a language straining to denote them not as ideas, but as "the absolute condition of present things." In short, we are brought to the Melville who gazes upon the Pyramids, anxious in the task of inscribing their depth in the presence of their blank walls.

With the use of a grid, we can present something of Melville's evolution as a writer by illustrating the complexity and the scope of his imaginative project in its cumulative form. Schematically, the evolving relationship that Melville established between the knowing subject and its cultural space might look this this:

shakes a wooden idol to make it utter the words of the gods.[13] In Moby-Dick, Ishmael speculates on the covert meanings of the hieroglyphical markings on the fleshy surface of the White Whale.[14] And finally in Pierre, the young Pierre Glendinning seeks to know the meaning of aged inscriptions on the Memnon Stone of Saddle Meadows.[15] The failure of his quest is inherent in the vision of the entire cosmic order with the claim elsewhere in the novel that "Silence is the consecration of the Universe." [16] While the expanses of the field in which man exists are clearly widened from one example to the next, the coherence of the self in each becomes somewhat more dispersed, rarefied.

In his ignorance of the cultural surround, Tommo is always sure of who he is. Yet Ishmael, by contrast, knows who he is only according to the store of information, the "cetology", that literally absorbs him. For he becomes, in the course of Melville's epic narrative, an outline of American man against the enormous (Leviathan!) body of cultural knowledge which delineates Western man. In short, his area of concern is already vaster than Tommo's, according to the vaster territory he now inhabits. In due measure, Ishmael's selfhood is also changed; he is less a "sovereign nature" than Tommo. And for Pierre Glendinning, those horizons of being are wider yet, and he negotiates existence somewhere between the Scylla and Charybdis of the finite and the infinite. From novel to novel, then, the

stakes become greater, the task of knowing more onerous, and Melville's being-in-the-world more anxious.

3.

The real index of that growing anxiety is apparent in the way Herman Melville grew into his subject matter from book to book and the way he, both as man and author, took more complete possession of the narrative worlds he successively created. This kind of possession was a formal concern for him, as much as it had been a lived experience. The relationship between the perceiving human subject and the cultural world inhabited by that subject assumed the shape of a corresponding relationship between IMAGE and FACT in Melville's fiction. While we can speak of the locus of the self in any Melville novel, we also discover in it an imagination which views the outer world in terms of the possibilities of meaning attached to its resident images. But in all of his novels up to and including Moby-Dick a "documentary" impulse seems to compete for Melville's attention. It is a commonplace in the study of these works that the mixture of fact and fiction is almost a signature of Melville. And yet, many of the reviews of Typee, for example, illustrate the degree of antagonism Melville's practice of mixing yarn and encyclopaedic documentation provoked in his audience. Early readers of Typee felt that Melville's criticism of the missionaries of Polynesia for their subjugation of native peoples and culture constituted

a deliberate distortion of the facts. According to the The Christian Parlor Magazine, the comparisons of the civilized and the savage conditions of man in the novel were "palpable and absurd contradictions." [17] The New York Evangelist viewed Typee as an example of the way all fiction insults "the understanding of the reader by representing as truth what is confessedly false, and by assuming that the great object of reading is amusement rather than instruction." [18] The "sheer romance" and the imaginative freedom this genre allows were seen by the Evangelist as joint subversions of the moral order of society. [19]

Modern critics, too, have expressed a certain unease at the balance of imaginative material and documented fact in Melville. Lewis Mumford's thoughts on Melville's mixed technique illuminate an important cultural presumption about the imagination in fiction, one that I will seek to refine in the coming chapters:

While his powers were not small, it was only with great difficulty that he could escape the actual world and create a world sustained by his own fantasy. . . . Like Defoe, Melville was chained to the document, the fact, the experience; he could endow these things with imaginative life, for all other instruments of creative writing were at his command; but he was not given to inventive elaboration. Do we not exaggerate the possibilities of the pure imagination? [20]

The question as it pertains to Melville is a valid one; even in Mardi and Pierre, in which Melville deviated furthest from the "realistic" account of human experience, his

imagining kept the self in close proximity to the cultural surround of what is known. Another way of saying this is that the image--the smallest "particle" of an imagined world--at all times in Melville's fiction remains in a taut relationship with the fact, i.e., the concrete presence of an object in the phenomenal world.[21] Certainly the concept of fantasy has little relevance to Melville's project.

Indeed, all the worlds Melville created and entered were "real" ones. But where their factual apprehension began to show only limitations in meaning, particularly after he wrote Omoo, Melville risked more of his own creativity in its investment in an increasingly impressionistic, imagistic apprehension of the world. Meaning sought after in this expenditure of imaginative energy drew Melville deeper and deeper into the field of being he had discovered. And the consequences of such meaning drew on Melville himself, wearied him, made him bitter. Self and cultural space, image and fact, contributed, in personal terms, to the aggregate conception of culture, unfolding from one Melville novel to the next. My aim is to illustrate that Melville's artistic career in an important regard is the history of the commerce between these dialectical poles. It is the beginning of that history that now concerns us.

Notes to CHAPTER ONE

1. Eric Voegelin, Order and History, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), vol 1, Israel and Revelation, p. 3.
2. Letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne, 16? April? 1851, The Letters of Herman Melville, (eds) Merrill R. Davis and William H. Gilman, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), p. 124.
3. Herman Melville, Journal Up the Straits, (ed) Raymond Weaver, (New York: The Colophon Press, pp. 58-59. Ellipses are mine.
4. Journal, p. 63. Ellipses are mine.
5. Clifford Geertz, Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology, (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 4: "To an ethnographer, sorting through the machinery of distant ideas, the shapes of knowledge are always eluctably local, indivisible from their instruments and their encasements." Melville's Egypt is such a locale of ideas, geographically and historically distant, and its pyramids are literal shapes of lost cosmological knowledge.
6. Soren Kierkegaard, The Point of View, (trans) Walter Lowrie, (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 130.

7. Larzer Ziff, Literary Democracy: The Declaration of Cultural Independence in America, (New York: Penguin, 1981), p. 33.

8. John Irwin, American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in in the American Renaissance, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), see Part One.

9. Walker Percy, "Herman Melville", The New Criterion, 2: 3 (November 1983), p. 40.

10. Herman Melville, "Art", Selected Poems of Herman Melville, (ed) Hennig Cohen, (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), p. 144.

11. Louis Hartz, The Founding of New Societies, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1964), p. 6.

12. Herman Melville, White-Jacket, (eds) Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle, (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1970), p. 23.

13. Herman Melville, Typee, (eds) Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle, (Evanston and Chicago: The Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1968), p. 175.

14. Ishmael says at one point: "By my retentive memory of the hieroglyphics upon one Sperm Whale in particular, I was

much struck with a plate representing the old Indian characters chiselled on the famous hieroglyphic palisades on the banks of the Upper Mississippi" (Herman Melville, Moby-Dick, [eds] Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker, [New York: Norton, 1967], p. 260.

15. Herman Melville, Pierre, or the Ambiguities, (eds) Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle, (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1971), pp. 132-133.

16. Pierre, p. 204.

17. Quoted in T. Walter Herbert Jr., Marquesan Encounters: Melville and the Meaning of Civilization, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 183.

18. Herbert, p. 183.

19. Herbert, p. 184.

20. Lewis Mumford, Herman Melville, (New York: Literary Guild of America, 1929), p. 70.

21. Charles Olson recognized Melville's sensitivity to the phemonemal world in his statement that—"Melville had a way of reaching back through time until he got history pushed back so far he turned time into space" Call Me Ishmael, (New York: City Lights Books, 1947), p. 14.

Chapter 2

CULTURE IN ABEYANCE: TYPEE

The doctrine of man's fundamental mutability and actual changing, and of the uniqueness of each product of change, contains the truth that the particularization of humanity in the different cultures, and again in the individuals sharing in it, produces genuine and unpredictable otherness; that consequently "knowledge of the like" must transcend itself; and that--taking off from the basis of the like--an understanding of the widely-different is possible and must be striven for.

-Hans Jonas, "Change and Permanence:
On the Possibility of Understanding History." [1]

I cannot determine with anything approaching to certainty, what power it is that imposes the taboo.

-Typee, Chapter 30.

It is significant that, like other primitive societies, the Marquesan natives who held Herman Melville captive in their secluded valley for those several weeks in 1842 traditionally refer to themselves as te hau enana, "the men". [2] Melville was not aware of this self-designation. This fact only serves to render Typee, his account of his captivity among these people, and his preoccupation with the question of man an interesting coincidence. Melville's first venture into professional writing is concerned with an

effort to understand humankind in this distinguishing and primal sense. This first novel deals with a society of natives whose primeval closeness to Nature promises to reveal what fundamentally constitutes "Man". It also confronts its reader with a profound difficulty: the gaining of access to a knowledge of those general human qualities disguised and deflected by the particularities of the customs and beliefs fundamental to all human societies.

Typee is a testament to Melville's realization at the very outset of his career that the visible manifestations of human nature vary according to where human beings live, and according to the collective visions of themselves they formulate and express. The moral of Typee is that the shared world of humanity which transcends different societies is constrained by an unshared rivalry of competing realities locked into the idiom of distinct cultures.

The existence of these competing systems was for Melville at twenty-five and as a result of his Polynesian wanderings, an acknowledged fact. Difference, in this manifestation as fact, is described in Typee by means of the language of documentary reportage. The world of fact issues in Typee from the authority of documents Melville read after his voyage. Yet the novel also depicts a world of tribal shadows, a world visible through Melville's intuitions. This world is communicated through what I shall call for the

moment the language of image. These images carry the intentions locked into a culture Melville did not fully apprehend. They originate not in the domain of his conscious deliberations, but in a distinctly Polynesian cultural space. Consequently, in terms of the aesthetic of his novel, they are also possibilities Melville may have neither recognized nor controlled.

The co-existence of these languages of image and fact is evident enough in the mixture of voices comprising Melville's account on the whole. The novel is unsatisfying on this level. It seems to call our attention repeatedly to the realization that this is after all an early attempt at writing by a young author who needs to learn a great deal more about his craft. Typee deliberates continually on the explicit distinctions between "savage" and "civilized" worlds; it appeals to the emotions of the Western reader by resorting to a rhetoric of self-righteous indignation over the behaviour of a missionaries of the South Pacific; it mixes materials from the authoritative researches of the day with a dearth of conversational, anecdotal speculations typical of the common sailor. We might regard these features as the marks of a beginning writer still trying out various narrative voices. [3]

Critical thought on Typee has not for the most part separated out these voices, other than to distinguish

Melville from his sources and the separate real events from the ones Melville invented. Generally, literary critics have viewed the narrative as continuous and trustworthy in terms of a stabilized author in full moral, aesthetic, and anthropological control of his subject and theme.

A useful gauge of these critical responses is F.O. Matthiessen's succinct conclusion that "In Typee Melville's most serious scrutiny was given to the differences between the civilized and savage life, to the frequently contaminating effect of the white man." [4] Milton R. Stern speaks of the "opposing forces" of Typee and European in his analysis [5]; while the West has at its disposal a developed technology and a philosophical system [6], Typee civilization "is an example of the animal in a pure and innocent state." [7] The same distinction is rendered in moral-historical terms by Raymond Weaver, who characterizes Melville's islanders and Europeans as groups separated by "the abyss between the animal integrity of classical antiquity and the Hebraic heritage of the agonized conscience." [8] John Wenke has addressed the psychological dimension of the differences in Tommo's translating from a European to a Polynesian culture: "In passing from the ship to the Typee valley, Tommo travels from the Western mind and history into the primitive world of unconsciousness and prehistory." [9] And more recently, Larzer Ziff has invested this contrast with Levi-Strauss' differentiation between

cultures with and without written language: thus, "The Typees have no history and accordingly no language; no means, that is, of communicating thoughts and sufferings that are the products of history." [10] Melville, eventually aware of the severity of this limitation, finally "opts for history and language," for the return of his "historical self." [11]

These approaches to Typee lay open to us a rich diversity of meanings when we read the novel as the expression of a single authorial voice speaking from the authoritative perspective of its own civilization. Melville himself hints at the inadequacy of precisely those "authoritative" distinctions between savage and civilized man. At one point in Typee Melville disputes an unnamed source describing "the frequent immolation of human victims upon the altars of their gods" (169). The irresponsibility Melville sees behind this claim impels him to warn his reader "that there is a vast deal of unintentional humbuggery in some of the accounts we have from scientific men concerning the religious institutions of Polynesia" (170). In other words, Melville imposes definite limits on the validity of what his sources present as factual knowledge. There is a consequence to this scepticism. Melville invests Tommo with a degree of confidence that allows him to carry into the narrative a trace of doubt that Melville senses about his sources. Tommo is constantly challenged in Typee. Never

entirely reliant on documentary sources, yet never entirely set to the task of interpreting the natives on their terms, he must consolidate himself as best he can in the indefinite Polynesian landscape Melville has drawn around him.

We need, therefore, to regard the mixture of voices in Melville's first novel as something more than artistic rough edges. At the same time we cannot gloss over the jumbled fragments of knowledge out of which Tommo emerges. Melville wrote Typee after his return from the Pacific. His recollections of his adventures there were enriched by wide reading about the area. There are, then, two Melvilles in Tommo--the man who lived among the Typees, and the man who reflected upon the experience. Tommo is a kind of "virtual" Melville, a hybrid construct which is neither the Melville of the experience nor the man who reflects on the learned histories of such experiences alone. In this assemblage of knowledge and experience, there are gaps between what Melville could have known during the time of his captivity and what he later learns in his informed reflection on the subject. These gaps and fissures create the stratified narrative of Typee. They occur in the proximity of the novel's concerns about the pivotal notion of "human nature." In Tommo's account we catch a glimpse of Melville's radicalized subjectivity. Tommo exists in the interior space of that subjectivity. He is thus a complex, layered

figure thrown into relief primarily because he is set against the Polynesian cultural surround that he cannot easily absorb into his preconceptions of human nature.

Typee, as an organized body of reflections, is the site where Melville the beginning writer works out the tensions inherent in his visit to the Marquesan world. Above and beyond the flaws of a first novel, this record of a cross-cultural encounter bears the traces of the layered complexities involved in Melville's attempt to organize his reflections. It is therefore essential, I think, that we appreciate at the outset the dynamic established in the novel by a three-way relation among the world of European "facts" concerning Polynesia, the world of Polynesian tribal "images", and the quality of subjectivity that resides in Tommo.

If Tommo is indeed a "virtual" or intentional Melville, we need a better understanding of how intention participates in Tommo's apprehension of his Typee world as well as of his home world and its collective perceptions of Polynesia. In simplest terms, "Intent," David Lowenthal writes, "modifies the character of the world." [12] The issue becomes more complicated, however, when we consider whose intent we are actually encountering in Melville's book. For by saying that Tommo is the cognitive focus of the narrative, we are referring to his individual responses to his dislocation,

despite the fact that he is a Western man surveying a terra incognita through Western eyes. To some extent, then, Tommo's is a private world view, fragmented somewhat from the accepted view of the Polynesian world held by his own compatriots.[13] Melville's experience of isolation during his brief captivity also intensifies the individuality of his responses. From Tommo's perspective, he has ventured into that world certainly with a Western outlook; nonetheless he is free to overturn any of its assumptions in the course of his encounter. This relation with the knowledge of Polynesia as it is understood by Melville's Western world defines the subjectivity of his hero as a kind of cultural imprint of the modes of understanding not necessarily visible to Tommo.[14] While he is free to disagree with the "factual" conclusions of the Western world, Tommo is not able to see the full extent of his conditioning by those facts.

At the same time as he is displaced from his home culture, he is, in the frame of the novel, a repository of Western knowledge. Consequently, Tommo is locked out of an authentic comprehension of the internal workings of Typee society, the rationale for its customs, and the meanings of its rituals. The narrative reveals only an indefinite image-sense of Marquesan culture behind the "facts" of Tommo's Western certainties. The result of this shifting landscape of image and fact is a kind of limbo which

provides Melville with the epistemological grounds for his assertion of the rover self with its "sovereign nature." But the sovereignty of that self, as my remarks above suggest, will always be something of an illusion created by the very jarring effect of displacement, in the case of Typee a literal, geographical dislocation. Trapped between the Western world of "facts" and the Polynesian world of "image", Tommo must appropriate for himself a self, a sovereign being among abeyant cultures.[15] This need is bestowed upon the Marquesan world of the novel just as Melville's wrestling with the instability of Tommo takes place in his private world. These are the beginning gestures of Melville's radicalized subjectivity.

Melville's handling of his factual source materials in Typee clearly shows this complex relationship within the horizons of Tommo's subjectivity. In his celebrated study of Melville's South Seas travelling and reading, Charles Roberts Anderson has shown the extent of Melville's reliance on the established authorities on matters of ethnology and social history in Polynesia.[16] This material is presented in Typee as the documentation of factual details which serve to flesh out Melville's own experiences in some cases, or enhance the credibility of Melville's narrative in other instances. In both cases, fact is of course a relative term which refers to the tone of authority and to the then-uncontested authenticity of the details Melville described rather than to the truth of any of the materials.

One of the writers Melville consulted, Charles Samuel Stewart, observed the disarray into which Marquesan holy places and idols had fallen and was prompted to remark that "No attempts, it appears, have since been made to replace idol, or repair their former dwelling: an evidence of indifference to the symbols of their superstitions." [17] As a Western man in a strange land, Tommo predictably echoes Stewart's conclusion: the Typees strike him as a "back-slidden generation ... sunk in religious sloth," requiring a "religious revival." [18] Now neither Stewart's conclusion nor Tommo's variation on it are facts in the sense of being true. The point to make now, however, is that the "facts" concerning the Polynesian world, from Melville's perspective, have been conveniently accumulated into one large body of ideas held in consensus by his Western culture at the time of his travels and early reading. This crucial element of knowledge as consensus surfaces in the more editorial statements made in Melville account of Tommo's adventures. Despite his acknowledgement of the abuses of the missionaries, Melville still maintains "that against the cause of the missions in the abstract no Christian can possibly be opposed" (197). The tone of this declaration recaptures the spirit of Michael Russell's earlier tribute to the Western colonizer in Polynesia: "Then beautiful and beneficent does nature become when improved by the industry of man, and what happy changes are produced by the arts of

civilized life." [19] For a man who lived among the cannibals, this kind of sentiment heralds, if nothing else, Melville's return to the cultural security and the moral optimism of his own America.

Beneath this layer of documentation there exists in Typee a subliminal structure of nuances not found in the factual accounts of the day. Melville communicates considerable anxiety over the knowability of human nature without actually putting his finger on the source of such anxiety. In addition to the visible language of the "facts" in Typee, of details concerning the differences between the civilized man and the savage, Melville also develops a secondary relationship between the emergence of Tommo's awareness of himself and the resistance the Marquesan world exerts against the probings of that subjectivity. Melville does not speak in a voice other than that of his narrator, never sees with eyes other than Tommo's. Yet he does recount in his written recollections of his experience among the cannibals an appropriation of identity from some place, out of a context which is necessarily beyond the reach of Tommo's personal grasp, and present in the narrative as tracings made in the language of image. Thus beyond the subjectivity that produces the slate of facts and beyond the personality and concrete presence of Tommo on the island of Nuku Hiva [20], lies a morally ambiguous expanse of the island which is always resistant to Tommo's factual representations.

On many occasions Tommo must confess that there are some aspects of the Marquesan world that he just does not understand. The "particular grades of rank among the chiefs" are unclear to him (186). Tommo admits that the purpose and significance of the Feast of the Calibashes eludes him entirely (168). He understands even less the institution of native taboo (221). In conceptual terms, the physical terrain that Melville saw and that Tommo renders visible to us in words becomes a tactile medium of interpretation, dense and pliable. As such it is roughly analogous, ironically, to the wood or stone out of which the Marquesans might carve their idols. In both cases the material resists the shaping efforts of the artist. As wood or stone resists carving, so does the island resist Melville's desire to know it and to express it in language. What Tommo claims to know as fact has clearly overcome the resistance as far as he is concerned. What continues to resist his scrutiny in the narrative survives as an atmosphere of diffused images that escape Tommo's comprehension and evade his apprehension.

2.

At the core of Typee lies a conflict between the language of Western certitude--the documentary evidence from previous sources--and the diffuse images of Polynesian culture which resist interpretation. There is throughout the narrative a straining between the two. Melville's recollection of his

own arrival in the South Pacific in 1842 is dramatized in Typee as a set of distinct yet related appropriations of knowledge, attempted procurements of territory, possessions in the Western consciousness of the Polynesian terra incognita --all of which assume the form of competing distortions of images of mankind when viewed together. Tommo negotiates a self-identity from these simultaneous and competing systems, meanings, cultures. In doing so he records Melville's earliest fictional exposure to an important fact: man, human nature, is intricately, perhaps irretrievably meshed into a distinctive cultural surround.

The account of the touching of the Dolly at Nuku Hiva involves the young Melville in the immediate use of the forceful Western paradigms of captivity, escape, possession. These paradigms are experienced on the literal level by Tommo. Melville understands them symbolically, in relation to Tommo's literal experience of the larger contexts of Western, imperial culture's involvement with a Marquesan one. When greeted in the natural harbour by a group of obliging young girls who have swum out from shore, the ship is said to be "fairly captured" by their charms (15). But this is the personal focus of a larger, correlative, historical scheme of things: it was "in the summer of 1842 that we arrived at the island; the French had then held possession of them for several weeks" (17). In parallel fashion, after making their escape from the Dolly, Toby and

Tommo find themselves trapped within the tall jungle reeds "whose great height shut [them] out from the view of the surrounding objects" (38). The entire landscape of Nuku Hiva in the early pages of Melville's account becomes the site of the strategies of possession by empire. These strategies touch on man and nature, self and society, and self in relation to another culture.

Tommo's attempt to gain entry into the interior valleys of the island is less a liberation from the binding grip of European consciousness than it is a vanguard extension of it. This is true in two senses really. Amid the general uproar of the French occupation, Tommo by jumping ship enters into his own version of chaos. And as a consequence of this mirrored chaos, Tommo's journey in its own way is as much a "cavalier appropriation" (17) as the French occupation of the island threatens to be. His willing dislocation from all the familiar points of reference involves Tommo in a muddle of false expectations and mistaken judgements concerning the topography and his bearing within it, as well as the presumptuous moralizing over the dilemma of "Typee or Happar." In microcosm, then, Tommo is simply re-appropriating ad hoc, out of dire need, a workable definition of himself from the faceless, signless Nature surrounding him, an activity not substantially different from the French imperative of "possessing" territory, and the missionary's gathering of converts.

In all instances, we witness a Western space-consciousness in aggressive action: for the French, for Tommo, for the missionaries, the cultivation of recognizably human reference points from out of a threatening state of "savage" undifferentiation is an urgent task; for all three the resistance of this alien tropical world is a constant. "The whole landscape seemed an unbroken solitude, the interior of the islands having apparently been untenanted since the morning of the creation; and as we advanced through this wilderness our voices sounded in our own ears" (44). That Tommo's dilemma can be related so closely to that of the French testifies to the unconscious role of shared cultural origins.. The notion of an expansion of the white empire into the "untenanted" New World is as Western and as Euro-centric as that described in Hobbes' Leviathan. For Melville's account reveals the unshaken conviction of the Western colonizers in their mandate "to inhabit a foreign country, either formerly void of inhabitants, or made void by war." [21]

At the crux of the novel are the various ways in which respective appropriations of the wilderness actually "people" the Marquesan world as it is seen from the Western perspective once the theories of "colony as void" and untenanted Paradise are no longer tenable. Unappropriated space is, in the imperial eye, undifferentiated space, a terra incognita. The frontier speaks back to the colonizer

in the language of absence. In this situation the appropriate facts, the items describing this terra incognita, also assist the act of appropriating. The void must be filled hurriedly and provisionally by a whole host of expectations and propositions concerning the nature of the inhabitants of this alien world.

Melville's wit occasionally rises to the occasions of such a procedure, undermining the zeal with which Tommo interrogates his surroundings. In response to one of Tommo's rhetorical investigations, Toby quips:

if you are going to pry into everything you meet with here that excites your curiosity, you will marvellously soon get knocked on the head; to a dead certainty you will come bang upon a party of these savages in the midst of your discovery-making, and I doubt whether such an event should particularly delight you (45).

Probably not; but beyond the painful truth of Toby's pun on "dead", there is no such thing as certainty in this terrain, as Tommo later admits himself (51). Implicit in this inward trek, however, is Melville's suggestion that while possibilities for action can be drawn from Tommo's inspection of the external world, its very landscape resists not only the physical advance into the heart of the island, but also the disclosure of its inhabitants. The early chapters of Typee illustrate, somewhat prophetically, just how difficult it is for man to win from Nature a sense of his own character and a full appreciation of his displacement. For Tommo and Toby, the appropriation of

Nature has earned them only a deeper contradiction concerning the moral character of mankind-- "Typee or Happar?"

Tommo can derive little sense of liberation, then, from being discharged from civilization into the physical, epistemological and moral obstacles which man alone in Nature confronts. Exposure to the absence of cultural categories almost immediately bestows upon him the responsibility for inventing new ones. More onerous still is the false sense of a "sovereign" human nature which arises in all of this. The Hobbesian vacuum that he believes he has penetrated is itself an illusion, a mistaken view, very much the product of a Western consciousness filled with assumptions unconsciously governing Tommo's declaration of independence from the world of the Dolly, the French, and home. In Melville's Eden, man cannot simply live and prosper like a prelapsarian Adam; he is charged with the Kantian task of getting to know himself, and building himself up from out of this knowledge as a moral agent, a full human being. Tommo conducts this building in an atmosphere of freedom. His placement in an alien culture has freed him from the "lifelong tutelage" that Kant observed in "those others" who "set themselves up up as ... guardians" within the confines of a culture.[22] The responsibility for such self-construction becomes all the more urgent when Tommo moves from his captivation by the

silent splendour of Nature to his captivity at the hands of the Typees; it is one thing to guess what lies behind a cliff-face, but quite another to decode the mysteries of the Marquesan culture. The resistance of those rocky impediments pales by comparison to the the moral and social impenetrability Tommo encounters in the company of savages.

The most interesting feature of Typee is the subliminal distinction Melville is obliged to make in his depiction of Tommo's bid to understand his captors. Once he is deep within the "land of men", a rift suddenly opens up in the narrative between the world that can be spoken of in terms of the "facts" (a visible social place) and the world that may be spoken of in terms of "image" (an invisible cultural place). The social and accessible details of Tommo's life in the valley define a relationship among human beings which includes (surprisingly) Tommo himself. But what is by definition cultural--that is, a relationship between Marquesan Man and Nature--is held in a kind of suspension in Typee [23]. There are two reasons for this abeyance. Tommo himself never needs to reconstruct his own relation to Nature; as we have seen, he comes to the natural environment with ready-made cultural assumptions concerning its emptiness. Secondly, and pertinent to our discussion now, Tommo also assumes that mankind is comprised of an essentially social grouping of individuals. In their initial meeting of the Typees Tommo and Toby trade names, as

if to immediately locate good will in the individuals and in their discourse: "An exchange of names is equivalent to a ratification of good will and amity among these simple people; and as we were aware of this fact, we were delighted that it had taken place on the present occasion" (72).

Tommo's initial contact with the natives introduces him to the savage as an individual much like himself, and not as a representative of a different cultural system. In this respect, Melville's intuitions about the nature of primary social interaction between members of different cultural groups is faithful to what generally happens in contact situations. Consciousness of culture per se is not often a factor in most first encounters between members of different cultures. As O. Mannoni has suggested,

Contact is made, not between abstractions, but between real live human beings, and the closest contact often occurs at the least desirable level. When a native chief meets a European leader the psychological impact is less than when native labourers work under a European foreman. The leaders are the refined specimens of the two cultures, but the value of their encounter is lost in the ceremonial niceties which appeal to what might be called the political imagination, but do not bring about an adjustment at the level of little every day affairs where the real work of natural adaptation must take place.[24]

Tommo's captivity is a far more urgent situation than that of the native workers under a foreign supervisor, but we still recognize a similar differentiation in Melville's narrative between the personal and the ceremonial encounter.

Early in the account Tommo recalls a ceremonial meeting between the "patriarch-sovereign" of the Tior valley of Nuku Hiva and the French admiral of the occupation Du Petit Thouars, a startling contrast in humanity that inspires admittedly "philosophical speculations":

At what an immeasurable distance, thought I, are these two beings removed from each other. In one is shown the result of long centuries of progressive civilization and refinement, which have converted the mere creature into the semblance of all that is elevated and grand; while the other, after the lapse of the same period, has not advanced one step in the career of improvement (29).

There is a political dimension to Tommo's reflections here, but more importantly there is an implicit questioning of the European notion of the evolution of cultures, an evolution that privileges Western culture.

In any event, this ceremonial moment transcends in scope Tommo's own face to face encounter with the Typees, an event which forces him to suspend consideration of any theory of cultural evolution whatsoever. To do so is to cut the bond with the "facts" of his cultural knowledge; in his meeting with the Typees, the need to reveal what is fundamentally human at the level of head-to-head individual contact takes precedence over contemplations of abstract or systematic structures:

Close to where we lay, squatting upon their haunches, were some eight or ten noble-looking chiefs--for such they subsequently proved to be--who, more reserved than the rest, regarded us with fixed and stern attention, which not a little decomposed our equanimity. One of them

in particular, who appeared to be of the highest rank, placed himself directly facing me; looking at me with a rigidity of aspect under which I absolutely quailed. He never once opened his lips, but maintained his severe expression of countenance, without turning his face aside for a single moment. Never before had I been subjected to so strange and steady a glance; it revealed nothing of the mind of the savage, but it appeared to be reading my own (70-71).

Tommo's need to discern the traces of humanity in this face must impose closure on any previously documented, empirical facts. At a timely moment, the "facts" dissolve into an individual experience which veils all structures of knowledge momentarily, rendering unstable the grounds and the protocol of such contacts. And when the dissolution occurs, the self sparks into reflective visibility. It is an event of Kantian self-emergence, a release from the tutelage of larger authorities. What Tommo describes as an impasse of countenances is really a much busier event of rapid adjustments, re-adjustments, and defensive counter-adjustments wherein one subjectivity is attempting to search out at once the visible and the invisible in the face of the other. The face of the noble chief is here providing, of course, deliberate resistance to Tommo's quailing, plaintive scrutiny. In his initial view of the savage, Tommo is instantly frozen between his hope for the pliant compassion of an Ariel and his fear of the inflexible brutality of a Caliban. These are the precise extremes which underlie the controversy over "Typee or Happar". [25]

His tense introduction to the savage world and Tommo's final act of killing Mow-Mow during his escape reinforce the Caliban image; but the long interlude framed by these incidents is one of pleasant though limited acculturation on Tommo's part, a process made possible only through the reciprocal appropriation by Tommo of the gifts of this paradise on the one hand, and the continued bestowal of those gifts by the natives on the other. In the space between Tommo's initial acceptance into the valley and his deepening sense of threatening cultural structures (emerging once Tommo begins to catalogue the social traits and customs of the Typees), Melville leads his reader through Tommo's attempts to make sense of the Marquesan world. Yet these attempts, which are social in scope, postpone the full impact of Marquesan culture as a manifold poised invisibly to threaten Tommo absolutely.

They do so in the face of the more pressing immersion in the "visible" considerations that define for Tommo, provisionally at least, the human attributes of his captors. For example, very soon Tommo is obliged to settle in his own mind the issue of the polarized ferocity and noble benevolence of the savage temperament (the choice between Typee and Happar) on mere faith alone if only because the evidence he would require for a firm unequivocal conclusion is buried in deeper cultural networks of meaning having, ironically, no status as "facts". For the meantime, Tommo



drifts aimlessly over the flat surfaces of meanings: "Various and conflicting were the thoughts which oppressed me during the silent hours that followed the events [of initial contact with the Typees] ... Nor was it possible that, after all our vicissitudes, were really in the terrible valley of Typee, a fierce and unrelenting tribe of savages." Thus while it is possible that "beneath these fair appearances the islanders covered some perfidious design" (76), Tommo clearly has not the means of interpreting the Typees beyond the proximate social surfaces presented to him in the contact.

As a consequence, he falls back onto a set of Western certitudes. Even Tommo's vocabulary indicates a carefree and comic investiture of a very constructed and self-conscious self in the social landscape of the Marquesans. From his perspective, for instance, Kory-Kory is his personal "valet", "servitor", or "attendant". It is a grim hour indeed when he much later suspects that his faithful servant may well be "executing the orders of some other person" (106) whom he has failed to identify. Tommo bestows upon the Marquesan man the virtues and the gentility which he takes to be the universal measure of humanity in the individual. And it is with considerable authority that he is able to see Marheyo, the patriarch of the household in which he is living, as "a most paternal and warm hearted fellow" (84).

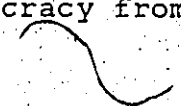
Melville's depiction of his narrator-hero's investigations of Typee social structures conforms generally to the "if I were a horse" mode of interpretation of alien social environments employed by the anthropologist of the nineteenth century. In the aim of explaining the rationale beyond such customs as body painting and cannibalism, the scientific observer of Melville's day would have first deduced that the savage mind differed from his own only in its limited capacity for reason. In order to know how it would "feel" to think primitive thoughts and participate in primitive rituals, the fledgling anthropologist transferred his already formed impressions of human nature and human potential to the "limited" intellect he hypothesized in the savage. [26]

When Tommo applies similar Western perceptions to Typee social institutions, we see the emergence of a subjectivity which has successfully appropriated itself from an otherwise undeciphered tableau of native behaviour. This feat of self-projection is, however, deceptive, since it carries the assumptions of a whole Western culture beyond the horizon. Yet Tommo's confidence in his perceptions of the Ti as a "sort of Bachelor's hall," which one might conceive of as a "a kind of savage Exchange, where the rise and fall of Polynesian stock was discussed" (157) is not without limits. The qualifications "sort of" and "kind of" register his reluctance to engage in metaphors; these constitute a

stammering, a certain telling guardedness in the activity of self-orientation, as if Melville himself knows that such comparisons place Tommo on unstable ground.

Nonetheless, the authority of this appropriation and the completeness of its registration in Tommo serve to strengthen his acknowledgement that in the final analysis the Marquesans are less savages than good fellows. In the exuberance of his restored faith in his own estimations of human nature, Tommo confesses to feeling "in some sort like a 'prentice boy, [who,] going to the play in the expectation of being delighted with a cut-and-thrust tragedy, is almost moved to tears of disappointment at the exhibition of a genteel comedy" (128). [27] This is an interesting moment. The admission introduces Tommo to his own subjectivity, an encounter which is simultaneously necessary, admirable, but untrue. Without having much choice to do otherwise, Tommo is forced to treat his own self-projection as if it were an objective presence.

The appropriation of the external world of the Marquesans by this forceful and carefree subjectivity predictably distorts the Polynesian into rough conformity to the America of the nineteenth century, a landscape visibly invested with the moral pressures of social idealism. Sociability, as Tommo applies it to the Marquesans, exists somewhere between the tropical wilderness and the rising democracy from which



Tommo is geographically displaced. As Tommo suggests, "The term Savage, is ... often misapplied" (125). The Typee language, he notes, contains no words for "civilized crimes" (126). The stable, virtuous character of the inhabitants of this hidden valley prompts Tommo "to think [that] so far as the relative wickedness of the parties is concerned, four or five Marquesan Islanders sent to the United States as Missionaries might be quite as useful as an equal number of Americans despatched to the Islands in a similar capacity" (125-126).

Whatever objective truth there might be in this claim, one thing is clear; the grounds of Tommo's comparison are determined by his Western consciousness to a degree that he does not acknowledge. Innate virtue, a cornerstone of that consciousness, is soon manifested in Tommo's impressions of the collective character of the Marquesans as a cultural group:

With them there hardly appeared to be any difference of opinion under any subject whatever. They all thought and acted alike. I do not conceive that they could support a debating society for a single night: there would be nothing to dispute about; and were they to call a convention to take into consideration the state of the tribe, its session would be a remarkably short one. They showed this spirit of unanimity in every action of life; everything was done in concert and in good fellowship (203).

Tommo is baffled by what seems to be social order that operates automatically, and one that creates no dissent.

Once again, Tommo betrays the cultural imprint--invisible to him--of the nineteenth-century Western observer for whom such total submission of the individual to the collectivity would have to constitute a lapse or a distortion in the conduct of human affairs.[28]

But the curiosity of Melville's protagonist places him in a double bind. He cannot in good conscience reduce the Marquesan social order to an ignoble anarchism; nor can he settle for the view, typical of Melville's contemporaries, that the savages are individuals "having no depth of reflection," and for whom the "usages of their fathers stood in the place of a moral law." [29] At the same time, however, gazing out from his free-floating, intermediary selfhood, he has failed to detect the influence of either a democratic impulse or a despot on the maintenance of Typee egalitarianism. The fact that Tommo cannot apply to Marquesan society nineteenth-century American faith in "fundamental law" (the merging of the Mosaic law of the Judeao-Christian tradition, and the natural law of the Enlightenment [30]) poses considerable problems. The affiliations here are with the portraits of pre-social man outlined by Hobbes on the one hand and Rousseau on the other. Tommo's inability to apply either of these models to Marquesan man makes them irrelevant.

While Marquesan man cannot be described as residing in a "pre-social" condition, it is true, as modern studies of Marquesan social life have shown, that Marquesan society was very loosely constructed. Irving Goldman divides Polynesian society into three types: traditional, open, and stratified. Traditional societies were dominated by a religious organization ensuring the social hierarchy's preservation. Open societies, such as the Marquesan, were organized according to military and political rivalry, thus creating less rigidified and fluxive status among the chiefs. Stratified societies were a synthesis of the above types, displaying--in Tahiti for example--intense rivalries by chiefs which consolidated authority over time in a central political and religious leadership. The social structures of the Marquesan Islands, those of Nuku Hiva particularly, developed along secular lines, and were solidified therefore in the status rivalries of the chiefs rather than in the rigidity of the religious hierarchies in the tribes. [31]

In light of this information, Tommo is not entirely misguided when he admits to seeing little evidence of formal authority or structure in Typee life. His inability to discern the details of the Marquesan social system, at least in part, reflects the loose construction of the society in general. Unaware, of course, that the determination of Typee social structure does not rely on either religious law or institutionalized political authority resting on an overt

code of procedure, Melville's Tommo comes by his confusion honestly.

Thus he alludes to the military prowess of chief Mehevi without realizing that it may be a political expression for the purpose of consolidating his authority, and not merely aggression against the Happars. The brief skirmish between the two tribes depicted in Chapter 17 of Typee is a negative disclosure that warfare is crucial to the natives, but apparently not for reason of defence or conquest. Tommo concedes that the battle must have been "an event of prodigious importance" (130), but is at a loss to explain to what exact advantage it was waged. It is more likely that in this instance Mehevi has very quickly converted the spoils of this swift campaign into political currency for the purchase of prolonged political authority. This transaction escapes Tommo entirely, as it does Melville. What Melville could only intuit is that battles of this type help consolidate the Marquesan chief's power over the tribe through the repeated symbolic delineation of territorial boundaries.

The Typees' use of controlled warfare for political, symbolic purposes also goes far to explain Melville's passing reference to the seemingly casual aspect from which the natives view their skirmishes. As an open society, the Marquesans "produced a political structure that was

territorially more institutionalized than in traditional society and that seems to have split away completely from the exploitation of nature. Political power was manifest in war, and war is a purely cultural activity, not transgressing the border [governed by religion and ritual] between nature and culture." [32] Melville has intuited in King Mehevi's short campaign against the Happars that war is not a disruption of the social order so much as the instrument by which the maintenance of authority would be played out within the social system. Tommo's inability to recognize the true import of Typee battle customs may also be attributable to the splitting off of the political structure from the more traditional integration of political life in the religious practices of the society.

The value of Tommo's observations of Marquesan social life does not reside in their adequacy or shortcomings measured against scholarly accounts such as those by Goldman or Siikala, but rather in the nearness of Melville's intuitions about what was likely to have been the case. The significance of Tommo's reflection stems from the limitations Western habits of mind impose on his observation of Typee society. Compared to the modern anthropologist Melville may work with limited knowledge. But he is not limited in his capacity to see in Tommo limitation itself as a subject for moral and aesthetic reflection. The essential feature of Tommo as character and as predicament is that of

a limited perspective that sees limits. The essential feature of Melville as the author of Tommo is that of a man outside of the particular limits defining Tommo and his experience of the Marquesans. With this angle of vision, Melville identifies in Tommo other limitations on the sovereignty of man.

One of these limitations is the language that Tommo uses to discuss social structure. Melville describes Typee unanimity and the peculiarities of tribal warfare--highly volatile and fluxive social practices--with terms suitable to a more static structure and more concrete institutions of civil authority. Tommo's groping attempts to understand the social and military forms of Marquesan life with such language has two consequences: 1) the effort to explain the actual structural underpinnings of these institutions is suspended; 2) in this suspension the privilege of Tommo's free-floating sovereign self is ironically sustained. Tommo's model for human behaviour is, as we have seen, based on his belief in the innate virtue of "man", by definition a constant to which Melville's America is the West's most recent tribute.

When Tommo is displaced into the Typee valley, however, the observation of such primal virtue in an alien territory becomes the means by which the distinct tensions of Tommo's subjectivity are made visible to Melville. Like previous



visitors to the South Seas such as Carteret, Kotzebue, and Vancouver, Tommo confronts gaps in his own understanding of the natives: "although hardly a day passed while I remained upon the island that I did not witness some religious ceremony or toher, it was very much like seeing a parcel of 'Freemasons' making secret signs to each other; I saw everything, but could comprehend nothing" (177). Tommo's social map of Typee valley is an interior region of Melville's Western subjectivity; it is a no-man's land between the imprinted sensibility of social idealism and the alien manifestations of the "savage" temperament. It is, then, a site containing Tommo as Western sovereign self and Melville as beginning author, feeling his way into the depths of his own experiences.

Ironically, the obsession with not comprehending anything obscures from Tommo's view those structures of aggression and competition in Marquesan society that Melville would have recognized immediately at home in America. Such a recognition is forestalled in Typee by Tommo's idealistic identification of the true egalitarian character of the natives and that democratic spirit he has derived from the differentials which, although as rampant in Melville's America as in any society built on the heritage of individual liberation, could not possibly exist in reality in the Marquesas Islands.[33]

The tensed subjectivity Melville uncovers in Tommo in the act of writing seizes on moments of doubt and crisis which force Melville into the Marquesan image-world. The nagging moral ambiguity in Typee, from the moment Tommo enters the interior valley, is whether the natives he will encounter are likely to be monstrous Typees or benevolent Happars--cannibals or virtuous citizens of a tropical Eden. The doubt recedes during that part of the novel in which Tommo as a free-floating agent in an in-between condition reconstitutes himself as a sovereign self, amassing a bulk of social "facts" in the narrative in order to make himself visible against a recognizable and therefore negotiable backdrop of human nature, to visualize himself amid the rudiments of his own humanity.[34] In this elaborate process his worries concerning the dubious character of his captors are temporarily deferred. The issue of cannibalism--as ritual and as cultural image--does not not recede. It merely shifts in Tommo's mind from being a suspicion about individuals to being an appraisal of human sociability that is alarmingly insufficient in the face of widening gaps in his perceptions. The possibility of a "perfidious design" lurking in the minds of the Marquesans is never actualized in the form of Typee malice or violence toward Tommo; it is instead realized through Melville's intuitions of deep cultural--not exclusively social--structures which have ultimately nothing to do with his narrator-hero as a focus of the novel's action.

In Chapter 27 this begins to change with interesting consequences. Melville's examination of "The social Condition and general Character of the Typees" heralds Melville's deepening concerns with Marquesan society. At this point Melville rephrases Tommo's ambivalence in a way that indicates the bankruptcy of the vocabulary of "good fellowship":

everything went on in the valley with a harmony and a smoothness unparalleled, I will venture to assert, in the most select, refined, and pious associations of mortals in Christendom. How are we to explain this engima? The islanders were heathens! savages! ay, cannibals! how came they, without the aid of established law, to exhibit, and in so eminent a degree, that social order which is the greatest blessing and highest pride of the social state? (200).

Now it is important to bear in mind that Tommo has been in some cases remarkably accurate in his description of the Marquesan world, or at least faithful to the "facts" of the day where he needs to be for credibility's sake. The volume of facts he has accumulated to this point in his narrative is, in and for itself, valid. But the same rigorous and resilient subjectivity, hard-won from the faceless undifferentiation of this seemingly "natural" world, circumscribes only a small space from out of a much wider domain. The language of fact in the novel succeeds in objectifying only the visible relationships among human beings. The foregrounding of these relationships eclipses more interesting realms of Typee experience however. The

ritualistic, symbolic world of the Marquesan culture necessarily falls outside Tommo's circle of social fact observed from the nineteenth-century point of view. In doing so, it strongly resists Tommo's probing surveillance. It maintains, in relation to him, an ominous concealment.

What Tommo's accumulation of facts hides, and Melville's ultimately independent control of language discloses, is the vague outline, a kind of invisible presence of the cultural relationship between the Marquesan civilization and its conception of its relationship to Nature. Just as Tommo needed to shore up his sense of himself as a subject over against the social network of his captors, so the Marquesans in their Eden require and re-enact in the form of ritual their self-appropriation from the natural environment. If it were not for the common issue of cannibalism, these two appropriated worlds would remain mutually exclusive in the novel. But what is "in-appropriate", intractable in Tommo's limited view of the the world of Typee social visibilities--of virtue sanctioned by the law of the people--is for the Marquesans a ritualistic means of affirming their possession, their procurement of a collective identity from the gods.

The gap between Melville's intuitive perspective and Tommo's horizon of facts is evident simply in the differentiation in Typee between the socially hermetic view

of Western man that embraces Tommo and the continuous social-cultural structure implicitly defining Marquesan man irrespective of Tommo's facts. The inscrutable native Taboo defining the Typees' contractual relationship to the natural world is the dividing line. The structure of the narrative as a whole places Tommo's construction of facts about Marquesan society into a parallel contact with an expanding set of intuitions about that society and Tommo's relation to it. These intuitions, by definition, remain in a curious state of suspension. While the children of sociality play before Tommo's eyes in their Happy Valley, that mass of cultural intuition thickens like an ominous thunderhead on the horizon of Nuku Hiva.

The resistance of the sacred symbolic realm of the Marquesan world to Tommo's investigation is evident in the latter half of the narrative. Confessing that the "religious theories" of the islanders are a "complete mystery" to him (173), Tommo nonetheless claims in a tone of studied authority that "religious affairs in Typee were at a very low ebb" at this point in the tribe's history (174). As evidence as the general indifference of the natives to matters of the soul, Tommo offers this account of a ritual "in honor of Moa Artua", the god of the islands:

In the first place [Kolory, the priest] gives Moa Artua an affectionate hug, then caressingly lays him to his breast, and, finally, whispers something in his ear; the rest of the company listening eagerly for a reply. But the baby-god is deaf or dumb,--perhaps both, for never a word

does he utter. At last Kolory speaks a little louder, and soon growing angry, comes boldly out with what he has to say and bawls to him.

Anger eventually overcomes the priest, and he strips the idol of its tiny robe and hides the naked god from sight, to the resounding applause of the assembled crowd (175). The ceremony ends as it began, with Moa Artua borne away in the arms of Kolory to be replaced in its sacred container. Tommo concludes that "the whole proceedings were like those of a parcel of children playing with dolls and baby houses" (176).

The combination of factual, verifiable material with Melville's imaginative manipulation of the episode on the level of image and nuance redeems his appeal to the stock comedy of the scene. Melville's reliance on Michael Russell's Polynesia (1843) is immediately evident. "The idols were either of unpolished logs of wood, wrapped in numerous folds of sacred cloth, or rudely carved images, braided with leaves and ornamented with feathers. Into these shrines the god was believed to enter at certain seasons, or in answer to the special invocation of the priest." [35] Melville alludes to more than he consciously knows perhaps in his description and in its implications for the meaning of the story he is telling. For Marquesan priests were of two types generally: tuhuna o'no, masters of prayer in the traditionally defined role as priest; and tau'a, "the inspired voices of the gods", often thought of

as gods themselves, of which Kolory is an accurate representation.[36] Melville's description of Kolory as a "sort of Knight Templar--a soldier priest" (174) finds its basis in the fact that the religious establishment, particularly of Nuku Hiva, was less clearly distinguished from the secular, political, and military orders of powers than was that of other Polynesian societies.

Beyond these correspondences of fact, however, there exists a more ambiguous region where Melville's intuitions actually undermine the authority of Tommo's account. There is a suggestion in this episode of cultural deprivation and desperation; the priest has literally seized the object of Typee worship in order to make it speak. To the observer from outside the culture this ritual dramatizes a double absence. Tommo does witness the predictable silence of the gods in the form of the taciturn idol. But because the ceremony has retained some significance for the native participants, his interpretation of the entire event is thrown into question. In other words Tommo understands neither the meaning of the ritual in itself nor the relationship of the congregation to that meaning. The portrayal of the ritual, from within the perspective of Tommo, as an agent of limited vision, constitutes an act of concealment inseparable from his attempts at interpretation.[37]

Tommo's appraisal of the Marquesan skill in stone construction articulates this fault of knowledge more deliberately. Kory-Kory, when asked by Tommo to account for the origins of the vast stone terraces they have come upon in a dense grove, responds "that they were coeval with the creation of the world; that the great gods themselves were the builders" (154). The absence of any inscription on the stone faces, the absence of sculpture, and of any other useful clue for that matter deprives Tommo of any means whatever "by which to conjecture the monument's history." Faced with only "the dumb stones" themselves, and unwilling to accept the mythological explanation given to him, Tommo resorts to a compensatory analogy of historical displacement in his reference to the "mighty base of the Pyramid of Cheops" (155). This is a different order of analogy from Tommo's earlier references to valets and servitors. There his wish to understand the Typee social hierarchy was detached and leisurely. But here, a degree of urgency characterizes Tommo's effort to subordinate the observed objects of this exotic culture to interpreted fact as his culture might understand them. This urgency derives from the collision of worlds, not the casual attachment of the European name to Marquesan object. Nor does a desire for Romantic speculation for its own sake explain Tommo's analogy to the the Pyramid of Cheops.[38] This reference is Tommo's resort to a recognizable model of man's integration

with history, a model taken from his own culture to fill the void presented to him by the undecipherable icons and institutions of the Marquesan world. Unknowingly Tommo is forced to guide his speculations around the hidden centres of meaning constituting the abeyant features of Typee culture.

Melville's manipulation of Tommo's limited perspective and equally limited options for the interpretation of Marquesan culture beyond its visible social character alone channels insight quite literally through those narrow fissures of the Marquesan world exposed by the insufficiency of Tommo's analysis of its surfaces. Even with his accumulation of the social facts, or more precisely because those facts concerning Marquesan "good fellowship" are a somewhat opaque medium for his investigations, Tommo soon faces another blank wall impeding his ability to make distinctions. This blankness is a repeat of the earlier moments in the novel when Tommo was confronted by the unfamiliar, enigmatic silence of the savage mind expressing itself through faces that betrayed no intention. The epistemological limitations are merely extensions of his physical captivity. Discharged from the arms of Civilization, he is no more free to "know" in his liberated state in Happy Valley than he was aboard the Dolly. Only the expression of his confinement has changed in his journey into the central regions of the island.

No feature of Marquesan life is more resistant to Tommo's scrutiny than the native adherence to taboo. Tommo's inability to make the necessary connection between the social "law" governing the Typees and the invisible authority of taboo over their lives points up once again the way facts which float with such comfortable limitation in the interior space of Tommo's understanding may be distinguished from Melville's use of image and atmosphere. These latter features, by contrast, are a language of the symbolic universe of the Marquesans; as such, image invokes that larger world where men, all men, wrestle an identity from the natural and supernatural realms. At one point Tommo is given to conclude that it is "the universally diffused perception of what is just and noble, that the integrity of the Marquesans in their intercourse with each other is to be attributed" (201); on another occasion he notes that although the system of taboo "always remained inexplicable" to him, he concedes that the savage characteristically "lives in the continual observance of its dictates, which guide and control every action of his being" (221). Both of these discordant principles, the one Western and the other "native", converge dramatically in the moral crux of the novel, the practise of cannibalism by the Typees and its status as taboo.

The major obstacle to Tommo's understanding of the role of taboo, not surprisingly and by his own own admission,

lies in the fact that "the word itself (taboo) is used in more than one signification" (224). The arrival of the native rover Marnoo in the valley illustrates the blurring of the concept in its practical applications. Tommo describes the effect Marnoo produces on the natives as "electric"; not only has he "a word for everybody" (138), he also speaks English, proficiency in which he gained when he shipped on a Sydney whaler as a boy. His enchanted mobility among the native villages is guaranteed by his being taboo, being held sacred and thus protected from harm. Both physical mobility and the proficiency in speech as represented in Marnoo are imagistic extensions of what Melville will later term the "talismanic word Taboo" (221); they are outward demarcations of the sacred within the context of Marquesan culture.

One more image of taboo in the person of Marnoo illustrates the degree to which Tommo's partial perspectives fail dramatically in embracing the full import of the institution. The most clever and yet inadvertent manipulation of image in the novel appears in Tommo's fascination with the tattooing of a tree on Marnoo's body. This reference anticipates Tommo's later discussion of the "wreath of leaves twined in a peculiar fashion" around the trunks of bread-fruit trees in the sacred groves of the Typees, "the mark of the taboo" (222). Tommo himself unknowingly makes an even more profound association. He

notes in passing that the Marquesan word for tree is "Artua", without recalling it seems his earlier annotation that "The word Artua, although having some other significations, is in nearly all the Polynesian dialects used as the general designation of the gods"(175).

Melville makes a crucial error in his use of Marquesan vocabulary at this point. He misspells the Polynesian word for god (Artua instead of Atua), yet his annotation in Typee otherwise closely resembles Stewart's: "The word Atua--the appellative of the first class--with scarce a modification, is the term used in all the Polynesian dialects to designate the ideal beings worshipped as gods, in the System of polytheism existing among the people." [39] There is in fact no etymological connection between the Marquesan word for tree (aka, akau) and the word for god (atua). The similarity between them, however, may account for Melville's mistaken identification. This suggests that the grounding of sanctity in the natural environment in this fashion arises from the accidental association of two words, and lends credence once more to the notion that Melville falls into crucial misreadings in Typee.

When Tommo looks at Marnoo he sees an enchanted warrior figure imbued with a host of social graces and privileges. He does not see those invisible associations, conveyed in the images Melville has gathered, which ground these virtues

at once in language and in the physical spaces through which Marnoo moves. The images themselves circulate in Melville's prose, like those spirits conducted into ceremonial idols, revealing an otherwise veiled consciousness of culture that Tommo as the site of the novel's preoccupations and anxieties cannot penetrate. Marquesan man, these images seem to suggest, is literally rooted like the trees of his taboo groves, in a hidden, sacred earth.

The humanity of the Typees-- their existence as te hau enana --can thus be understood not by isolating social forms as distinct spheres of Marquesan life in the way that Tommo tends to, but as part of a single continuum of being which links the taboo to the hallowed ground of the Typee valley through the totemic image of the tree. Virtue, social order, and the gods are all etymologically and ritually connected in Melville's prose. In this sense Typee is itself a latent representation, beyond its own acknowledgement, of the Marquesan culture's appropriation of its existential contours from the literal topography of the valley.

The most dramatic enactment of this appropriation concerns the moral ambiguity of the "hideous rite" of cannibalism in which a select group of Typees participate (236). More significant than the revelation that the natives are cannibals is the context of Tommo's discovery

For him the discovery swiftly terminates his speculations on the "good fellowship" of his captors. The sociability of the Marquesans, to say the least, is clearly jeopardized. On the one hand the discovery convinces Tommo that the Typees cannot be both human beings and cannibals at the same time. On the other, the cannibal ritual ties together the loose strands of hallowed ground, and social obligation which in fact define Marquesan man to himself and even to Melville in a limited way. At some level at least Melville's sensitivity to the invisible and the spatial expression of the Typee culture exceeds that of Tommo.

The spatial dimensions of Marquesan culture--the physical symbols, monuments, and sacred grounds in Typee Valley--serve to unlock Melville's intuitions about a realm of structure stretching beyond Tommo's "factual" grasp of events. The holding of the cannibal feast at the tribal Ti, the location of Ti in the Taboo Groves, and finally, Kory-Kory's urgent admonition that both the human remains and the site in which Tommo discovers them are strictly taboo--all of these details confirm the latent significance in Melville's recurrent references to hallowed ground in the novel generally. Tommo's discovery of the bones in this sacred place reveals the missing link he requires for his interpretation of taboo, explaining, potentially at least, the relationship between the outward, social character of the Typees and the cultural, symbolic, ritualistic

expression of their self-definition. Unfortunately, Tommo's self-definition, imprinted with his own subjectivity, prevents him from being open any earlier to this cultural function.

What he obviously has no time to consider before his hasty escape from island, and what Melville's constellation of images outlines only vaguely, is that the taboo cited throughout Tommo's account has less to do with the strictly social relationships among individuals, virtuous or otherwise, than with the equally "moral" relationship between Marquesan man and Nature. The cannibal feast functions in the moral dialogue of Typee quite specifically as a native appeal to an authority veiled in the unstated grammar of Marquesan Nature. Taboo represents that larger framework, or language of compliance with the demands of that authority perceived by the Typees. In short, the Marquesans consume human flesh for reasons beyond physical nourishment in a metaphysical arena where, for them, nothing is simply physical, where all gestures are symbolic, sacred. The feast is after all a ritual.

Tommo, then, perceives Marquesan social interaction as evidence of an Edenic world. He does not see the deeper cultural relationship between the Marquesans and their gods. Tommo never realizes that the Eden of innocence survives only at a price exacted by the Nature from which it comes.

The "innocence" of the Typees is better understood perhaps as their singular dedication to the obligation expressed through the taboo rituals to those unseen forces which grant them their food, their shelter, and their own brand of collective liberty. Melville's narrative implicitly warns that what is incomprehensible to Tommo is not a void, a hollow gorge that can be occupied effortlessly on a whim; it is rather the space in which the Typees orient themselves in their visible universe. While it may be true that the "'independent electors' of the valley were not to be brow-beaten by chiefs, priests, or devils" (177), the iconic fragments and episodes Melville lifts from their culture leave no doubt that the Typees have retained a "conscience", definable in their terms, that expresses symbolically in the consumption of human flesh the payment of their debt and the appropriation of their territory from the gods.

4.

The distinction between the expressive Marquesan world, saturated with image, and the functional, social, scientific fact-world at the centre of Tommo's perceptions of himself and of the Typees says a great deal about the early Melville. The dim tracings of the abeyant Marquesan culture show us the limits within which the young Melville was working; they also point to that area of human existence to which he would someday direct his attention. Moby-Dick is the classic expression, in the Melville canon if not in the

entire American Renaissance, of the fact that man knows not "where lie the nameless things which the mystic sign gives forth such hints; yet with me, as with the colt, somewhere those things must exist." [40] There can be no doubt that Tommo is a long way from being able to make this kind of assertion. In Melville's first novel, Tommo is curiously removed from the fragments of symbolic utterance generated by and through Marquesan culture in the form of tantalizing image.

This lack of grasp of the reality of things in Typee Valley obviously registers. Melville's unavoidable misunderstanding of the cultural terrain of Nuku Hiva as it appeared circa 1842 to him and to the writers upon whom he relied for the facts of the day. But the imagistic suggestion of greater meaning throughout Typee is a tantalizing hint of Melville's feel for a world of ambiguity that as yet was foreign to his imagination, as foreign as the Marquesans were to his Tommo-self. Put another way, Melville in 1846 had not yet fully occupied his own imagination. The ambivalence set up in Typee between the use of the "facts" and the curious play of images measures both the reticence of Melville's imagination and the enormous potential it disclosed. In view of Melville's unoccupied imagination, Typee seems strangely "un-authored", an impression reinforced by the two most notable characteristics of the novel. First, Tommo's constant

appeals to the documentary evidence existing in his day concerning the Polynesian world } have the effect of transferring the authority from Melville's pen to those from whom he borrowed so thoroughly, thus transforming his own authorial subjectivity into a cultural imprint which frames, to some extent, Tommo's perspective. The second feature denying Melville entry into his own narrative is the unintentional and unknowing insight which resides in the Marquesan world, made dimly visible by the arrangement and the suggestive intensity of crucial images of Typee culture.

The narrative voice which utters these dim truths of Marquesan taboo belongs not to the cognitive centre of Tommo--not to the "knowing" Melville either--but to the independent capacity of Typee culture to generate symbolic forms in such a rich and hauntingly ambiguous profusion that Melville became alerted to the drama of existence in a forest of symbols. Melville's experience among the cannibals, coupled with his reading on the subject, released into the act of writing a sensitivity to displacement and dislocation. In the novel this takes the form of a split between Tommo's conscious knowledge, the facts, and Melville's unconscious knowledge of another culture expressed in images. Tommo's predicament of displacement requires the immediate delineation of a subjectivity, a cogito, from out of the } undifferentiated world around him. I have the impression that in parallel fashion Melville,

engaged in his initiation into the act of writing, required with like urgency the same cognitive centre, buoying him amid the expanse of his imaginative potential. Tommo carves out of his consciousness an image of human nature from the material shapelessness of his immediate experience in order to produce a self. This vital appropriation of subjectivity, consequently, is not an artistic exercise of prerogative. It is an existential responsibility, an impulse of intentionality.

Indeed if this act were exclusively the conscious desire of the first novelist to tell his story, it seems to me that Tommo's appropriation might have occurred in isolation, in the realm of fantasy or satire perhaps. But the resistance of the Marquesan culture to Tommo's probings and to his self-delineation is, in part, the consequence of the Typee culture's respective appropriation of its domain of collective identity. Neither Tommo nor Melville was alone in his desire to decipher the human "dumb stones" of the landscape. In some sense, Typee suggests that humankind has been given its autonomy as cultural fragment and discharged from Nature rather cruelly and perhaps without ample understanding of the terms of the release. And this emancipation seems all the more dubious in Typee because on the formal level, Tommo is neither free of the imprint of the "facts" of the Western experience of this alien surround nor comfortably mobile, like the native Marnoo, in the enchanted, totemic world of Marquesan images.

Charles Feidelson has suggested that in Typee Tommo journeys into the "metaphoric" topography of Nuku Hiva. [41] To my thinking, the application of such terms as metaphor to Typee, as well as Omoo, needs to be qualified somewhat, according to whose perspective we view the Polynesian world depicted in Melville's book. In terms of Melville as author, "metaphor" connotes a control over the material that is not really there. Melville has yet to interiorize or absorb fully these spaces of cultural meaning. It is true that Melville inhabited this native place; yet he has not reflectively appropriated it. On the one hand, we might say of Melville's words that they, to use Clifford Geertz's phrase, "materialize a particular cast of mind out into the world of objects where men can look at it." [42] But on the other, there is no definite indication in Typee that Melville's cast of mind has become visible to itself in the manner we might ascribe to the framer of metaphor or to the symbolist. A self-consciousness necessary for symbolic thought is postponed in Typee as a result of the precarious balance set up in its pages between the factual self and the imagined other.

In this respect, Typee is instructive in showing the pre-existence in Melville's early reflection of a space of consciousness, a topos of imaginative potential. Typee delineates a pre-symbolic territory to which the presence of the author is called. The moral questionings inherent in

the very landscape and the ambiguous picture of man drawn in its foreground render Typee "A fibred space traversed by the impetus of words." [43] But it is Omoo that documents the transition of Melville's intuitive "impetus of words" into the more defined sphere of self-consciousness. This transition carries with it Melville's new-found ability to transcend the "knowledge of the like" and to gain an awareness of the human caught in the tidal rush of a real history.

Notes to CHAPTER TWO

1. Hans Jonas, "Change and Permanence: On the Possibility of Understanding History, Social Research, 38: 3 (Fall 1978), 505-506.

2. Robert E. Suggs, The Island Civilizations of Polynesia, (New York: New American Library, 1960), p. 110.

3. This was the least of Melville's worries at the time of Typee's publication, however. His British publisher, John Murray, found it hard to believe that the manuscript was the work of a previously unpublished writer and a former sailor as well. And in fact he urged Melville to provide him with some evidence that the adventures were real and not the product of a literary imagination. (Jay Leyda, The Melville Log: A Documentary Life of Herman Melville (1819-1891), [New York: The Gordian Press, 1969], I, pp. 199, 200).

4. F.O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 375.

5. Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968), p. 35.

6. Stern, p. 39.

7. Stern, 42.

8. Raymond Weaver, Herman Melville, (New York: Literary Guild of America, 1929), p. 185.

9. John Wenke, "Melville's Typee: A Tale of Two Worlds," Critical Essays on Herman Melville's "Typee", (ed) Milton R. Stern, (Boston: G.K. Hall and Company, 1982), p. 251.

10. Larzer Ziff, Literary Democracy: The Declaration of Cultural Independence in America (London: Penguin, 1981), p.

9.

11. Ziff, p. 10.

12. David Lowenthal, "Geography, Experience, and Imagination: Towards a Geographical Epistemology," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 51: 3 (September 1961), 326.

13. Lowenthal: "Private worlds diverge from one another even within the limits set by logical necessity, human psychology, and group standards. In any society, individuals of similar background, who speak the same language, still perceive and understand the world differently," (255).

14. My use of the word imprint is deliberately technical. Tommo's Western subjective views of the Typees can be seen as being conditioned according to certain laws which govern the transference of information. John L. Allen argues that

in the measurement of the role of subjectivity on the impressions of newly explored territory, "it may be convenient to borrow some concepts and terminology from general systems theory and view image formation as a simple process-response system" (John L. Allen, "Exploration and the Creation of Geographical Images of the Great Plains: Comments on the Role of Subjectivity," Images of the Plains: The Role of Human Nature in Settlement, (eds) Brian W. Blouet and Merlin P. Lawson, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), p. 4.

15. Which is to say that he must fill in the space left between these two large cultural, conceptual spaces. As a Westerner Tommo sees this space as the region of the ego. In this light, consider David Lowenthal's assertions that "Westerners are more spatially egocentric than Chinese or Balinese" or Polynesians, for that matter (Lowenthal, 252).

16. Charles Roberts Anderson, Melville in the South Seas, (New York: Dover Books, 1966), passim.

17. Charles Samuel Stewart, A Visit to the South Seas, the U.S. Ship Vincennes, During the Years 1829 and 1830, (New York: John P. Haven, 1831), p. 239.

18. Typee, p. 179.

19. Michael Russell, Polynesia, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1843), p. 20.

20. Melville applies the name Nuku Hiva to a particular settlement when properly speaking the name applies to the entire island, the largest of the Marquesan group.

21. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, (ed) Michael Oakeshott, (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 190.

22. Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" On History: Immanuel Kant, (ed) Lewis White Beck, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), p. 3.

23. Claude Levi-Strauss, attributing this distinction to E.B. Tylor, expresses it as "two ways of looking at any civilization: there is, on the one hand, culture, and on the other, society. By culture, we mean the relationship that the members of a given civilization have with the external world, and by society we mean more especially the relationship men have with each other" (G. Charbonnier [ed], Conversations with Claude Levi-Strauss, [trans] John and Doreen Weightman, [London: Jonathan Cape, 1969], p. 40).

24. O. Mannoni, Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization, (trans) Pamela Powesland, (New York: Praeger, 1956), pp. 23-24.

25. Mannoni considers this polarization to be a projection of the split response of the European to the native. The more realistic image, of course, would be a synthesis of these extremes, precisely the kind synthesis

Tommo for example has great difficulty achieving in his impression of the Marquesans.

26. Brian V. Street, The Savage in Literature: Representations of Primitive Society in English Fiction, 1858-1920, (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 163-164. This view parallels the perception of human beings with that subjective image of alien landscapes discussed by John A. Allen (see note 14).

27. In a contrasting reading, Edgar A. Dryden sees Tommo's projection of his own social values onto the Typees as his revised impression of Polynesian culture: "Every effort is made to associate apparently unique primitive practices with accepted civilized modes of behavior," thus dramatically illustrating the "basic savagery [inherent in civilization] which is found in a less appalling form in a primitive culture", Melville's Thematics of Form: The Great Art of Telling the Truth, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), pp. 45-46. I think that this reading is valid to a point, i.e., in its description of Tommo's reference. But it does not take into account the more troubling gap between Tommo's sensibilities (accurately observed by Dryden) and the fainter suggestion that the Marquesan world's inscrutable symbolic character invalidates Tommo's apparently reliable narration.

28. Mary Douglas discusses the tendency of the early generation of anthropologists to argue that the "heathen" of primitive cultures were necessarily "sunk in darkness", while seeking in their researches to uncover the religious structures that they believed had to exist for the maintenance of moral and social order observed in these cultures. See her essay "Heathen Darkness", Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology, (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 74-81. Tommo suffers from a similar perplexity in his study of the Typees, for in his admiration of the social harmony of the natives, he too is unable to uncover the moral structures which he is convinced are required to maintain such behaviour.

29. Michael Russell, pp. 47-48.

30. Ralph Henry Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought, (New York: The Ronald Press, 1956), pp. 14-15.

31. Irving Goldman, Ancient Polynesian Society, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 20-22. The same definitions are used by Siikala (see note 32. below).

32. Jukka Siikala, Cult and Conflict in Tropical Polynesia: A Study of Traditional Religion, Christianity, and Nativistic Movements. Folklore Fellows Communication N. 223, (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1982), p. 254.

33. Levi-Strauss suggests that a process inherent in Western democratic societies is the continuous and necessary creation of new "differentials" to replace old ones eroded by democratic appeals for reform. Using the metaphor of the steam engine, Levi-Strauss argues that the maintenance of those differentials among classes and divisions of labour spurs the rapid development characterizing Western societies through history. Tommo's identification of Marquesan egalitarianism with the unseen democratic impulse (which he assumes to be the motivation for Typee behaviour) is in this sense highly ironic, since a modern democracy such as Tommo's America owes its advanced state of development to the discrepancy among its classes and to a lack of true egalitarian sympathy. See Charbonnier, p. 41.

34. My argument suggests Melville's implicit concern about origins, but not those of historical dimension, nor the origins of man or language, but rather the origins of a particular appropriation of human identity through the appearance to man himself of a culturally-defined, though displaced focus of attention. This is contrary to Thomas P. Joswick's deconstructivist reading of the novel in his article "Typee: The Quest for Origins," Criticism 17 (Fall 1975): "The narrative mind discovers that its freedom to create a fictive order of experience derives from the failure to express the presence of the origin of a self--a failure that threatens the narrator with social isolation

and conceals a potentially frightening instability of his existence" (336).

35. Russell, p. 69.

36. Goldman, pp. 136-137.

37. Charles Roberts Anderson shows convincingly that Melville's description of the ceremony involving the miniature idol of Moa Artua is taken from David Porter's mistaken interpretation of such a ritual, echoed in Stewart's account also. In fact, Anderson continues, there is no evidence whatsoever that idols of this sort were ever used in a public ceremony in the Marquesas (Anderson, p. 173). But Anderson's contention that Melville "never treats the pure paganism of the Marquesans forthrightly and in sober interest" is potentially misleading. It is true that Tommo does not probe into Typee paganism very deeply; but the novel's image structure does juxtapose Tommo's passing comments with a more sophisticated intimation of deeper cultural significance, connected ultimately to the issue of cannibalism, an issue Tommo takes extremely seriously.

Melville's account of this ceremony has had a kind of litmus paper effect of showing the true color of numerous critical perspectives from which it has been discussed. For example, Stern interprets the denuding of the idol by Kolory as evidence of Melville's desire to expose Moa Artua "as nothing more than what we are led to believe he is--a piece

of Wood" (Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 64). This serves Stern's theory that Melville is profoundly anti-idealist in temperament. Edwin Haviland Miller treats the ceremony as the male mimicry of child-bearing: the idol, "an absurd, patched up phallus," enters the canoe-like container, "a womb," and emerges as a fetus doll after its birth journey," Melville, (New York: George Braziller, 1975), pp. 127-128. But the issue underlying the plurality of readings is the same, regardless of critical persuasion: the gap between what the ceremony actually means and what Tommo assumes its effect on the Marquesans means, allows for arbitrary impositions of meaning.

38. Cf. Anderson: "Melville was drawing unnecessarily on his imagination, however, in accounting for these massive stone platforms. Perhaps he actually misunderstood what the natives told him; perhaps it was simply more congenial to his romantic attitude to conjure up a race of Marquesan master builders coeval with those of ancient Egypt" (p. 158).

39. Charles Stewart, A Visit to the South Seas, vol 1, p. 267.

40. Moby-Dick, (eds). Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker, (New York and London: Norton, 1967), p. 169.

41. Charles Feidelson, Symbolism and American Literature,
(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 165.

42. Clifford Geertz, "Art as a Cultural System," Modern
Language Notes 91 (1976), 1478.

43. Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, (trans) Maria
Jolas, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. xxiv.

Chapter 3

INTERIORIZING HISTORY:

OMOO

We have cast away the worship of idols, and have embraced the worship of our common Lord. In the year 1814 we embraced Christianity.

-Queen Pomare, in a letter to
the President of the United States,
September 16, 1829. [1]

In Tommo, as narrative centre, Melville documented the opening moves of a self coming into a consciousness of its own. Uninitiated in the ways of the Typees Tommo looks at their culture with the need to appropriate from it a sense of the human against which to measure himself. Quite literally he needs to "see" himself as a shape distinctive to that human topography. Because he regards himself as a free-floating sovereign entity, Tommo sees Marquesan man as a single fabric of humanity, undifferentiated and morally uniform. Paradoxically the need to assert this consciousness of himself as an appropriating centre eclipses the deeper cultural structures of the Marquesan world. Tommo's view of the natives has an opaque quality which contributes to the radical de-emphasis of the cultural life of the Marquesans and renders it an intractable collection

of unreadable activities. Yet the vague outlines of that culture begin to appear outside of Tommo's restricted perspective, thrown into relief by a network of suggestive images sensed by Melville in the process of writing Typee.

The most interesting features of his first novel, then, are not only the specific details concerning native life Tommo observes, but also the stratified layers of meaning produced in the difference between what Melville took from his experiences and later reading to be the facts concerning the Marquesan world and what that world expresses, as it were, on its own. Two modes of apprehending the same landscape emerged in Typee. The world according to the Western man's facts is a space that can be directly and completely inhabited by Tommo/Melville. The world projected at him as fragment and image is relative, partial and, in its overall character, unknown. Melville can survey and register this landscape in his Western consciousness without understanding or absorbing it fully. In light of this distinction, Melville's early commitment to factual documentation--which he maintained in all of his novels up to and including Moby-Dick--assumes a central importance for him as a mode of literary expression. The reliance upon the "facts" of the world, all that can be said, locates Tommo in the epistemological certitudes of his own culture.

Melville's second novel, Omoo, represents a subtle change in this delicate set of relationships. For this reason, it is more than a sequel to Typee. It is true that it shares with Typee a Polynesian setting, this time Tahiti. It is also true that in it Melville continues his moral criticism of the missionaries. But the Tahitian world Melville saw was fundamentally different from the Marquesan valley in which he had been previously captive. The historical realities of Tahiti were different. Melville noted these differences when he wrote to John Murray about Omoo in January 1847: "I think you will find it a fitting successor to 'Typee'; inasmuch as the the latter book delineates Polynesian Life in its primitive state--while the new work represents it, affected by intercourse with the whites. It also describes the 'man about town' sort of life, led, to the present day, by roving sailors in the Pacific." [2]

Melville's reference to the rover's life and to the freedom it provides suggests the prominence of a new version of the self in Omoo. This alteration would have important consequences for the course of Melville's writing from this point in his career onwards. The narrator of Omoo stands within his Tahitian world in a way that differs from the stance Tommo had in his Marquesan valley. This changed orientation may be attributed to the relatively advanced stage of European occupation and settlement in the Tahiti of the early 1840s. This Tahiti was a more familiar place to

the young Melville, an environment capable of sustaining a "man about town". It had a more saturated exposure to European power than had the Marquesas Islands. As a result, Tahiti was inhabited by personages he would have more easily recognized as being "human".

To accommodate different conditions of Tahiti's more advanced acculturation, Melville builds into his new narrator a heightened concern about the self. He portrays it as less garrisoned, less rooted in the assumed sovereignty of Western "facts". As a result, the narrator of Omoo is more open than Tommo. As well he is more sensitive to the historical change which he surveys in the world around him. He is much more able to register the subtleties of the advanced cultural contact. Thus in a more articulate fashion than in Typee, Melville focusses in Omoo on the presence of a self inhabiting more aggressively and with more awareness the boundaries between cultures in Polynesia. Robert E. Abrams has attributed the qualities of "elasticity and mutability" to this presence.[3] And Merlin Bowen has spoken of this self and its intensive concern with identity as

something that is both given and achieved: as an aboriginal, stable, though ever elusive centre of identity on the one hand; and on the other as a realization in action of the full human and individual potential. A man is both his inmost sense of himself and the outward declaration of that sense in his interaction with the opposing world.[4]

Omoo to a greater extent than Typee exemplifies the close bond between the inmost self and the exterior, opposing world. The narrator's sharpened focus of attention is closely related to the notion of a self meshed into the estranged conditions of an external world which sends back confused signals.

The feature of that external world which most crucially determines the direction and the formal contours of Omoo is the phenomenon of acculturation. Early in the novel Melville makes a passing reference to one Lem Hardy, "a renegado from Christendom and humanity," an Englishman who deserted ship some ten years before Melville meets him, and who has since assumed the traits, customs, and outward appearance of a native Tahitian. Most notable in Melville's description of him is the highly suggestive image of an individual who has become a kind of cultural configuration placed in a yet larger cultural structure:

He had gone ashore as a sovereign power, armed with a musket and a bag of ammunition, and ready, if need were, to prosecute war on his own account. The country was divided by the hostile kings of several large valleys. With one of them, from whom he first received overtures, he formed an alliance, and became what he is now, the military leader of the tribe, and the war-god of the entire island. [5]

Cultural contact and the subsequent process of reverse acculturation-- here the white man assuming native characteristics--are facts of Tahitian history that Melville has noted and shaped into an image of the European as cultural renegade.

Lem Hardy is an extreme example of a reversed acculturation process in several ways. His ability to sustain his role as a god over the islanders for ten years departs significantly from the historical conditions of prolonged cultural contact, in which the deification of the white man by the local population erodes very quickly. As soon as the humanity of the Western visitor is discovered, the fiction of godhead crumbles. In another respect Lem Hardy's assumption of native qualities is an ironic reversal of the direction of cultural influence in Polynesia generally. The white man has taken on the traits of the native; history was to reverse the process in Tahiti in the creation of a hybrid culture. That he should assume native qualities also serves to undermine the degree to which he really is a "sovereign power". Despite these alterations the image affords Melville an opportunity to grasp the traumatic dimension of the confused symbiotic drama of role, identity, and self at the centre of the Tahitian mosaic. Melville benefits from having this pivotal and plastic centre at his disposal in his attempt to make visible all the chameleon gestures of the acculturation process.

The cultural renegade transcends the status of mere colourful detail in the novel. The portrait of Lem Hardy is emblematic of the whole course of European involvement in the affairs of the islanders from the late eighteenth century onwards. In this way, he is more than just an

anecdote of a particularized phenomenon of change of the island. In his own right, he is a psychological and cultural construction; he has built elements of the native culture into his own character. He has, like the Melville who depicts him, interiorized in his own metamorphosis the flow of history that is changing Tahiti. That Lem Hardy is now regarded as a minor deity on the island suggests that the process of acculturation has rendered him taboo, giving him the status similar to that of Marnoo in *Typee*. The figure of the individual man who has thus pieced together a self from the fragments of Tahitian culture is a central anchoring figure in Melville's narrative. Such self-reconstruction also provides a model for Melville's repeated attempt to mold aesthetically the "given" external world of factual experience into a rudimentary form of signification or artistic, as opposed to strictly documentary, expressiveness.

The portrait of Lem Hardy as a type gives Melville some aesthetic mobility, allowing him to move beyond the possession of dry, documented facts into an imaginative region much more sensitive to the situation of both natives and Westerners on Tahiti than Tommo would have been. Melville's short Preface to the novel describes this sensitivity in provisional terms that distinguish the narrative from a formal study: "In no respect does the narrator make pretensions to philosophic research. In a

familiar way, he has merely described what he has seen; and if reflections are occasionally indulged in, they are spontaneous, and such as would, very probably, suggest themselves to the most casual observer" (xv). The distinction implicit in this disclaimer is important. The artifice of the inert, lifeless aspect of raw scientific data should not be confused, Melville argues, with the immediate "spontaneous" reactions of the casual observer who, in his unconscious absorption of his surroundings, can allow reflections to "suggest themselves". In the same way, the spontaneity of such reflections also sketches out the selfhood of the teller of the tale in his telling.

The prose of the novel, on the whole, does exactly what Lem Hardy has done: it acts out, from the vantage point of the man thrust into the flow of historical change, the rhythms of cultural dissolution and the subsequent fabrication of hybrid cultural forms. From the viewpoint of Melville's narrator three groups emerge from the landscape simultaneously in the forging of some kind of identity through the acculturation process. Omoo transforms them into three variations of the self, now locked into the drama of an unfolding documentary fiction: a) we see the natives "denationalized" in the overlap of European modes of authority onto the antecedent structures of traditional Tahitian society; b) the missionaries as "civilizers" are forced to adapt Christian transcendentalism and morality to

the social and political realities of the native world; c) and finally the narrator-rover himself, like the colonial citizen, must clear some space between the native and the missionary societies and find a shifting, mobile sense of self.

Caught in the same flow of change as Lem Hardy is, all three groups emerge in Omoo as variations on his hybrid identity. Each of them valorizes the land in a distinct way. For the native it is sacred ground. For the missionary it is a compromised New Jerusalem. For the roving narrator and the settled colonist it is an exploitable resource. Melville gets a hold of the dispersed energies and interests--which put an existential pressure on Tahitian life as a whole--by reference to a thematized sense of his own experiences, and by a conscious and formal attention to the language of expressive description. Melville's experiences derive from the social "facts" of Tahitian acculturation. Omoo lends shape to those experiences, captures and in effect processes them in the interior, aesthetic space of "image". The result is an account of this destabilized Polynesia as a frontier inhabited by troubled pioneers.

2.

VARIATION (A): THE NATIVE

Melville commits himself in Omoo to an account of the historical circumstances which prompted the decline of the Tahitian native culture. The purpose of the missionary programme of "denationalizing the Tahitians" was moral improvement; the consequence, Melville notes, was the erosion of the whole culture: they have "sunk into a listlessness . . . more pernicious than all the games ever celebrated [with pagan zeal] in the Temple of Tanee" (183). The disruption of the ritual life of Tahitian man followed on from this denationalizing imperative. The system of native idolatry, for example, has been done away with by the time Melville arrives. The sudden influx of foreign nationals into native society to take up residence there as colonial citizens has created an apparent homogeneity of cultures. While this "new nationality" has removed any threat of further atrocities being committed against the native population (185), all visible signs point to the fact that the price for this physical security has been the spiritual life of the old native society.

Melville's account touches on the structural factors that contributed to the rapid and total seizure of the island and to the negation of the culture. The narrator of Omoo contends that the changes in the native society are not merely the result of the superior force of the Europeans. Similarity of structure between colonial and the native social orders which preceded cultural contact made

relatively easy the European intervention into the political life of the Tahitian chiefs. Eventual domination became inevitable. Melville's analogy is apt:

Under the sovereignty of the Pomares, the great chiefs of Tahiti were something like the barons of King John. Holding feudal sway over the patrimonial valleys, and on account of their descent, warmly beloved by the people, they frequently cut off the royal revenues by refusing to pay the customary tribute due from them as vassals (305).

The European powers could observe in the clashing intrigues of the Tahitians something of their own political competitiveness and ambitions. They could see these tendencies. They could act on them and in them. The obscurities Tommo had to negotiate in Typee do not present themselves in Omoo. In his change of locale from the "open" society of the Marquesas to Tahiti's "stratified" system built as it was on political authority, Melville encounters new conditions of power and cultural organization, which in turn alter the character and the substance of the narrative he writes. [6]

Melville discovered in Tahiti the raw materials of political intrigue much more congenial to the European perspectives than the aloof culture of the Typees was. His description of the "feudal" system of Tahiti is now an appropriate image whereas his references in Typee to Polynesian servitors, bachelor houses, and genteel sociability were clearly not. Melville's cross-cultural

vocabulary works for Tahiti. It is borne out by a set of social conditions framed by institutional structures and political activities which facilitate comparison. The application of these terms to the world of the Typees disturbed the text. The application of the European feudal model to the Tahitian conditions is, by contrast, entirely appropriate.

A stratified society such as Tahiti's would in fact have been characterized by intense rivalries among regional chiefs for the absolute spiritual and secular authority over the island which, by the time Melville arrived, had been consolidated under the reign of Queen Pomare. Status rivalry--which Melville identifies here as the refusal of the chiefs to replenish the royal coffers with "the customary tribute"--gave the Europeans a double advantage in their project of colonizing the Tahitians. The influencing of the supreme sovereign of Tahiti assured them control over the entire island. In addition the European participation in the various rivalries for that supremacy allowed for the entry of Christianity into direct competition with the natives' sacred cult grounds of Oro. Conversion to the white man's religion seemed like a fair price in exchange for the military assistance from the Europeans. Underlying Melville's remarks on the moral degeneration of the native population is the historical fact that Christianity was brought into the battles which raged against the traditional

cults. Because the cults in Tahiti were under the centralized authority of one family, control of the spiritual realm guaranteed control of the political orders of the society.

Melville's summary of the political history of the island reveals his awareness that the transferred religious allegiance of Tahitian royalty tarnished the integrity of Christianity as much as that of the old tribal religions.

Every reader of Cook's voyages must remember "Otoo", who, in that navigator's time was king of the larger peninsula of Tahiti. Subsequently, assisted by the muskets of the Bounty's men, he extended his rule over the entire island. This Otoo, before his death, had his name changed to Pomare, which has ever since been the royal patronymic.

He was succeeded by his son Pomare II, the most famous prince in the annals of Tahiti. Though a sad debauchee and drunkard, and even charged with unnatural crimes, he was a great friend of the missionaries, and one of their very first proselytes. During the religious wars into which he was hurried, by his zeal for the new faith, he was defeated, and expelled from the island. After a short exile he returned from Imeeo, with an army of eight hundred warriors; and in the final battle of Narii, routed the rebellious pagans with great slaughter, and reestablished himself upon the throne. Thus, by force of arms, was Christianity finally triumphant in Tahiti (302).

The account faithfully acknowledges that the tribal wars were fuelled, spiritually and politically, by the natives' adoption of Christianity. The competition for native cult grounds and for the physical possession of the idols of Oro continued even after the Christianizing of Tahiti, placing the pursuit of Christian grace along side the tradition of

seeking mana, the supernatural power bestowed upon the native believer. The dynamic of acculturation as it involved religious belief has been summed up this way: "A typical feature of the first stage [of colonial-native interaction] was the conflict between Christianity and the traditional religion, which began to undermine the traditional authority of the sacred king. The grounds for battle for secular power at the same time changed and Christianity in particular emerged as the new source of strength." [7]

Commentators have examined the intrigues which gave the Pomare dynasty so colourful a history. [8] The point that bears on our concern with Melville's handling of these materials is that the restructuring of Tahitian society is an external historical process which Melville has absorbed into the verbal texture of Omoo in a manner parallel to the absorption of the European religious and political hierarchies into the native culture. Tahiti's social conditions occurred in a site of crossed cultures. Melville's account of this site is in effect a crossed grammar of acculturation, a hybrid text derived from travel romance and documentation. Melville's language is at every instance enormously sensitive to the paradigms of power and historical change.

The description of Queen Pomare's palace conveys something of the legacy of cross-cultural antagonisms and overlays found in this diluted cultural environment at large. To his surprise the narrator of Omoo enters the royal audience hall to find "the incongruous assemblage of the most costly objects from all quarters of the globe. Cheek by jowl, they lay beside the rudest native articles, without the slightest attempt at order" (309). This remarkable "museum of curiosities" (310) is the image of the disparate artifacts of cultural data scattered throughout the landscape of Tahiti. Melville has reoriented, resituated in the landscape of his imagination these lost artifacts from both cultures, imbuing them with a particular meaning that surrounds his discovery of them.

That they are "found" things now implicates the narrator in their demise, makes the knower party to the fate befalling the known. The function of these objects as "made" things belongs to the ritual and spiritual value of either native or European worlds of which they are no longer a meaningful part. They present themselves now to Melville as "found" things. They have been displaced from their functional origins, their proper place of significance, into the consciousness of a "casual observer" who can do little else but register their importance as fruits of an archeological investigation.

Melville sees an extremely confused archeological site containing both items which are not indigenous and the native artifacts we would expect to find here. The combination bears the destructive imprint of Western empire:

All the articles first mentioned, were, doubtless, presents from foreign powers. They were more or less injured; the fowling pieces and swords were rusted; the finest woods were scratched; and a folio volume of Hogarth lies open, with a cocoa-nut shell of some musty preparation capsized among the miscellaneous furniture (310).

Melville does not need to add that these things are all "miscellaneous furniture" as a result of their startling inappropriateness in the Tahitian world.

The recording of this museum collection has a separate function for Melville as collector and arranger of anecdotes in his fiction. It assists him in transforming the presence of these historical artifacts into a larger significance as images in an artistic expression. The shift forces the observer-narrator into personal concern about the traumatizing effect of acculturation. A self emerges from this concern, a self not garrisoned and defensively hostile to the outer world as Tommo was. Instead we have a self capable of understanding the historical changes the Tahitians have been forced to confront in the deepest recesses of their existence. From the perspective of this more porous and concerned self, there is more to this scene than the simple transformation of the Polynesian artifacts

into rubbish. The metamorphosis signifies the entry of Tahiti into the flow of Western history; it also indicates how Tahiti and Tahitian sovereignty have been contaminated by that history. The natives have absorbed the contagion into their characters. To Melville that process is irreversible. The exposure to the flow of history infects Tahiti with a fatal inertia. In his words: "Years ago brought to a stand, where all that is corrupt in barbarism and civilization unite to the exclusion of the virtues of either state, like other uncivilized beings, brought into contact with Europeans, they must remain stationary until utterly extinct" (192).

Despite the negative sound of this proposition, Melville's account of the acculturation process highlights the resistance of the natives to the effects of civilization. The corrosive fallout of history does not distract Melville from the post-contact cultural hybrid which has emerged on the island as a new form. He juxtaposes the images of the apparent assimilation by the Tahitians into Western customs of dress with the superficial Christianity of one of the recent converts, the young Idee. She is in Alexander Pope's words "A sad good Christian to the heart--/ A very heathen in the carnal part" (178).

It is precisely the visibility of the native conversions and in general of the assimilation of Western culture that

is at issue throughout Omoo. . . Because these become the objects of Melville's concern, his own selfhood is being lured into visibility in his account of cultural conditions. No longer is his subjectivity eclipsed by the alleged objectivity of the "facts", as it was in Typee. The description in Omoo of the native congregation attending Sunday service at the palm tree chapel points to the Tahitian complicity in the drama of acculturation: "Everywhere meets the eye the gay calico draperies worn on great occasions by the higher classes, and forming a strange contrast of patterns and colors. In some instances, these are so fashioned to resemble, as much as possible, European garments," a practice that strikes the young Melville as being in "exceedingly bad taste" (170). Within this cultural mosaic of patterned assimilation lies the boundary between what the natives will accept and what they will reject. The visible signs of acculturation retain the marks of the tribal culture. They also signify the limits of tolerance. For the tastelessness Melville sees in this appropriation of the styles of dress vaguely suggests the natives' deliberate mimicry of the white man in their hybrid representation of European fashions.[9]

Similarly the grotesque and feigned effects of the native conversions to Christianity begin to supercede the contents of belief. The natives of the island of Raiatair, in the aim of gaining the favour of the missionaries,

"pretended to be wrought up to madness by the preaching they heard. They rolled their eyes; foamed at the mouth; fell down in fits; and so, were carried home" (175). In this instance grotesquery is a visible ritual in and for itself. The public pretense of conversion turns ritual back on itself, thus rendering the self-consciousness of the mode of behaviour more significant than the ideas that are supposed to be communicated through its enactment.

Melville's account of this incident crystallizes in language the effects of acculturation by means of an expressive image of what Victor Turner calls a "social drama", a process by which a society registers the dynamics of internal conflicts. Turner's analysis of this patterned social ritual sheds light on Melville's rendering of the Tahitian social dynamic of resistance and acceptance. "In the social drama," says Turner, "though choices of means and ends and social affiliation are made, stress is dominantly laid upon loyalty and obligation, as much as interest, and the course of events may then have a tragic quality." [10] For in their participation, Melville's natives are cementing the bonds which make Tahiti a single society of contractual obligations, no longer the site of two independent cultures involved in the earlier dynamics of contact. The fits of the natives' pretended ecstasy of conversion are a dance of life, a ritual that undermines, veils the tragic consequences of the loss of the old order.

Acculturation, while it may bring about the passing of an old culture, is also an energy surge out of which emerges a new cultural configuration. This process draws on a collective form of creativity, a resourceful re-arranging of meaning and ritual to accommodate the Western presence. In this new "cultural configuration," continuous flux replaces the solid fixtures of authority. Melville's narrative reflects the instability of a society whose ground has shifted from beneath it; the novel, too, is a hybrid configuration. The scraps of historical fact and personal experience serve Melville in his construction of a world sensitive to the play of image, and to the moral consequences of expanded empire. For example, the discussion of the proper date for the celebration of the Sabbath is a paradigmatic expression of the flux in Tahitian society. That the missionaries of the good ship Duff could have "lost one precious day of their lives" in sailing eastward on the quest for souls "perplexes the poor natives mightily" (164). The historical conversion of Tahiti to Christianity dislodges the old orders of time and space. In some respects, history redesigns the consciousness of geography.

One victim of this existential revision of the Tahitian world is Jeremiah Po-Po. Melville regards him as a "pillar of the Church." But while he is in every outward way a model elder of the religious community, his name still bears

the testimony to the ambiguity of cultural contact and conversion. Narmō-Nanna Ro-Po (The-Darer-of-Devils-by-Night) becomes Jeremiah-in-the-Dark. It is a dubious translation highlighting what may have been a dubious conversion. His Christian fervour is undercut by the obscure meaning of his native name; it is meaning which survives like a Tahitian idol.

VARIATION (B): THE MISSIONARY

The missionary stands on the other side of the acculturation process. Melville sees him as a creature equally trapped between two cultural modes of existence, yet unaware of the compromises he has been forced to make. The political-moral role of the missionaries is defined in *Omoo* as the mixture of the salvation of souls and the acquisition of territory. It was the already well defined wars for Oro that brought Christianity to Tahiti. After that, the effectiveness of the conversion techniques rested on the ability of the missions to make Christianity respond to the indigenous culture.

In the pages of *Omoo* the assimilation of Christianity into the native mould assumes the form of a network of images which undermine the overt purposes of the missions. The "Church of the Cocoanuts" is both an historical site and a "found" metaphor by which Melville balances the new faith and the old. It requires little embellishment to become a ready metaphor for a Christianity which is itself culturally

displaced. Melville notes that the church was constructed by Pomare II, a "Polynesian Solomon" who employed "nearly as great a multitude" in its building as the original Hebrew monarch did for his temple (169). Despite the authenticity of its European design (replete with gallery), the church exudes an air of prior culture now supplanted by the new religion:

As hinted, the general impression is extremely curious. Little light being admitted, and everything being of a dark color, there is an indefinable Indian aspect of duskiness throughout. A strange woody smell, also--more or less pervading every considerable edifice in Polynesia--is at once perceptible. It suggests the idea of worm-eaten idols packed away in some old lumber-room at hand (170).

No importation even of this magnitude can cover the prior ground of the Tahitian culture. If anything the images of cultural and spiritual renovations only serve to emphasize the fragility of the overlay of one civilization onto another. Melville's added reference to the now eroded Tahitian religion--his suggestion of "worm-eaten idols packed away"--carries the metaphor of the church to its limits, to limits which mark the boundaries and the extent of Christianity's visible hold on the Tahitian converts. More importantly, the symbolic value of the church as a kind of grotesque flaw in the landscape surrounds the island with a profoundly disturbing atmosphere of moral ambiguity. Ambiguous enough to unsettle the pieties and powers of European authority.

The missionary's sermon similarly reveals the political maze into which the quest for souls has strayed. As Melville notes, the discourse is "specially adapted to the minds of the islanders; who are susceptible to no impressions, except from things palpable, or novel or striking" (173). The issues at stake in the special adaptation--anti-French sentiments, the warnings to native women against prostitution, and the greatness of British Empire--are of more importance to the missionary. For him the maintenance of order is a priority in this volatile colonial environment. The most outrageous extension of moral and social authority is the institution of the "kannakippers", the squad of native constables who enforce attendance at Sunday services (177).

The process of acculturation thus has as strong an effect on the missionary-civilizers as it does on the native Tahitians. The concerns of the missionaries after all are just as much for "things palpable". One gets the impression that what interests even Melville is the same palpable quality. But for him the palpability of the hybrid culture of the island is now given over to a language of interpretation; it is as tangible yet as volatile as newly created matter.[11] What is palpable "out there" in the cultural surround that Melville himself inhabited translates into the verbal density of image his narrator-protagonist now occupies. While both the missionaries and the natives

they seek to convert may appear initially as polarized extremes, Melville's portrayal of them neutralizes this polarization. His narrative illustrates how both parties have been molded into the same landscape, forced to meld into one another in the circumstances of mutual, necessary acculturation. What is true of Jeremiah Po-Po is true of the missionaries themselves whose own doctrines have had to submit to the pressures of cultural contact. Acculturation, as Melville describes it, produces a specific conceptual space which is neither that of European culture nor that of Polynesia. It occurs rather in a tertium alter, along the margins or the interface of the two root cultures.

In this respect all those inhabitants of this new Tahiti have undergone an important rite of passage which negotiates the traumatic shift in identity through three related phases: separation, margin, and re-aggregation. The important phase of the process, for Victor Turner, is the middle one; the margin is a "liminal" cultural experience of transition.[12] It is also crucial in Melville's interpretation of Tahitian life. For him, that middle stage in defines a loss of orientation which is compensated for by the emergence of symbols such as the Church of the Cocoanuts, and rituals such as the native fits of ecstasy which express as coherently as possible, if only unconsciously, both the nature of the loss and the means of enduring it. Acculturation in this regard attains the

status in Omoo of primum mobile. Melville's images of the constant decentering of both root cultures contribute simultaneously to the rhythm of his narrative and to his novel's faithful representation of the dynamics of historical change in the Polynesian world.

3.

VARIATION (C): THE ROVER/COLONIAL

The "liminal" world created by the process of acculturation in Tahiti produced new problems of cultural identity for both the European and native. To the extent that Omoo as a text focusses on this phenomenon, it also contributes its own liminality of image employed by a narrator-rover in his free-floating subjectivity. Acculturation in Tahiti extends the self-understanding of the "casual observer" who records its effects. The physical limits of the Tahitian world governs the perspective of the narrator of Omoo as much as the Marquesas Islands did Tommo, though in a different manner. While Tommo "knows" within a limited space bounded by the suspended culture of the Marquesans, and is held captive in a sense by what he does not understand, the narrator of Omoo has been thrust into the currents of historical change, earning from his "rover" status a curious mobility across cultural boundaries. Mobility of this sort and in this time and place is a privileged manifestation of the liminal, but one which has been given over in this instance to Melville's fullest recording of the expression

of the liminality he has observed in Tahiti. [13] The narrator's ability to move freely through this world of margins has interiorized within this "casual observer" the instability he notices everywhere around him. The narrator shares character traits with Lem Hardy, Jeremiah Po-Po, and the missionaries as a displaced group. His freedom of movement gives him a patchwork identity bestowed upon him in a spontaneous and reactive way by the conditions of cultural overlay and assimilation. This freedom to move invests him with a capacity to see, to know, which reminds us that the narrator's mobility is ontologically and hence absolutely grounded in Melville's assertion that the Marquesan word from which the novel takes its title "signifies a rover, or rather, a person wandering from one island to another, like some of the natives, known among their countrymen as 'Taboo kannakers'" (xiv).

The bestowal of the sacredness of the taboo upon the narrator is doubly significant. In a documentary fashion, Melville reports in Omoo on beachcombing adventures true to the colonial phenomenon in every way. But additionally, to be an "Omoo" is to appropriate, literally on the run, one's identity from the circumstances arising in one's path. In Melville's role as writer, the appropriation is an act which transmutes experience to the language of record. Experience yields words; words provide a much needed buoyancy for the free-floating sovereign self. In this sense, then, Omoo

conveys implicitly the threat of exhaustion that pervades the narrator's continuous mining of the Tahitian world. The tangible nature of this appropriation shows how Melville intuited in his own Polynesian experiences the material role of the beachcomber in the liminal, fluxive world of Tahiti.

Much like the native society in which he now found himself, the beachcomber needed to patch together from fragmented items of the cultural environment a usable model of self and world. He was committed, because of his isolation from his home culture, to entering aggressively into the acculturated Tahitian world and to piecing together a structure of existence between cultures. The beachcomber, therefore, had a crucial role in the acculturation process. Although the job of establishing a single cultural infrastructure from out of the earlier event of contact between the two cultures befell the missionaries, "they were preceded by beachcombers, but the latter no longer were any elements of the structure of European culture. They were outsiders without any institutional support, and so were guided by their own individual motives." [14] In essence the rover-cum-narrator acquires his magical status of "Taboo kannaker" by interiorizing the historical circumstances of the Polynesian world, and becoming--much like Lem Hardy, the archetypal figure of the Omoo--a "sovereign self". And yet this sovereignty is by definition illusory since becoming free over oneself in this way involves a kind of

construction of a self out of the cultural resources he finds around him.

Melville's portrait of the beachcomber who must make do with the cultural versions of selfhood that exist in the immediate environment conforms to the creativity of "primitive" man. Levi-Strauss defines with the use of the term bricoleur:

The 'bricoleur' [odd job man] is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks; but, unlike the engineer, he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project. His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with whatever is at hand, that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions. [15]

For Levi-Strauss, the creativity of the bricoleur is a fitting analogy for the myth-making capacity of primitive society. For Melville, the beachcomber, too, is a bricoleur, whose self-construction takes shape from bits and pieces of cultural bricolage.

As if to throw into relief the pact of compromise made out of that bricolage, Melville's narrator must sustain his privileged status of wanderer by participating in a rite of passage that makes him the master bricoleur, the artist of

acculturation. He enacts symbolically his separation from the old order of home and smooths his entry into the liminal world of Tahiti. His early incarceration in the Calabooza Beretaneé is a social drama of "deculturation" involving important reversals which allow for the smooth passage from the Western Empire into the neutralized space Tahiti has become. Initially showing all the signs of a prison, the Calabooza soon undergoes a gradual metamorphosis, providing the narrator with the opportunity of roving rather than remaining a symbol of his obstructed freedom. In his loose captivity--looseness being the emblem of change and shifting ground of identity on the island--the alleged mutineers are put on display before the local natives who come daily to peer at what is clearly an odd collection of strangers (127). An edge of Melvillean parody attends this scene. These visitations reverse the situation Melville mentions previously, that of Tahitians being exported to Europe and examined there as curiosities of the human species (66).

As the narrative proceeds, the possibility that colonial society constitutes a vast extenuating circumstance begins to weigh heavily on the moral certitude of Melville's account. The narrator's criminality, like his imprisonment, becomes blurred in a setting where moral distinctions become difficult to sustain. There are several reasons for this. Mutiny in Polynesia, for one thing, carries an ominous connotation in view of the original penetration of the

Bounty's crew into the wilds of pre-acculturated Tahiti decades before Melville's arrival. The mutineers of Omoo, in their lax captivity, are an interesting contrast to that historical mutiny which began the process of Tahitian acculturation in the first place. The renegades of Omoo actually reap the benefits which are the historical consequences of the cultural contact generated by the earlier mutiny of the Bounty's men. Another reason for the diffused morality is that the dubious ethics of the colonial captors--in light of the fact that "Owing to the proceedings of the French, everything was in an uproar" (75)--transform the serving of justice into a nostalgic backward glance to the home culture where civic ideals are still intact. From the perspective of both the beachcombers and the colonial administrators, idealism in this post-contact frontier is a luxury. The high standard of integrity they all brought to this part of the world from the home culture could not survive. [16]

This is a maxim that the acting consul Wilson, in particular, seems to have taken to heart. What attracts Melville's attention, aside from the generally disagreeable nature of the man, is the air of the new regime which seems to surround him in his appropriated dignity: in his rooms "Wilson and his two friends were seated magisterially at a table--an inkstand, a pen, and a sheet of paper, lending quite a business-like air to the apartment. These three

gentlemen, being arrayed in coats and pantaloons, looked respectable, at least in a country where complete suits of garments are so seldom met with" (112-113). In Melville's portrait, Wilson has shored up his authority with the acquisition of a set of symbolic props of colonial power. The aesthetic activity of clothing Wilson's dubious ethics with what amount to being the mere artifacts of power has the effect of exonerating the narrator. It does this despite the equally doubtful character of the company by whom he is judged.

But in terms of the underlying dynamics of the colonial predicament, Wilson and Melville have a great deal more in common than their surface antagonism immediately suggests. After all the white settler and the white beachcomber share a common need to nurture an identity from the material and psychological bricolage of Tahiti. Both are at a distinct disadvantage. Unlike either the missionary or the native Tahitian, these individuals can no longer appeal to the certitudes of a home culture. The sense of themselves given to them by a coherent cultural order has been attenuated. Neither do they possess any longer the material fortunes to purchase influence or status in the colonial marketplace. The subsequent impoverishment is evident enough in Melville's account of Wilson. And it is only the narrator's mobility that keeps him always ahead of that same cultural bankruptcy. As an "omoo", the narrator holds a privileged

rank in two roles: as physical wanderer and as recorder of a wealth of experience which maintains his free-floating subjectivity.

Once freed from the Calabooza, the narrator has no choice but to start exploiting the curious, tentative, sacred mobility that goes with being an "omoo", setting himself up as a "man about town" amid the fragments of historical circumstance. What plot the novel possesses is determined by the narrator's negotiation of the ambiguous features of the Tahitian landscape and his successful recounting of them. In this tropical landscape as it is reconstituted in Melville's writing objects have become artifacts requiring interpretation and explanation. The narrative process parallels that process by which the various individuals exploit the bricolage of Tahiti to sustain an apparently "sovereign" self.

Melville's dependence upon the fragments of real experience has implications for the problem of the self as it appears in his narrator. Melville's own freedom to move imaginatively among these experiences is as qualified as the sovereignty inherent in the "sovereign" self. The two concepts are related. In his ideal terms Melville seems to suggest that the only way to maintain freedom in the midst of contact and acculturation is to retain an absolute autonomy, to remain impervious to the conditions outside.

him, out in the surrounding world. This is in effect Tommo's situation, in the sense that his understanding of Marquesan society actually suspends the cultural realities of Typee civilization. But the narrator of Omoo has the advantage of being in a cultural environment which yields considerably more information. Indeed, it is not because the Melville who writes Omoo has passed beyond the Melville who lived among the cannibals. Both Melvilles are similar; the cultural space of Tahiti simply reveals more to Melville than that of the Marquesas Islands ever did. The consequences of the change of islands appear in the different narrative fabric of Omoo. The documentary "facts" of Melville's experience in Tahiti respond with greater ease to his shaping imagination. But whereas the contours of the Tahitian world are more prominent than those of Typee Valley, the sense of himself that Melville worked with and the self of the narrator he constructed in Omoo is less centered, less absolute and unchanging than its counterpart in Typee.

Melville drew from his experience of acculturation in Tahiti a lasting impression of cultural bricolage. When he turns to those experiences for the subject matter of his second novel, he employs the aesthetics of bricolage, and he assumes the role of bricoleur. Consequently, in Omoo Melville's reconstructs the world of his actual experiences in a narrative form that depicts a cultural landscape

bristling with the traumas of historical change. Acculturation, a visible process of history, survives in Melville's account not only as a historical phenomenon, but also as a formal structure, a map of Melville's patchwork narrative consciousness. For the narrator of Omoo the threat of the exhaustion of those "factual" resources providing that sense of self becomes increasingly real. Every setting is a temporary stop-over: Calabooza, the valley of Martair, and the primitive community of Taloo. Melville's protagonist spends only the time in these places needed to acquire the raw material for the next informative yarn.

The documented world of the "facts" is an extremely limited space for Melville in Tahiti, and there are real limitations in imagistic play those facts will allow. Shortly after the publication of Omoo and into the writing of his third book in 1847, Melville realized that the cultural definition of human existence entailed a special kind of dislocation, one whose successful artistic expression would have to exceed the "facts" and the fragmentary imagistic significance based exclusively on the mere documenting of experience. Mardi is both the testament to Melville's realization of the limits of the rover-self of Omoo, and the record of a wanderer with far greater imaginative licence and a deeper understanding of the existential implications of his role as artistic bricoleur.

The acculturation process Melville observed in Tahiti was the basis for the free play of image. Its exhaustion finally in Omoo prompted Melville to broaden the horizons of the self in Mardi in the examination of myth. For Melville, image was the application of the interpreting imagination to "present things". Myth, as Mardi shows, would be for Melville a means of understanding the "absolute condition of present things" in the wider temporal contexts of origins and of the cultural act of appropriation, of the piecing together of ancient meanings from across the expanses of history.



Notes to CHAPTER THREE

1. Quoted in Charles Samuel Stewart, A Visit to the South Seas, vol 2, p. 49.
2. Letter to John Murray, 19 January 1847, Letters, p. 33.
3. Robert E. Abrams, "Typee and Omoo: Herman Melville and the Ungraspable Phantom of Identity," Critical Essays on Herman Melville's "Typee", (ed) Milton R. Stern, (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1982), p. 202.
4. Merlin Bowen, The Long Encounter: Self and Experience in the Writings of Herman Melville, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 3.
5. Herman Melville, Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas, (eds) Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle, (Chicago and Evanston: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1968), p. 27. All further references to the novel are taken from this edition. Page numbers appear in parentheses in the text.
6. The distinctions between "open" and "stratified" societies are made by Irving Goldman in Ancient Polynesian Society, pp. 20-22. We have discussed them in relation to Marquesan society in the previous chapter. See Chapter Two, note 31.

7. Siikala, pp. 255-256.

8. See Charles Anderson, Melville in the South Seas, Chapter X, "Tahiti in 1842", and Jukka Siikala, pp. 207-249.

9. Brian V. Street discusses the use of clothing as a symbol by Western writers in their treatment of the "primitive" in later British fiction, but his remarks are also pertinent to Omoo. "When the natives are shown in Western dress, it is often to prove how badly it fits." Street emphasizes the element of mockery in such portraits and also the arbitrary nature of the native's acculturation in that "when the clothes come off, so, too, will the culture." (The Savage in Literature, p. 117). Melville's claim that the natives' Europeanized dress is in bad taste suggests the extent to which he assumes the arbitrariness of the fashion, while at the same time lamenting the irreversibility of the trend.

10. Mannoni also refers to the assimilation of dress styles in a context which addresses Melville's discussion more directly. The "personality structure" unique to the colonized individual, in Mannoni's view, explains his ability to accept what he wishes of the colonizing culture and to reject other aspects of it (Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization, p. 29.) Melville ably dramatizes this dual acceptance and rejection in his juxtaposition of the image of native dress and the accounts

of the natives' indifference for the most part to Christian teachings:

10. Victor Turner, Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 35.

11. The issue of Melville's reliance upon the immediate, the tangible, and the concretely historical elements of experience is the hypothesis of Milton R. Stern's The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville. Arguing that Melville was not an idealist in the tradition of other Americans such as Thoreau and Emerson despite his dependence on the same Romantic symbology, Stern says: "For Melville, the immediate facts of the historical community are the first logos With Melville the foundation is not built from the top down, from individuality, from individually perceived oversoul to historical action, but from the bottom up, from worldly experience to historical goal" (p. 6). Stern's observation that Melville depends upon "the mind's relativistic, independent, and interior use of exterior fact" (p. 8) does not take into account the ambiguity surrounding Melville's distinction of interior and exterior domains as a result of the acculturation process. In Melville's fiction generally these are not fixed categories, as my discussion of the constantly changing relationship between cultural surround and individual subjectivity tries to show; these domains are

interrelated within the structure and the intent of Melville's prose of recalled or imagined experience.

12. The division of a rite of passage into these parts was first made by Arnold Van Gennep in 1909 in his study Rites de Passage. Victor Turner has described the notion of liminality this way: "These rites of transition, says Van Gennep, are marked by three phases: separation, margin (limen), and re-aggregation. The first and last speak for themselves; they detach ritual subjects from their old places in society and return them, inwardly transformed and outwardly changed, to new places" (Victor Turner, "Variations on the Theme of Liminality", Secular Ritual, (eds) Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff, (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, Assen, 1977), p. 36.

13. Victor Turner modifies Van Gennep's concept in a way which distinguishes for us the liminality Melville would have observed in Tahiti from the liminality inherent in his recording of it in the act writing. The Tahitian world of cultural margins was a collective and an historical phenomenon involving whole groups of individuals. But strictly speaking Melville's reminiscence in the act of writing Omoo constitutes the same process but from the perspective of the man, sitting within the confines of an industrial society and using the novel as the means of re-creating the liminality of the events he saw. Turner would

say that the novel is a "liminoid" phenomenon, in contrast to liminal phenomena the novel has recorded. The liminoid is a secular act, to a degree experimental and fragmentary, as opposed to the liminal act which is religious, conventionalized, and whole in itself, ("Variations on the Theme of Liminality", pp. 43-45).

14. Siikala, p. 256.

15. Claude Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 17.

16. "Those undergoing [the process of liminality]--call them liminaries--are betwixt and between established states of politico-jural structure" (Turner, "Variations", p. 37).

Chapter 4

THE TRANSCENDENTAL IMPERATIVE: BURSTING THE HEAVENS OF MARDI

Tous ceux qui font des grandes choses les ont faites pour sortir d'une difficulté, d'un cul de sac.

-Henri Michaux.[1]

And my soul sinks down to the depths, and soars to the skies; and comet-like reels through such boundless expanses, that methinks all the worlds are my kin, and I invoke them to stay in their course. Yet, like a mighty three-decker, towing argosies by the scores, I tremble, gasp, and strain in my flight, and fain would cast off the cables that hamper.

-Mardi, Chapter 119.

Man, in Melville's accounts of his Polynesian experiences, was comprised of specific individuals, native and Western. The human was not a subject for larger moral and metaphysical speculation. It was an empirical one concerning men, not a transcendental one concerning Man. It emerged out of an actual physical displacement of a young man caught between cultures and supplemented by the travel literature he used to develop his account of that experience. Primary experience and secondary reading provided Melville with a body of material amenable to

aesthetic transformation, to the play of the imagination. The greater density of Tahiti-- a site where the activities of empire and advanced cultural contact had produced ambiguities--yielded a greater harvest of enigmatic behaviour which floated before Melville's narrator as image rather than fact. Melville's attempt to bestow upon these images and impressions a larger significance provoked the young writer's imagination into greater activity. He had modelled human figures in Typee and Omoo by placing an accepted vision of Western man in the foreground of an undifferentiated topography peopled by inhabitants he could not clearly see: thus he could just barely outline the savage Marnoo's elemental grounding in the sacred tabooed earth, and envision Lem Hardy as a focus of a Tahiti interiorized into the depths of Western history and consciousness.

The differences between those novels and between the recording consciousness of the respective narrators presented in them do not necessarily correspond to any change in Melville's competence as a writer. They arise instead, I have suggested, from the radical difference between the cultural conditions of the Marquesas Islands and those of Tahiti in the early 1840s. Drawing imaginatively on intuitions rooted in his experience, Melville depicted in Omoo a locale invested with an historical significance altogether lacking in the Marquesan world. Perhaps more

than ordered significance, Melville sees the fallout of history in the aftermath of disruptive change. persons, objects, the landscape itself--all are invested with the densities of European history visited upon the Polynesian world. The Tahiti of Melville's second book becomes an inside narrative of colony and empire. It registers the marks of a European conscience, with its concerns with guilt and atonement, on the people and the soil of Tahiti. The beautiful and the sensuous features of the native people have, from Melville's perspective, been distorted into images of a moral reckoning only history can impart.

Mardi dramatizes that reckoning with history by subjecting the Polynesian world to the altering attention of Melville's morally alerted imagination. The distance between the disturbed realities of Tahiti and the fantastic world of Mardi is far greater in a moral sense than the geographical and historical distance between the real islands of Melville's actual Pacific adventures. Mardi offers a glimpse of a landscape yielding to the pressures of mind itself. This volatile "world of the mind" becomes visible to Melville as an area where the intensification of meaning seems to grow from the increased vagueness of images. The atmosphere of the indefinite belonging to such images seems to promise the definiteness of ideas unconstrained by the world of facts. Melville attempted in his third novel to surpass the limits of his Polynesian

horizons with a new transcendentalism centered in the reflective imagination, in which mind, image, and idea relegated "fact" to memory, to the past.

Melville's gradual transformation of the Polynesian site of his early experiences into the site of his own imagination and subjectivity succeeded in altering the relationship between the self and the cultural surround in each of these three early novels. The movement from Polynesian place into the site of the imagination altered the balance in Melville's writing between the self and the cultural space it occupied. In Typee Melville offered his reader a self set apart from the "facts" of his own culture and from the world of the Marquesans which he experienced as segmentation and image. In Omoo he placed that self in an environment of jumbled facts and images, among the fragments produced by acculturation. In this environment fact and image were more closely related. In Mardi a sovereign self lays claim to a plenary imagination; there the play of mind on image overwhelms the domain of the facts entirely.

The presence of this imagination in Mardi in effect bursts the horizons of the Polynesian world Melville seeks at least initially to depict. The Samoans called the first white men who penetrated their world papalangi, the heaven-bursters.[2] In like manner, Melville's imagination disrupts

the world it enters. To inhabit Mardi the place--as completely as Melville himself did--is to be in a liminal region located in the imagination and not "out there" in a physically liminalized place such as the Tahiti of 1842. It is liminal because Melville's imagination tries to establish a direct relationship with what I shall call here the transcendental imperatives revealed by image. To inhabit the Mardian world, therefore, is to be caught up in Melville's subjective scrutiny of a landscape now only partially recognizable as a Polynesian setting. The liminalities of the imagination displace the liminalities present in the historical moment of Tahiti in 1842. The new liminalities have their own "in-between" realities of intuition and image. The Mardian archipelago, a kind of dispersed inscape of the mind, possesses a procreative capacity of generating the history of everywhere, anywhere, a history confined to no one Tahiti, to no one time.

As a "world of the mind" the Mardian cultural landscape is an unstable setting. Melville has difficulty in maintaining consistency between the imagery of place and belief, between Pacific geography and the Polynesian myths and rituals. In the course of Taji's odyssey, Melville's imagination migrates to the Western hemisphere, while maintaining all the trappings of the Pacific world. Melville quite early in his career as a writer spoke in terms of a "Pacified" America. Concluding a letter to

his brother Gansevoort, Melville assessed the American participation in the Mexican War. He concedes that the war "is nothing in itself", but goes on to wonder

who knows what all this will lead to--Will it breed a rupture with England? Or an other great power? . . . Lord, the day is at hand, when we will be able to talk of our killed & wounded like some of the old Eastern conquerors reckoning them up by the thousands;-- when the battle of Monmouth will be thought child's play--& canoes made out of the Constitution's timbers will be thought no more of than bamboos.[3]

Later Taji will relate to his cultural environment with the same familiarity that Melville's imagination imposes here on this hybrid world of great battles. The Mardian archipelago is a marginal region somewhere between America and Polynesia.

Modern critics have tended to treat the dislocation/relocation I have described here in terms of form: of genre, text, technique, convention. Milton Stern has argued, for example, that Mardi falls apart eventually because its symbolism and its narrative are poorly related, because symbol, story, and allegory get in each other's way.[4] Moreover the novel in Stern's view evidences a breakdown in the relationship between perception and technique.[5] Raymond Weaver suggests that while some geniuses mastered their dreams, Melville was mastered by his.[6] Another related argument that has emerged in modern studies of Melville has seen the novel as evidence of the

breakdown in the cultural mechanisms of artistic expression itself. James Baird calls Mardi "the most important of all American experimental literary works, documenting the development of the symbolist imagination." [7] This development, he continues, has led to the exhaustion of Western symbology, "a loss of a regnant and commanding authority in religious symbolism, since religion is here understood as the ultimately effective symbolic authority in the total culture of a race." [8] In Melville's case, "the I-Thou relationship is fundamental to the decay of a Protestant symbology which inspires symbolic primitivism as a remedy to the 'aloneness' of man in the world." [9] Hence Melville "takes to the waters of ocean." [10] Robert Richardson Jr. has described Mardi as Melville's "book of myths", "not a survey of myths, but a fictionalizing of the development and history of myth" [11]--in other words, of the fictive morphology which has recorded and then frozen the processes of mythical representation in the very words of Melville's narrative. In a similar vein, Richard Brodhead seeks to understand the novel as the formal testament to a turning point in Melville's career, "the moment at which he starts conceiving of his works not as a record of pre-existing experience--a narrative of facts--but as a creative imaginative activity [I]n its change of design Mardi acts out this shift, [such] that as one book displaces another in it it bursts the fetters of conventional form ...

and a reportorial tie to reality . . . freeing the imagination to soar into realms of beauty and strangeness." [12]

Several important features of Melville's aesthetic come to the fore in these formal analyses: the structural instabilities of the novel, the appeal to transcendent orders of being made by the liberated imagination, Melville's recourse to a Polynesian symbology not fully consistent with the Western philosophical concerns which began to occupy Melville's attention in the course of writing the novel. By restricting these concerns to matters of form exclusively--be it form of myth, of text, or symbology--we run the risk of obscuring an equally important bond existing between Melville's imagination and certain cultural anxieties in Melville's America which neither originate as literary forms nor fit neatly under the rubric of technique. Now it is true that these cultural anxieties find expression foremost in Melville's peculiar collapsed romance, particularly in the shift in setting and form from the fantastic Mardi of the first portion of the book to the allegorized political world of the Western hemisphere in its later pages. But the language of formalist literary criticism focusses on matters of design to the exclusion of those constraints on Melville's imagination which originate in the culture of the day, and in the predicament he found himself in after his Polynesian experiences, in connection with that culture.

The contemporary reviews of Mardi suggest another perspective on the connection between the act of imagination and the moral context most suitable for its expression. Melville's contemporaries, who shared many of his cultural preoccupations, responded to the novel with a sensitivity to the corresponding compositional anxieties that Melville himself brought to the Mardian landscape. The reviewers of Mardi, for example, entered into the Mardian world with an awareness that its exotic excursions were relevant to their world, at the same time as recognizing that its literal boundaries were turned into literary ones which eventually assumed fantastical shapes. Evert Duyckinck noted at the core of the novel a recognizable world to which the author's imagination had broken through: "The sea has many isles, and the continents are but isles in Mardi--Mardi is the world. Be not surprised then, readers, at finding thyself flitting about, here and there, among its characters, or seeing thy birthplace and country figures on its ample map." [13] But significantly, Duyckinck was somewhat uneasy about the heights to which Melville soared. Referring to the on-going banter of the four Mardian thinkers who accompany Taji on his fantastic quest, Duyckinck continued: "The discourse of these parties is generally very poetical, at times quite edifying, excepting when they get into the clouds, attempting to handle the problem of the universe." [14]

The unsigned review of Melville's book which appeared in the April 1849 issue of Bentley's Miscellany was more precise in relating the romance's imaginative realm to a larger contemporary ambivalence about the imagination in general. It focussed on the same polarity Duyckinck observed between the transcendental heights to which Taji aspires in Chapter 119, "Dreams", and the political commentary on the real world that Melville conducts in the allegory of the West in the latter part of Mardi. But this reviewer added a wrinkle to the argument by drawing attention to the responsibilities and limits of the poetic imagination:

Our imagination may almost be said to make the world it looks upon, so completely does it mould and and colour the aspect of nature. Language, besides experiencing its inability to paint with precision the world without us, flings itself almost in despair into exaggeration and substitutes towering images for a faithful report of reality. [15]

This reviewer touches on a certain anxiety over what the imagination ought to do, and over the resort to transcendence which follows in its failure. In a way that more recent readings of Mardi do not, these comments centre Melville's novel in the context of a far wider debate in the nineteenth century concerning the trustworthiness and capacity of language conducted by such American theorists as Alexander Bryan Johnson and Horace Bushnell, a debate put into poetic practice by Emerson and Thoreau. [16]

Babbalanja's dictum in Chapter 93 of Mardi, that "truth is

in things, and not in words," marks Melville's sensitivity to this issue. But unlike his reviewer, Melville also attributes the imprecision of language not to its innate weaknesses, but rather to the sfumato shadings which make the imagistic qualities of a poetic language so unstable and yet capable of conveying transcendental knowledge amid that instability.

This reviewer comes closest to understanding Melville's ambivalence about the turn toward transcendence locked into the imagination. In this turn images become a tower of substitution which rises from despair, from the refusal of things (the world) to collaborate with words (language). Melville becomes a bricoleur of both words and things; he places a sense of himself, his sense of order and culture into harmony with the realities for which words and things, conjoined, formerly spoke. Both the reviewer and Melville conceive of the language of artistic expression not as form (reified traces on a page), but as the representation of a mode, a particular act which has real consequences for how the world is construed or misconstrued and for how man orients himself amid the bricolage.

For Melville the instability suffered by the language of his romance was not a quality of technique alone. The activity of writing Mardi opened up to him a realm of experience and participation, not just an opportunity for

experimenting with form. The novel also opened up an area of the oceanic, of that kind of procreative vagueness which the image, as power and province, holds in reserve. In this place emerged what the reviewer called "the transcendental views of nature which render it preternatural".[17] For Melville this was the site for the imaginative reconstruction of reality. Joseph Conrad's description of Marlow's diffusionist view of reality in Heart of Darkness has a special relevance to Melville's fascination with the Mardian world of image:

The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which it brought out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine.[18]

The alteration of the clear lines of definition and resolution in Melville's view of reality occurred as soon as the world of Polynesian fact ceased to provide a satisfactory frame for the kinds of questions concerning man, culture, meaning that he had stumbled upon in the Pacific.

Mardi submits itself to this conflation of the worldly and other-worldly precisely because Melville sought to probe the imagination's limits and potential for the discovery of wider meaning beyond that suggested by the immediacy of

reality. For while Melville at the early stage of writing Mardi could not know what form his "strange compound", as George Ripley called the novel, would take [19], he did know even then that there was more potential for meaning in the Polynesian world than the factual base of personal experience had yielded. In his letter of 25 March 1848 to John Murray, Melville suggested a new rôle for the imagination in his fiction: "proceeding from my narrative of facts, I began to feel an incurible distaste for the same, & a longing to plume my pinions for a flight, & felt irked, cramped & fettered by plodding along with dull common places." He tells Murray that in response to these feelings of restriction, he has finally begun to tap the "great deal of rich poetical material" afforded by the Polynesian setting to the "Romancer & poet". [20] The Polynesian landscape itself remained the same as it had been when Melville had drawn on it in the writing of his first two novels. It was the additional and broadened reading--Rabelais, Coleridge, Montaigne, Thomas Browne, Burton--that really contributed to the reshaping of the Pacific world of Herman Melville. These sources bestowed upon the expansive power newly understood by Melville, a Coleridgean imagination of which he had little inkling when he wrote Typee and Omoo.

In his first two novels Melville depicted the ungrounding of the self in the encounter between Western man and alien

culture; that ungrounding assumes new form in Mardi. The indefinite culture of the Marquesans that Melville intuited and that Tommo overlooked emerges in the foreground of the panorama placed in front of Taji. The Marquesan culture asserted its presence in Typee as ambiguous image. In Omoo the decentering of the Tahitian culture in the process of acculturation was apparent in the liminality given over to images of Polynesia as opposed to the facts of empire. But the subject of Mardi becomes precisely that decentering inherent in the liminality of the imagination itself. Melville would later confess to Richard Bentley that the use of this liminality as a subject for fiction threatened to unground the artist as well as distancing him from his readers:

You may think, in your own mind that a man is unwise,--indiscreet, to write a book of that kind, when he might have written one perhaps calculated merely to please the general reader, & not provoke attack however masqued in an affectation of indifference or contempt. But some of us scribblers, My Dear Sir, always have a certain something unmanageable in us that bids us to do this or that, and be done it must-- hit or miss. [21]

What Melville had previously noted as a phenomenon experienced in his dislocation from his home culture now became the intellectual and spiritual ungrounding of a man voyaging into the centre of that culture.

The intellectual range his widened reading gave him now allowed Melville to create a rover self who possessed

greater mobility than even the enchanted Marnoo had. This surge of belief in the imagination, the "certain something unmanageable" in Melville, allowed him to transcendentalize the Pacific into a territory fit for Taji to wander in. Mardi, in consequence, does not serve Melville as a recollection of a place as Typee and Omoo did. It stamps the Polynesia of his earlier travels with a pressing sense of the world itself now understood as an interpreted structure. The imagination which applies the pressure of this structural imprint on the world is, as Melville suggested in his letter to Murray, necessarily transcendental. Polynesia, which had been a frontier of the primitive in Typee and of acculturation in Omoo, becomes in Mardi a frontier of hermeneutic concern. On this interiorized frontier where consciousness takes the form of both Melville and of Western civilization as a whole, Taji is an intellectual pioneer. He is an omoo of the mind set into a "world of the mind" with all its doubts and ambiguities. The question Melville poses throughout Mardi is this: does the transcendental imagination "mould and colour" the world because there is a reality in that altered perspective, or, as Melville's speculative reviewer had hinted, does it, out of despair, exaggerate the features of our "real" world in a foiled attempt to represent it mimetically? Ernest Gellner has recognized two kinds of transcendence at the heart of this dilemma. He is speaking

here of the monism that arises from the commitment to one form of philosophical transcendence or the other:

Oceanic monism is a unitary vision designed to give the believer a consoling, edifying or exhilarating sense of being merged with the great One of which he and all else is a part.

By contrast, critical monism, the attempt to restore intellectual "order" by the sustained application of simple, delimited, lucid, principles, principles designed to isolate and use the marks of a genuine knowledge, an attempt which is mandatory in conditions of intellectual chaos such as in fact often obtain--such monism is absolutely essential for our life. [22]

The appeal of Melville's imagination to the transcendental harbors a doubt concerning the very nature of the transcendental. This explains why Taji, unlike the narrators of Typee and Omoo, seems always vexed by the possibilities for meaning in his Pacific world. With his doubts and speculations, Taji is really Tommo as he might have been had Melville been able to let him speculate longer and more reflexively on the lost significance of Marquesan monuments and rituals. And he is a less sophisticated prototype of the Melville who will stand before the pyramids in 1857. Not only is Taji geographically displaced into this world from his American homeland, he is also, like his travelling companions, displaced across history, separated from an earlier, mythological Mardi in which meaning was whole. His awareness that Mardi is a place of lost, completed meaning imposes an imperative of transcendence on

the deciphering of the curiosities Taji encounters. The Mardian world of the present splinters under the weight of Taji's investigations. The fragments disperse in all directions under the pressure of all those doubts inspired by Melville's expansive imagination. The dispersal of 'history', as a perception of the world (a factor of time), coupled with Taji's roving (a factor of space), sets up a pattern of polarized terms in Mardi:

geography <----->	history
self <----->	other
man <----->	gods
individual <----->	society
object <----->	idol
surface <----->	structure

Here we see the concrete features of Melville's first authentic "collision of alien elements".

In Mardi the mode of Melville's imagination also splinters in its depiction of these multiple and conflicting orientations of man in his cultural surround. The documentary narrative reminiscent of Typee and Omoo becomes in Mardi a compendium of symbol, myth, and allegory. Melville offers each of these terms as a way for positioning the self tangibly in a Pacific world bereft of geographic and historical familiarity. Mardi is an advance beyond the previous travel narratives Melville wrote. By 1848 Melville is aware that symbolic, mythical, and allegorical modes of expression tie into larger cultural anxieties in which we can see culture itself called into question as question.

Symbol, myth, and allegory are the acts of the imagination which carry the weight of anxiety about meaning and existence; they do so in a way that brings into prominence an anxiety about the nature and ambition of the imagination itself as a faculty.

Taji begins his voyage with the discovery that the process of interpreting wavering images in the Mardian world throws everything into doubt of a Cartesian proportion. As Taji's journey continues, Melville projects these philosophical doubts--deliberately, intentionally, phenomenologically engaged--onto a distinctive field of American culture in the form of its politics and practice, and onto the ideologically shaped assumptions behind that culture. The process in the novel from symbol to myth to allegory deflects the philosophical character of the questions concerning identity and reality into questions of American identity and into the social realities of the United States. The shift to an individualized form of such questions had of course already begun in Typee and Omoo with Melville's placement of the lone sailor-narrator in an exotic and unfamiliar landscape. The sailor who in these early novels brought America to the Pacific as displaced rover now brings the Pacific to America as author of Mardi. But this Pacific is now an interiorized mental space which contains the guideposts necessary for an interpretation of the America of 1848. That mental space is of course

Melville's imagination, a space newly discovered by him. It is for him, then, a privileged means by which he can become a "real" author now able to register his concern with large questions such as human identity, the essence of things, and the activity of knowing. The Polynesian format allowed Melville to come at these questions with an authority of transcendental inquiry while at the same time registering his concern in the material bricolage of actual, historical societies. In Mardi Melville could at once participate in the method of American Transcendentalism and focus it on the concrete fragments of actual experience.

For Melville, the various figural distinctions within his imagination--symbol, myth, allegory--are not the static conventions of a literature or kinds of philosophical thought. They are modes through which his narrator-hero Taji participates in the Mardian world. Each provides a different slant on a different access to the problematics of that world. All of them carry an aspiration for greater meaning to be taken from the America/Pacific as a symbolscape, as a mythscape, as a landscape responsive to allegory. Transcendence is always the index of Taji's mobility when physical movement has ceased to be a real event in the novel. Once the horizons of the Mardian world have burst, the somewhere of Polynesia becomes an everywhere viewed by an American Everyman as a "world of the mind". The modal diversity of Mardi is on the whole an extended

enactment of Babbalanja's parable of King Normo and his fool; regardless of how one negotiates the world of concrete realities the transcendental imperative, the need to know grander significances, remains a constant.

2.

In Mardi, the transcendental imperative originates in the liminalities that Melville attributes to the ritual objects Taji encounters. Like the horizons Taji has burst to come upon Mardi, the limits that impose meaning on all objects also define inscrutable spaces beyond. "I am intent upon the essence of things," declares the Mardian philosopher-questor Babbalanja, "the mystery that lieth beyond; the elements of the tear which much laughter provoketh; that which is beneath the seeming; the precious pearl within the shaggy oyster. I probe the circle's center; I seek to evolve the inscrutable." [23] As his many exchanges with Yoomy the poet and Mohi the historian reveal, those essences successfully elude even seekers such as Babbalanja whose integrity and ambition are beyond question. In a world as enigmatic and as diverse as the Mardian archipelago, the range of curiosities to be found there bears the mask of doubleness. The visible objects of this world stand alone and discrete in reality only until their historical shadows are perceived. In those shadows, the interconnections between objects begin to appear. Formerly discreet things now belong to whole networks of meaning. Every object in

Mardi is an artifact haunted by the "functional" ghosts of history and the "spiritual" ghosts of mythological explanation. In essence, then, all things in this world declare both their physical presence and function as well as the possibility of a larger symbolic, cosmological character.

The Polynesian idiom of Mardi imposes on all objects a suggestion of pagan, clouded antiquity. As a result, the exotic nature of a tropical island is crossed with a lingering sense of prior value. Thus Babbalanja's Kant-defying quest for the essence of things can only be frustrated by the historical contexts into which they are repeatedly cast. If according to Emerson institutions are the shadows of great men, in Mardi the entire landscape carries the shadows of great meanings. Physical things in this cultivated grove of historicized forms become imagined things. In this shifting re-forestation of the world as correspondence and symbol Taji, the overseer as well as the undertaker of perception, finds himself on unstable ground. One particular incident in the novel serves as the emblem for this shock of ambiguity. Babbalanja's declaration of his interest in the essence of things is appropriately followed by the arrival of Taji's party at Haveneva, the home of a maker of idols:

"When I cut down the trees for my idols," said he, "they are nothing but logs; when upon those logs, I chalk out the figures of my images, they yet remain logs; when the chisel is applied,

logs they are still; and when complete, I at last stand them up in my studio, even then they are logs. Nevertheless, when I handle my pay, they are as prime gods, as ever are turned out in Maramma" (354).

The implication of the artisan's account, at least at face value, is that an inanimate log has a considerable capacity for transcendental meaning in the marketplace. But beneath the cynicism of these sentiments lies Melville's suggestion that even when meaning reduces to commerce, it still refers to some source which transcends both the material itself (the wood) and the materialism of the craftsman's ambitions. Even the neutrality of words and the economic expediency which obliges the writer to write for the market do not necessarily compromise the capacity of the final product to transcend these limitations. So too, Melville seems to say, is the case with the Mardian idols.

Using certain objects of Mardian contemplation as touchstones, Melville focussed attention on the binary character of culturally accepted meanings, the consequences of which extend far beyond this comic interlude. The essence of things, here as elsewhere in Mardi, is obscured by doubts concerning the oceanic or critical transcendence of "present things" inherent in human perception of meaning in the world. Either a log is transfigured, from the point of view of the believer, into a conduit of the gods, or its status as idol, from the point of view of the observer, is a functional symbol within the social context of Mardian

civilization. Thus the "essence" Babbalanja seeks is here hidden by either the function of the log-idol as a social symbol, or by its status as a true medium of the gods in the expressive world of native belief.

History forces things to do something, and not just to be. The quest for "essences" must therefore be forfeited to a transcendental imperative which diverts attention to the existential and historical character of man's presence in the Mardian world. Mardi strays into transcendental interrogation not because its characters relish such speculation, but because they have little choice to do otherwise. Melville has set them into a vast archeological site strewn with artifacts whose original uses and potentials for meaning have long since become uncertain. On the one hand, "Mardi itself is all the better for its antiquity", as Babbalanja admits, "and the more to be revered; to the cozy-minded, more comfortable to dwell in" (270). But, on the other, once the loss of meaning to Time is acknowledged, the distance between an object astray in history and its prior existence as full meaning in its original culture becomes clear. The meaning of a found object is just as archeological as the object itself. Do we revere the object for its sacred character, or do we sacralize the loss of its meaning in antiquity?

Hegel saw the discovery of the common origin of Greek and Sanskrit as the unearthing of a new world of philology, archeology, and of the ground of existence. Taji's discovery of the Mardian world is akin to this. Melville entered into a new realm of consciousness defined by his imagination, a realm that opened him to a heightened sense of what consciousness, and what the imagination, understood as phenomenal faculties, were. This placed him close to the nineteenth-century concern for the origins of man and society. There were, of course, a good number of theories in circulation. Enlightenment speculations concerning the profane rather than the sacred foundations of human existence, language, and society derived from the works of Herder, Humboldt, Hobbes, and Rousseau. The ethnology and the travel literature that Melville read with such an appetite-- William Ellis, James Bruce, and Sir William Jones--provided empirical support for these debates, a support which mixed uneasily with the notions of spiritual transcendence Melville took from the works of Coleridge, Carlyle, and Emerson. The conflict between the spiritually and the culturally transcendent was in Melville's case intensified by his awareness of an historical dimension of man which brings to the fore the nature of the transcendent.

Melville backed away from the "oceanic", oversoul variety of Transcendentalism. His awareness of the social frameworks of knowledge led him to espouse in Mardi an

alternative system of transcendentalism, one which acknowledges the "critical" stance described by Gellner.

Melville's awareness that the meanings of *Mardi's* artifacts were part of a socially constructed system of symbols had its roots in his own experience. His objection to the oceanic Romanticism was not "intellectualist", but rather, made from within the experience of an expressive, symbolic world.[24] It was not a position he developed in the mood of philosophical reflection. In this respect Melville deviated from Romantic metaphysics. Coleridge for example, moved amid a wealth of European culture, clearly not bound by the effects of obstacles to interpretation that Melville experienced as givens in his Polynesian travels. Coleridge defined symbol as the only means by which to convey "an IDEA, in the highest sense of the word." [25] He could view the imagination as "vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead." [26] Melville by contrast sought to interpret artifacts whose transcendent meaning was at best enigmatic and potentially lost. In light of his experience of those Polynesian idols in the South Pacific which actually were fixed and dead at least from Melville's perspective, Coleridge's idealism seems only a pale substitute for the socially engaged critical transcendentalism hinted at throughout *Mardi*. What Coleridge did not like about Greek sculpture--its portrayal of a kind of hollowness--is precisely what Melville's

investigation of meaning threatens to disclose. Coleridge's contradistinction of Idea and Idol merely expresses from the other side of a cultural barrier of faith the same duality of spirit and matter residing in Melville's separation of oceanic and critical forms of transcendence. Melville learned from his own experiences of lost meanings that to free an Idea from the finitude of its function as wood or stone is to make a choice in the ignorance of history. [27]

If the Romantic sensibility embraced the oceanic transcendence more than Melville could, it was also more worried than Melville was about the solipsism of transcendental experience. In its quest for the spiritual reality inherent in things, the Romantic philosophy warned against fetishizing objects. Coming out of his experiences in Polynesia, Melville was perhaps as incapable of this as he was of spiritualizing things to an excessive degree. The conversion of an idol into a fetish requires the conferring of animation upon an object. [28] But Melville's dilemma derives from his seeing objects as dead, hollowed, bereft of significance--killed by the geist that is history.

In the pages of Mardi we can almost see Melville poring over the multiple doubts concerning the nature of meaning in the Mardian world. Eventually Taji arrives at a fork in the road during this odyssey in the fragmentation of his perspective into two competing interpretations. The

"oceanic" view of Nature leads him to an other-worldly source of meaning. A "critical" view, however, suggests the possibility of locating meaning in the social consequences of an act of interpretation and leads to a potentially anthropocentric description of Nature. Donjalolo's astonishment over the contrary findings brought back by two scientific expeditions to the neighbouring island of Rafona is a bench mark of the cultural anxiety concerning the relationship of the transcendental imperative and the real world of historical objects requiring interpretation.

"What!" he exclaimed, "will ye contradict each other before our very-face? Oh Oro! how hard is truth to come at by proxy! Fifty accounts have I had of Rafona; none of which wholly agreed; and here, these two varlets, sent expressly to behold and report, these two knaves speak crookedly both. How is it? Are the lenses in their eyes diverse hued, that objects seem different to both; for undeniable is it, that the things they thus clashingly speak of are to be known for the same; though represented with unlike colors and qualities. But dumb things can not lie nor err" (249).

Donjalolo is Melville playing devil's advocate. He demands of his researchers a representation of the Mardian world constructed according to those "facts" that Melville himself has already rejected. In Mardi Melville has forfeited the sharpness of the facts for the refraction of image. What is problematic in the Mardian world is the integrity of these refracted images; exploiters and projectors of all sorts abound in Mardi. Taji finds it increasingly difficult to distinguish sincere

representations of the universe from those expedient inventions of rhetoricians who invoke a transcendental licence for the purpose of gain. Taji himself is a doubtful participant. Having declared himself a visiting deity, he soon wonders whether everyone in this enchanted kingdom has claimed his own divine nature as his birthright.

Babbalanja's transcendentalism situates this ambiguity in terms of either an expediency of belief or a logical imperative stemming from the act of believing itself. Ironically, his reference to Bardiana's theory of demonic possession underscores the doubt surrounding symbolic interpretations of the other-Worldly in the here and now. Descartes' demon was a device to dramatize the reality of doubt. Bardiana's demon is a refinement of the notion of Cartesian doubt. Where Descartes posited the existence of the demon, Bardiana accepts it as a given. The doubt for him concerns the identity and the sovereignty of the demon. "All men are possessed by devils; but as these devils are sent into men, and kept in them, for additional punishment; not garrisoning a fortress, but limboed in a bridewell; so it may be more just to say, that the devils themselves are possessed by men, not men by them" (317). Bardiana does not dispute that the devil is a transcendental agent. The notion of the demon is locked into different kinds of transcendence and involves therefore an interrogation of kind as well as function.

Babblanja's own resident demon Azzageddi is a perfect illustration of the practical uses to which the doubt concerning the kinds of transcendence can be put. The philosopher suggests that his indwelling "stranger" determines his actions in Cartesian fashion: "He prowls about in me, hither and thither, he peers and I stare. This is he who talks in my sleep, revealing my secrets, and takes me to unheard of realms, beyond the skies of Mardi. So present is he always, that I seem not so much to live of myself, as to be a mere apprehension of the unaccountable being that is in me" (457).

This being the case, Azzageddi allows Babbalanja the luxury of speaking the "unspeakable" in two senses of the term. In its more virtuous form, the unspeakable is that realm of "oceanic" transcendental truth extending beyond the limits of mortal language. Closer to earth, what cannot be said is what should not be said, that Media is in fact only a mortal like the rest of Mardi's population. In this more secular case, the notion that King Media is a demi-god is an image which transcends what can be known empirically about the character. But Babbalanja's accusation reveals that Media's claim of semi-divinity serves a social purpose of maintaining authority within the kingdom. The need to posit this "critical" strand of transcendentalism may well define a functionalist purpose for the positing of the Other. As Babbalanja says: "the mass of Mardians do not believe

because they know, but because they know not. And they are ready to receive one thing as another, if it comes from a canonical source" (455-456).

Babbalanja comes closest to Melville's conclusions about the status and nature of the human appetite for transcendent explanation when he concedes that "I come now to treat myself as a lunatic. But this last conceit is not so much based upon the madness of particular actions, as upon the whole drift of my ordinary and hourly ones; those in which I most resemble all other Mardians. It seems like going through with some nonsensical whim-whams, destitute of fixed purpose. For though many of my actions seem to have objects, and all of them run into each other; yet where is the ground result? To what final purpose, do I walk about, eat, think, dream?" (459). Such is the fate of man who lives in a world of refraction and image. Human will and human desire inform that sense of transcendental realities that man has either created himself or that have created him.

With these ruminations Babbalanja has travelled full circle. He initially asserted that, like him, all Mardians require an object on which to focus belief. The provision that belief be sanctioned by a "canonical source" entails the further requirement that this source extend beyond the limits of the knowable, since by definition belief is rooted

in what cannot be known. The object of belief is either "found" in the sense of being given an enigmatic significance by an absent culture, or it is posited in the sense that the argument demands such an object. Whether found or posited, however, whether the atmosphere of anthropology or, of philosophy surrounds the object, as a focus for argument it is itself an unknown entity shaped by the known structures of belief in a very untranscendental, empirically experienced world. This is a realm intuited but never fully realized, whose outlines are the visible tracings of an otherwise undiscernible substance. Taji is thus placed into the very structures which floated outside the perceptions of an innocent Tommo in his Marquesan captivity. In Mardi Melville has grown into that image-world of equivocation he had registered unknowingly in Typee. Previously baffled by the deeper structures of need and intent a culture utilizes to describe the surrounding world in the language of image, Melville is now in control of those images and hence those structures, too. He now consciously directs himself toward the heart of ambiguity and doubt concerning their origins.

The transcendental imperative which reconstitutes the presence of concrete things into the equivocal radiant haze of Symbol also registers the gap in understanding between the present and the mythological antiquity of Mardi. The Isle of Fossils, for example, is a site where the ambiguity

of images assumes crucial importance for the identity of Mardian man in the present: "Like antique tablets, the smoother parts [of the island's surface] were molded together in strange devices:--Luxor marks, Tadmor ciphers, Palenque inscriptions. In long lines, as on Denderah's architraves, were bas-reliefs of beetles, turtles, ant-eaters, guanos, serpents, tongueless crocodiles:--a long procession, frosted and crystallized in stone and silvered by the moon" (415). This is the grammar of creation, the legislation of value onto things. Yet it is impossible to know whether we are looking at images of nature (fossils), or images of artifice, the artifacts of the mind. Have we seen evidence of the hand of God or of the chisel of the artisan? Slowly pacing over the surface of the fossil-rock, Babbalanja's demon speaks the unspeakable and undecipherable answer (419).

Had these concerns remained exclusively philosophical, letting--as Media advises Babbalanja--"inferences take care of themselves" (370), Mardi would have remained a document of transcendental speculations sealed off from the world of its readers. But the consequences of these speculations reach beyond philosophical discourse, striking perhaps too close to home for many of the book's nineteenth-century readers. Melville eventually shows that the kinds of transcendence which emerge as competing sources for the symbolic mode--positing either a spiritual or a purely

functionalist "other"--have a crucial bearing on the validity of Christian belief in Melville's United States.

The discussions of the avatar-saviour Alma test religious belief in the power of symbol. Mardi leads us to believe that the difference between the equivocal status of idols or devils and the historical event of Oro's becoming man in the person of Alma is merely one of degree-- in this case a degree of historical significance and consequence for all Mardians. The devils and idols of Mardi may or may not be conduits of the gods. Fossils could be messages from the dark ages of creation. Alma may or may not be a truly divine "possessed" man who entered human history in man's moments of spiritual darkness:

Alma, it seems, was an illustrious prophet, a teacher divine, who ages ago, at long intervals, and in various forms, had appeared to the Mardians under the different titles of Brami, Manko, and Alma. Many thousands of moons have elapsed since his last and most memorable avatar, as Alma on the isle of Maramma. Each of his advents had taken place in a comparatively dark and benighted age. Hence, it was devoutly believed, that he came to redeem the Mardians from their heathenish thrall (348).

Alma is the purest manifestation of the Coleridgean symbol, the showing forth of the infinite in the finite, the revelation of the spiritual in the material and of the eternal in the temporal. It is not so important to Melville that Alma has made appearances within the religious contexts of other cultures. Rather, his ambivalence arises from what

appears to be a discrepancy between a spirit of history and a spirit entering into history from beyond it--a conflict which derives from the alternatives for transcendence offered by the symbolic mode of interpreting the world. [29] The tension Melville sets up between the "essence of things" in Babalanja's philosophical bedevilment at one extreme, and the discourse concerning the entry of Alma into human history at the other extreme splinters Mardi further in the deepening of the symbolic mode into the mythic mode.

3.

The ambiguities of Symbol characterize the ritual objects that Taji comes upon. The ambiguities of Myth, however, have a greater bearing on Taji's relation to the Mardian culture. He enters the Mardian world and assumes the role of demi-god himself in order to survive and to remain free to wander. With his creation of Taji, Melville enters the mind of Lem Hardy, to describe the process of expedient acculturation from the inside looking outward.

There is one very crucial difference between the roles of Taji and Lem Hardy, though. The liminality of situation Melville could only document in Omoo as a cross-cultural phenomenon produced in the historical Tahiti becomes in Mardi a liminality of the imagination, a mental space in which Melville registers his own doubts about the myth-making capacity innate to man. It was never necessary or

even possible for the narrator of Omoo to assess the integrity and the character of beliefs held by those people in Tahiti whose values and customs had been altered by the liminality into which the acculturation process had cast them. In Mardi, however, Melville assumes the responsibility for such an assessment by re-creating that liminality with his imagination. Between Omoo and Mardi Melville has learned how to poeticize the "real" spaces he previously inhabited. He has re-mapped Polynesia to suit his own subjective purposes. Taji's status as a self-proclaimed deity allows Melville to focus his attention on the validity of myth-making as a structured human activity. And the fact that Taji must also reckon with other avatar figures whose status as sacred beings is as doubtful as his gives his investigation a decidedly moral edge. An activity which was exterior to him when he documented Lem Hardy's transformation into a god has now become a crux in Melville's own imagination.

At the centre of this crux, the oceanic spiritual transcendence that myth promises is repeatedly challenged by the presence in the Mardian world of myths whose function seems to be the preservation of the privileges and the authority of individuals such as King Media. The transcendental ideal espoused on occasion by Babbalanja may well be a virtuous and elevated product of Mardian culture, as certainly as Romanticism and Christianity are for

Melville's Western civilization. But what Melville has pinpointed through Taji's dilemma is that the transcendental properties of myth originate in those moments in a culture's history when explanations for loss or social breakdown are urgently required. The symbolism of Alma, like Christ in Taji's homeland, conveys the hope that the human can participate in the godhead. And like the Coleridgean symbol, those Mardian idols--as the conduits of the gods--promise to overcome history. Symbol may well celebrate the human desire to participate in the One. But myth celebrates man's separation from the One in the recounting of a specialized history of consolation, of a resignation to history. Myth for Melville is, to use Mircea Eliade's phrase, "sacred history". The placement of mythological events in "primordial time, the fabled time of beginnings" [30] deflects the appeal to the transcendental in Melville's novel from the eternal and the infinite (to which Symbol appeals) into the moment of material origins of human history. Myth is a mode by which the divine bequeaths the material realm to human beings who later, in another time, come to possess it fully and resign themselves to its restrictive horizons. [31] The sacred emerges out of the breach opened up between the "beforetimes" and the present. The sacred must be distinguished from the infinite realm of the symbol by its necessary residence and function within history. What is sacred about myth is precisely the sense

that in history essences have been removed temporally from their beginnings and distorted out of their anterior idealized state.

In Mardi the description of the experience of myth revolves around the key figures in the narrative who have themselves been thrown into the breach between the pre-historic age of harmony and the fragmentary present age. But Melville is skeptical about the authenticity of myth; even Taji's "mythical" status as demi-god is created expediently in his need to dupe the Mardians for his own survival. In this respect, myth never gets a fair hearing in Mardi. The myth of Yillah, for example, can be broken down into two categories of transcendence, just as the symbolic mode is. Either Yillah really is a goddess who was captured in the tendrils of a vine, transformed into a blossom, cast upon the shores of Aleema's island, there transformed back into a maiden to be later captured by the priest, or she is a mortal whose traumatic experiences have been veiled. Taji, because he knows the expedient motivations for mythmaking, is quick to perform a rationalist's dissection upon the tale in the aim of exposing the "real" events Yillah has garbled.

For ulterior purposes connected with their sacerdotal supremacy, the priests of these climes oftentimes secrete mere infants in their temples; and jealously secluding them from all intercourse with the outside world, craftily delude them, as they grow up, into the wildest conceits.

Thus wrought upon, their pupils almost lose their humanity in the constant indulgence of seraphic imaginings. In many cases becoming inspired as oracles and as such, they are sometimes resorted to be devotees, always screened from view, however, in the recesses of the temples. But in every instance, their end is certain. Beguiled with some fairy tale about revisiting the islands of Paradise, they are lead to the secret sacrifice, and perish unknown to their kingdom (139).

But even with this act of demythologizing, the myth's function as a symbolically social structure derived to explain the woman's untold experiences still retains a greater integrity than that of idle fantasy or misguided story. Because the events of the myth are substitutions for a set of worldly occurrences does not make the myth any less true to the structure to which it refers. Ironically, Taji himself immediately shrouds the kernel of the Yillah myth in layers of equally mythical interpretation in his attempt to find alternative explanations for her garbled tale. While Taji's scenario accounts for Yillah's story, it does not explain her white skin. Taji tries out various explanations.

One possibility is that she is an Albino of the Tulla tribe, whose members "die early, and hence the belief, that they pertain to some distant sphere, and only through irregularities on the providence of the gods, come to make their appearances upon the earth, whence, the oversight discerned, they are hastily snatched" (153). These

speculations take Melville's narrator further and further into a hermeneutical frontier wherein lie further myths which have within them further encoded explanations. He began by trying to deflate the myth of Yillah; he becomes entangled in a whole web of myths, answering the demands of the Mardian culture's transcendental imperative. In effect, put to the task of solving the riddle of Yillah's presence and of her curious tale, Taji is led blindly into those social structures which generate myth in the first place. It soon becomes apparent that it is impossible for Taji to extricate Yillah the person from the structure that proves to be a vast array of mythological interconnections.

Under Taji's scrutiny Yillah ceases to exist as a person at all. She appears here as myth-structure, a set of diffuse concepts. Whether Yillah is a goddess or a mortal is immaterial at this stage in Melville's narrative. The important point is that Melville regards Yillah's assertions of her mythological status as symptomatic of a lapse in her and Taji's knowledge of the "real" events. Melville has given Taji the role of demythologizer not to establish the truth behind Yillah's past, but to examine how myth works as a concrete cultural structure. In effect Melville has already muted the oceanic transcendence of the Yillah myth, isolating in its transcendental character a social function instead of authentic spiritual possibility. Her story does not, in Melville's mind, refer to divinity

but to worldly social events which have produced the need for a transcendental meaning. Assuming that the myth's "spiritual" transcendence is false, Taji is obliged to resort to a set of social "signifieds": 1) Yillah's "divinity" will then become an expression of a kind of primal kinship with the natural world; 2) her confused recollections of an anterior life will refer to latent social relationships she cannot accurately remember; 3) her concerns about origins will express anxieties over the representation of the moment of cultural creation and not the event of nature's Creation itself.

The most striking expression of Yillah's primal kinship is her account of imprisonment on Aleema's island:

Now, at the head of the vale of Ardair, rose a tall, dark peak, presenting at the top the grim profile of a human face; whose shadow, every afternoon crept down the verdant side of the mountain; a silent phantom, stealing all over the bosom of the glen. At times, when the phantom drew near, Aleema would take Yillah forth, and waiting its approach, lay her down by the shadow, disposing her arms in a caress; saying, "Oh, Apo! dost thou accept thy bride?" And at last, when it crept beyond the place where he stood, and buried the whole valley in gloom, Aleema would say, "Arise Yillah, Apo hath stretched himself to sleep in Ardair. Go, slumber where thou in his arms" (155).

Melville has fashioned a very Western facsimile of a Polynesian myth, imitating the totemic eroticism we might expect to find in a primitive anthropomorphic cosmology. He thus simulates the very relationship between primitive man

and Nature he could only intuit in Typee. But Melville's construction of an imaginary native myth serves his own Western purposes and registers his own concerns about the nature of transcendence. This very specialized moulding of Polynesian material by Melville's highly synthetic imagination is significant in two ways. It indicates that Melville has begun to tame or to "domesticate" the material, in his attempt to poeticize it, to make it perform very Western acts of interpretation. Secondly, as a fictional construct--and an imaginative deviation from the factual lore--this myth affords Melville the opportunity of deflating the oceanic, spiritual transcendence to which it might refer in its native element.

The "betrothal" of Yillah to the mountain god in the daily ritual, while it is a transparent lie from the perspective of the observer who is outside this belief system, holds together from Yillah's perspective within the narrow horizons of her belief. The mention of the youth who attempts to rescue Yillah and who "suggested vague thoughts of worlds of fair beings, in regions beyond Ardair" (156) calls to mind the "real" American world of Taji which exists beyond the horizons of this fantasy world. The immediate social need for transcendence takes precedence over the spiritual realities it purports to describe. Whether or not we grant Aleema's ritual of cosmological kinship between Yillah and the god Apo much credibility, we nonetheless find

ourselves curious about the tendency of the human mind to imagine such events.

Yillah's apprehension of her own past prompts Taji to consider the role of a "beforetimes" in her mythic tale.

Yet were not these things narrated as past events; she merely recounted them as impressions of her childhood, and of her destiny yet accomplished. And mystical as the tale most assuredly was, my knowledge of the strange arts of the island priestgod, and the rapt fantasies indulged in by many of their victims, deprived it in good part of the effect it otherwise would have produced (139).

His acknowledgement that he is an outsider to the myth-making culture and therefore not subject to the delusions of belief encourages Taji to treat the Yillah myth as a veil hiding the "real" events of her past which he believes to be neither mystical nor beyond the grasp of a rational mind. In the interest of gently conducting Yillah from the realm of haunting visions back into the world of reality, Taji like a Mardian Orpheus enters the depths of her myth-world voluntarily: "In my home in Oroolia, dear Yillah, I have a lock of your hair, ere it was golden: a dark little tress like a ring" (143). His entry into Yillah's world of myth is not without moral ambiguity, as Taji soon realizes. Promising to return Yillah to Oroolia commits him to a voyage to yet another terra incognita, in whose existence he has little faith.

Taji's participation in the mythic mode, while seeming to perpetuate her delusions, does however reveal certain structural connections which transcend the knowledge the Mardians have of themselves. By transcending the literal world of Mardi, these structures begin to shift Melville's attention away from the particularity of Polynesian Mardi onto larger human issues. But this is transcendence of the critical variety, not of oceanic, spiritual Oneness: we do not move away from worldly knowledge, we move from local knowledge of Mardian man to another realm of human knowledge.

The Melville who is constructing the web of myth and fantasy into which his narrator-hero enters is actually setting up a tension among images of race, nation, and kinship when, for example, Taji's romantic involvement with Yillah begins. On the literal level, the hero is falling in love with the maiden. Taji notes that as this happens, Yillah's commitment to her fantasy-world begins to fade. He is convinced that her initial belief that they "dwelt together in the same ethereal region" is gradually giving way to a sincere affection. But this reference to "nameless affinities" (158) between them finally suggests far more than an instinctive and requited love. Indeed, the place where they may have both dwelled in the pre-Mardian beforetime may not in the end turn out to be not so "ethereal" after all. What haunts this narrative is the

that both Taji and Yillah are white. And this fact points to certain gaps in history which are insufficiently filled by the postulation of the mythical place Oroolia. That Yillah should come to regard the Polynesian Samoa "as a sort of harmless and good-natured goblin" (146) refers to a context larger than that of personality. Her feelings for him suggest conditions under which the white visitor to Polynesia historically saw in the indigenous island peoples a whole race of Calibans.

Samoa's response is equally stylized and telling: "The fate to which she had been destined, and every nameless thing about her, appealed to all his native superstitions, which ascribed to beings of her complexion a more than terrestrial origin. When permitted to approach her, he looked timid and awkwardly strange; suggesting the likeness of some clumsy satyr, drawing in his horns; slowly wagging his tail; crouching abashed before some radiant spirit" (146-147). These images beg to be understood in their wider cultural and historical contexts of a real bursting of the Polynesian heavens by Western man. In these contexts the possible meanings of myth, its oceanic or its critical transcendence, diverge under the anxiety generated out of Melville's morally centered imagination. The Polynesia created by that imagination is one that registers meaning in the ambiguities of images which refer to a Western contact with Polynesians, not to the contact between goddesses and

men. Mardi's inhabitants are imagistic not factual representations of historical oppressors and oppressed. Their historical roles have been obscured in the syntax of a specific Mardian myth. Yet their outlines are discernible in the grammar of all myth.

It is in this way that Melville begins to occupy the world of his imagination forcefully, with much more self-awareness than he possessed in either Typee or Omoo. In Mardi Melville transforms the Polynesian landscape he inhabited in real life and documented factually in his first two books into a world given meaning by a structuring imagination of transcendence. This is a marginal world describable only in the language of image. Melville's handling of the images of the Yillah myth puts into a moral frame the historical expansion of the West throughout the Pacific. To burst the heavens of Polynesia is, in part, to demythologize its cultural structures of meaning. The local knowledge of Mardi loses its autonomy once Taji begins to examine the various myths he encounters. The spiritual transcendence which that local knowledge describes is negated by the historical need of all human beings, Mardian or otherwise, for a symbolic expression of what cannot be rationally understood or of events for which no clear memory survives. Taji's bursting of the Yillah myth, for example, renders spiritual transcendence an historically and geographically relative event. Only from the restricted

perspective of the Polynesian "savage" is the West another world entirely. From the standpoint of the European journeyman, any myth asserting the other-worldly character of the West is merely the product of limited knowledge made absolute within its horizons.

Taji himself in his Mardian travels cannot escape the same indictment. If the horizons dividing cultures have been shattered, then are not the myths of all cultures equally vulnerable to this demythologizing? The revelation that Yillah was in fact kidnapped from a Western ship whose passengers "were worshipped as gods" (307) shows the extent to which Western man's need to believe in his own gods and spirits is as great as the Polynesian's. For Yillah, who is a Westerner after all, the belief in a myth of origins was as fervent as anyone else's. Another "nameless affinity" between Yillah and Taji is their respective carving of identities as demi-gods from out of the circumstances of cultural contact. Both characters disguise their mortality in the bricolage of Polynesian myth. But Melville's moral outlook on these transformations threatens to demystify even the myths of the European world from which Taji and Yillah have come. In this respect, Melville's portrayal of Mardian myth is haunted by an antecedent and alien Western consciousness. It is not surprising that Samoa should be the one who alerts Taji to the fact that the natives of Mardi regard him as a "superior being" (164), for the legacy

of Samoa's people is their submission to this alleged supremacy. The activity of heaven-bursting in this local, particularized instance only serves to suggest occasions of breakdown or erosion of the structures of other belief-systems elsewhere in the world, such as Taji's homeland for example. On this occasion of an allegedly divine presence entering into a hermetic cultural region of the world Melville invokes a language and a posture of the divine.

What lingers finally on the periphery of Melville's imagination are not the cultural structures of this people or that people, but the structuring capacity of humankind. Taji ruminates briefly on the expedient ritual of "becoming" divine in order to both survive and retain his mobility among the Mardians. He is instantly aware that the symbolic value of his divinity is caught somewhere between the oceanic, spiritual transcendental status of this mythology from the Mardian standpoint, and critical functionalist transcendence: "And it seemed proposterous, to assume a divine dignity in the presence of these undoubted potentates of terra firma. Taji seemed oozing from my fingers's ends. But courage! and erecting my chest, I strove to look every inch of the character I had determined to assumed" (165).

The moment Taji assumes the role of demi-god Melville assumes full control of the myth-making capacity in order to deconstruct it. In this sense Melville adopts the

responsibilities and the imperatives of the cultural imagination. In assuming his role, Taji soon discovers that the "terra firma" of Mardi is not solid. It is, like Melville's Western world, informed by a series of contingencies and relativities that are privileged as absolutes within the horizons of local knowledge. There are consequences to this kind of thinking; a morally disquieting revelation proceeds from Taji's entry into the Mardian world under the guise of a demi-god. His inhabitation of Mardi entails the same proviso that Melville's inhabitation of his own Western world entails: he who shatters the horizons separating the "ethereal region" of the gods from the "land of men" is cursed to live in a world in which the gods are men. Taji's membership in a gentleman's club of Mardian demi-gods seems only fitting. His knowledge of the transcendental as a functional imperative which only invents the ethereal realm, opens a Pandora's box of multiple associations, interpretations, responsibilities constituting human, not divine history. This revelation gives Melville's imagination a qualified, Promethean freedom. He has stolen ritualistic objects, symbols, and myth from the gods. He has also removed them from their privileged sacred grounds in Polynesia. Melville's appropriation of them as souvenirs and memorials of his Polynesian journey was very much part of his re-entry into American space.

The shared human features of Yillah, Taji, Media, and even Alma all converge on one distant point: the density of history is a kind of knowledge which privileges the functional and threatens to divest myth of its spiritual transcendence. Only within the horizons of that faith are man and god resolved into discrete entities, as distant from one another as Polynesian man and the white Western "demi-gods" were until history brought them together. In Mardi, Melville completes an analogy between Western transcendental thought and the historical circumstances of cultural contact with foundations provided by the "rich poetical material" he afforded himself in Typee and Omoo. Gods and men, like savages and civilizers, may differ finally only in degree. Like Yillah, the other demi-gods of Mardi have thrown themselves into the breach opened up in the cultural imagination between gods and men. The occupation of this breach by human participants is an event which levels the secular and the sacred. The collapse of the Tahitian and Marquesan gods under Western eyes with a functionalist demythologizing glance paralleled the collapse of the Tahitians and the Marquesans themselves under Western imperial power.

From the curiously "republican" perspective of Melville's Taji this collapse occurs in the forfeiture by the Mardian demi-gods of all political constraint. Such excesses create an elite class of Mardian rulers:

Ay: there were deities in Mardi far greater and taller than I: right royal monarchs to boot, living in jolly round tabernacles of jolly brown clay; and feasting, and roystering, and lording it in yellow tabernacles of bamboo. These demi-gods had wherewithal to sustain their lofty pretensions. If need were, could crush out of him the infidelity of a non-conformist. And by this immaculate union of church and state, god and king, in their own proper persons reigned supreme Caesars over the souls and bodies of their subjects (175).

The breadth Melville applies to these images of Mardian society is clearly apparent in the transition made in this passage from one context to another. With these words, Taji journeys from the images of spiritual transcendence (deities, tabernacles, clay) to the images of a critical transcendence which is more temporal, qualified, political (church and state, non-conformist, Caesars).

In the "world of the mind" constructed by Melville's imagination Taji covers a lot of ground. This passage reflects the journey of Melville's imagination, throughout the novel as a whole, into the depths of a culture's self-consciousness. In Mardi Melville proposes, with Cartesian urgency, that the visible things of this world are manifestations of 'transcendental' essences; the discovery of these essences is Babbalanja's quest. Melville questions the integrity of the symbol in its capacity as conveyor of the spiritually transcendent. What he discovers is that the Symbol may have the status of the critically transcendent, of the socially functional instead. This discloses to

Melville the existence of a gap between the realm of gods and the "land of men" which is expressible in myth. But myth too, like symbol, is quite possibly a social function and not a truthful rendering of the events of separation between the heavens and the earth.

4.

The gap between the worlds of god and men is widened considerably by Melville's political allegory of Europe and America. In terms of the history of Mardi's composition the allegorical sequence from Chapters 145 to 168 dealing with the real world was an afterthought which took Melville's romance in an entirely new direction. Merrell R. Davis has shown, for example, that the political allegory of the Western world was written and then inserted into the novel not before the fall-winter of 1848. [32] But while it may well have been an afterthought, the allegory can also be viewed as the aftermath that follows on the exhaustion of spiritual, oceanic transcendence. The new direction that Melville assumed in the use of allegory has a particular relationship to the symbolic and mythic modes. Allegory is part of a dynamic set up within Melville's imagination. The discussion of the ethical behaviour of nations in Europe and North America is a point of arrival entirely appropriate to the cul-de-sac of transcendental metaphysics. The imagination working with the raw materials of history rather than with the speculations concerning either metaphysics of

symbol or the lost "beforetimes" of myth confronts a world immediately at hand, a world whose concrete realities of suffering and political expediency demand attention.

The world of 1848 provided Melville with fertile raw materials for his romance. Taji and his companions witness the volcanic eruption of revolution in France (498-499), the Chartist uprising in Britain (479), as well as the political struggles of the United States. The great chief Alanno (Senator Allen of Ohio) addresses the assembly on "some all-absorbing subject connected with King Bello, and his encroachments toward the northwest of Vivenza" (517). This is Melville's Polynesianized recreation of the Oregon crisis. President Polk appears as "a personage, no way distinguished, except by the tattooing on his forehead, stars, thirty in number, and an uncommonly long spear in his hand" (521). The thirty stars represent the thirty states, the last of which was Wisconsin, admitted into the Union on 29 May 1848.

The presence of these figures and events in the form of allegory in an important way follows from the apparent bankruptcy Melville observes in the oceanic transcendentalism promised by symbol and myth. The figures of Van Buren, Polk, John C. Calhoun, and the events of European social disturbance and of controversy over slavery, and states rights in America confirm in allegory Taji's

suspicion much earlier in the novel that Mardi's demi-gods serve a very real political function as opposed to providing evidence of the divine in man.

Melville's shift to allegory from myth has two consequences for the course of his romance. The sacred is washed out of Mardian myth just as the commercial viability of the making and selling of idols divested them of any authentic spiritual value. Secondly, the exhaustion of the sacred in the Mardian world distracts Melville in a crucial way; it shifts his attention away from the concern with oceanic transcendence and fixes it onto social and political concerns belonging to his own American world. These worldly concerns put Melville in the position of attempting to restore intellectual order to the chaos of history. For Melville, allegory serves this function by providing a medium and range of topical social and political subjects. But his employment of the allegorical mode establishes a sequence of transition, a means of migrating to the concerns of America. The symbolic mode, in questioning the integrity of the spiritually transcendent idols, originates in a Polynesian world that is only marginally relevant to these proximate social concerns. The mythic mode registers the local knowledge of the South Pacific in terms which become universal to humankind: Mardian myth, as we have already seen, suggests the myth-making capacity innate in all cultures, since the Mardian myths Melville creates are

Melville becomes aware of certain American tendencies in his own imagination the moment the Mardian myths degenerate into an allegory of the political situation in the Western hemisphere. The Everyman of the mythical, Polynesian Mardi becomes a distinctly American observer of the world of 1848. Taji's journey, then, is a kind of boomerang return to local knowledge.

from Symbol | to Myth | to Allegory
|----->----->----->
from Polynesian man | to Mardian Man | to American Man

The nature of the Mardian world changes radically once Taji enters the allegorical counterpart to the Western hemisphere. His entry registers Melville's resignation to the world of temporality. It is the end of a chain of imaginative thought. Just as the symbolic mode, drawing on the Polynesian world of stone and wood, invoked the mythic mode in its conception of a world lost to history, so the mythic mode gives rise to the allegorical mode in the fruition of Melville's apprehension of history in the form of his own American history. In the end, Mardian man can go

nowhere but Mardi. But Melville's imagination is too restless to keep Taji there, and it subsequently ushers him homeward and into the tensions of allegory. If symbol denotes the realm in which man seeks to place himself, and myth denotes the man's historical distance from that place, then allegory returns man to his present.

It does so by interrogating the world immediate to the individual subject in terms which vindicate the physical world of the here and now. Gay Clifford argues that "allegory attempts to escape the pressures and the tormenting relativity of the material and contingent by giving form to the ideal and abstract." [33] This function is further described by Bainard Cowan who discusses the cultural circumstances that give rise to allegory:

Allegory has arisen at moments in history when a people has found itself in a crisis of identity, its members seeing themselves as inheritors of a past tradition of such authority that the tradition is identified with their very name as a people, yet on the other hand finding much of that tradition morally and factually unacceptable A culture that has reached the point of recognizing its necessary discontinuity with received tradition is also confronted with the problem of identity. [34]

In the case of Mardi, it is Melville's awareness of the inconsistencies in the social ideals of America that prompts such a crisis in his imagination. Consequently, his commentary on the events in Europe and America conform to the view that allegory "is a device for bonding together opposite and contradictory aspects of a functioning

society--aspects too widely separated from the immediate and delightful conjunction that paradox implicitly effects within the individual." [35]

In Mardi the symbolic and mythic modes of Melville's imagination foretell the final frustration of spiritual transcendence in the face of a transcendence generated by social need and function. The allegorical mode assumes a less lofty order of transcendence at the outset. In Melville's novel, allegory resigns the "world of mind" to temporality; it forecloses on that hope for spiritual transcendence. [36]

In consequence to the distraction of Melville's attention from the spiritual realm of symbol and myth, the allegory of the Western world entails a reification of values in a mingling of what is familiar to Taji's homeland with what is still, at least in part, Polynesian. Despite the fact that Melville upholds the camouflage of a South Pacific setting, it is clear that Taji is by this point in the novel becoming absorbed into the cultural anxieties of his own young America. In this way, his role as Melville's aesthetic agent has changed along with the cultural surround. Less an individual displaced in an alien environment, Taji assumes the responsibilities of an American. He now assesses, measures the validity of America's claim of its separation from the terra firma of Europe.

The differences between the European world and the New Republic exist in the Mardian mirror-world as manifestations of a consciousness that creates frames of history, a Zeitgeist. On some occasions, this sentiment is expressed in the rhetoric which privileges American society:

the men of Vivenza were no dastards, not to lie coming from lion-like loins, they were a lion-joined race. Did not their bards pronounce them a fresh start in the Mardian species, requiring a new world for their full development? For be it known, that the last great land of Kolumbo, no inconsiderable part of which was embraced by Vivenza, was the last island discovered in the Archipelago. (472).

On other occasions, Melville asserts a contrary notion of the spirit of history, one that undermines the linear progression of America's destiny. History, according to the alternate theory, repeats itself:

for throughout Mardi, all strong nations, as well as all strong men, loved to govern the weak. And those who taunted King Bello for his political rapacity, were open to the same charge. So with Vivenza, a distant island, at times very loud in denunciations of Bello, as a great national brigand. Not yet wholly extinct in Vivenza, were its aboriginal people, a race of wild Nimrods and hunters, who year by year were driven further and further into remoteness (468).

This view of the history of New Republic levels the idealism of its social experiment. It subordinates the flow of history to the immutability of man. As Babbalanja argues:

'Tis the old law--the East peoples the West, the West the East; the flux and reflux. And Time may come, after the rise and fall of nations yet unborn, that, risen from its future

ashes Porpheero shall be the promised land, and from her surplus hordes Kolumbo people it" (512). While America is in one era The City on the Hill, history may well bestow that honour upon an ethically restored Europe sometime in the future.

The tendency to regard the American nation in absolute terms is also checked by the principle of compensation, a crude sort of cultural relativism which privileges no one nation on earth over another. One place is no more virtuous than the next in the final analysis, since "evil is the chronic malady of the universe" and checked in one place, breaks forth in another" (529).

In these instances, Melville refracts the Polynesian, mythic mode of construing the world into a context of American and European history, into allegory. The procedure is distinct from Melville's investigations into the transcendental character of myth. The "beforetimes" of human origins is replaced here by the present of real history. Melville's interests in American society and its distinctiveness in the Western world unfold in the particular issues "confronting Americans" in 1848, not those confronting humankind from the beginning of history. The allegorical mode provides Melville with an opportunity to stress a kind of instability differing from the metaphysical diffuseness of symbol and the doubts concerning the

prehistoric "beforetimes" of myth. Taji's role as displaced spectator therefore changes in the new contexts of Melville's allegory. Displacement becomes an ungrounding now of the political and social certitudes which underpin the idealism and optimism of Melville's United States.

In these more concrete social and political terms, this ungrounding makes the relationship between the self and the body politic fragile and tentative. The allegory of the scroll in Chapter 161--in which "They hearken unto a Voice from the Gods"--diffuses imperialist sentiments and undermines Manifest Destiny. The youth who reads aloud from the scroll attributes it to the gods only because "never will you trace it to man" (524). This statement heralds the turn Melville makes from the spiritual realm of transcendental gods to the immediate concerns of man and society, of Americans in America. All intention now becomes part of the flow of history. Only by an accident of history, the scroll suggests, was Vivenza populated thinly enough to permit the great social experiment of democracy to be performed, in the belief that "Civilization has not ever been the brother of equality" (527). Melville here recirculates Tommo's idealism about the apparent virtue of the savage world compared to the visible corruption of the civilized. Taji, however, "domesticates" Tommo's sentiments. He extracts them from the Polynesian world and adapts them to conditions much closer to home in the Mardian allegory of the West.

Melville's political allegory goes on to suggest that the ideals of this Mardian version of America are not grounded innately in the institutions of society, but in the coincidence of circumstances. The scroll reads:

"And, may it please you, you are free, partly because you are young. Your nation is like a fine, florid youth, full of fiery impulses, and hard to restrain; his strong hand nobly championing his heart. On all sides, freely he gives, and still seeks to acquire" (526).

Nor do these ideals apply evenly to each and every one of its citizens, least of all to the Americanized citizens of the Hamo race. From a perspective reminiscent of his view of the acculturation process he witnessed in Tahiti and recorded in *Omoo*, Melville portrays the American black as a traumatized victim of cultural disorientation who does not belong where he now lives. When Taji's party visits the southern region of Vivenza, Babbalanja asks Nulli (John C. Calhoun) whether the Hamo workers toiling in the sun possess souls. Nulli replies, "their ancestors may have had; but their souls have been bred out of their descendents" (532). The history of empire has the capacity of voiding the American black, as it did the native Tahitian. Viewed in this way as a cultural being, the individual of Melville's allegory (black or white) is shattered and re-assembled by history. And as Melville's allegory of the revolutions of 1848 indicates, the social landscape on the whole can also be transformed by the erupting volcanoes of historical

change. Melville had an inkling of this process of shattering and reformation when he wrote about the cultural bricolage of Tahiti in Omoo. But Mardi reveals the creative process through which Melville interiorized in the form of images what had been in his Polynesian experiences external "facts" of historical change and collective human trauma resulting from social instability. Now the cultural bricolage is produced by stresses in Western society.

At first glance the allegorical mode of Melville's imagination seems to depict America as an environment as volatile as Tahiti was in 1842. Perhaps more to the point, it is the imagination poeticizing America in these allegorical terms that is really the volatile environment. Babbalanja's comments on the Mardian writer Lombardo and his great work the Keztanza locate the source of the instability:

When Lombardo set about his work, he wrote right on; and so doing, got deeper into himself. He did not build himself in with plans; and like a resolute traveler, plunging through baffling woods, at last was rewarded for his toils. "In good time," saith he, in his autobiography, "I came out into a serene, sunny, ravishing region; full of sweet scents, singing birds, wild plants, roguish laughs, prophetic voices. Here we are at last, then," he cried; "I have created the creative" (595).

The allegory of the modern world is thus somewhere between the objective reality of the outside world and the interior region of the creative imagination. As allegory, its transformation of Polynesian man, through the construct of

Mardian man, into American man is an awkward one; it is a transition that exceeds the scope of Melville's setting. The Mardian world becomes cluttered with the bricolage of other worlds. —As the site of Melville's imagination, Mardi the place is strewn with the fragments of political idealism, frustrated metaphysics, as well as the elements of a promised land where one need seek perfection no more.

Mardi the text parallels the world of Mardi in being, as Sabbalanja admits:

nothing but episodes; valleys and hills; rivers, digressing from plains; vines, roving all over; boulders and diamonds; flowers and thistles; forests and thickets; and, here and there, ferns and moors. And so, the world in the Koztanza (597).

As with the world of the imagination, so with the text that makes it visible. Melville wrote a text of bricolage. In his role of bricoleur he splintered the forms of life in an poetic re-creation of history's violence. His romance is a construction built from the fragments--symbol, myth, allegory.

Two centrally important movements coincide in Melville's imagination when he embarks upon the allegory of the Western world in the last third of Mardi. Taji's passage from symbolic to mythic to allegorical imaginative modes charts the degeneration of the oceanic transcendence into critical transcendence, of the glimpses of the eternal into Melville's resignation to the limits of temporality. This

resignation had an impact on Melville's artistic development. He would labour under its influence well into the writing of Moby-Dick, three novels later. In addition, this resignation to the temporal world speeds Melville home to America, to a place in history. When Taji reaches the shores of the Mardian Vivenza, the horizons have closed in on him. Beyond them is the real Polynesia that he has left behind, despite his reliance upon that place for the integrity of his images. In Taji's words, Melville throughout Mardi trembles, gasps, and strains in his flight to the transcendental heights, yet finally he fails to "cast off the cables that hamper". Melville's allegorical homecoming is a reckoning with a past which burdened his depiction of the alien Polynesian world.

The alteration of those landscapes by his emerging historical sense signalled the exhaustion of one relationship between self and cultural surround and the birth of another. From Typee to Mardi, from Tommo to Taji, the self in Melville's fiction changes very gradually. Under the rubric of man in a strange land, these narrator-heroes provided Melville with a cognitive centre in which to register his understanding of human nature and human potential. In each novel that understanding grew, and with it the ability of his narrator-hero to understand the alien environment also grew. In Tommo's case the foreign social landscape of the Marquesan culture eluded him almost

entirely. In an environment which has little chance of informing his subjectivity, Tommo possesses a "sovereign nature". Omoo indicated that this kind of sovereignty is an illusion. The effects of acculturation upon the Tahitian native, the European missionary, and the Western beachcomber and colonials taught Melville that human subjectivity under these conditions was porous and easily penetrated by the cultural surround. It is Taji who registers the impact of this revelation on Melville's own imagination. In the interlude between the publication of Omoo and Mardi, Melville's own subjectivity becomes porous to the possibilities of the Polynesian world for heightened meaning. In this period he also realized that the manipulation of the raw materials of information and experiences he had gained from his Pacific wanderings and researches could produce a view not of the Polynesian world alone but of a world of the mind, of the world as it is given to consciousness by experience. In this way, Melville interiorized the world "out there". The world of "facts" becomes a more volatile world of image from Typee to Mardi. Melville's movement from the landscapes of the Marquesas, Tahiti, and Mardi allowed his imagination to possess the world more fully with each novel. The odyssey produced a kind of inversion, a turning of the world inside out: knowledge found in the world became for Melville a world found in knowledge.

This early course of development had consequences for the whole of Melville's career. The relationship between the self and the cultural surround changes radically after Mardi. In Redburn, White-Jacket, and into Moby-Dick, the terms of the self's displacement also change. The geographical displacement which underlay Tommo's self-identity is in these later novels not a literal event occurring to a mobile individual. It is rather a metaphorical and historical displacement of American man from the European culture of his origins. The starting point for the self of Melville's middle period is Taji's return to America. Returning home in his fiction, Melville temporarily flees from both Nature and Spirit into the mediating forms of a society in a given moment of history. This place is the world of the polis.

Notes to CHAPTER FOUR

1. Quoted in George Whalley, Poetic Process: An Essay in Poetics, (New York and Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1967), p. 183.
2. Siikala, pp. 191-192.
3. Letter to Gansevoort Melville, 29 May 1846, Letters, p. 29.
4. Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 86.
5. Stern, p. 91.
6. Weaver, p. 152.
7. James Baird, Ishmael: A Study in the Symbolic Mode in Primitivism, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 192.
8. Baird, p. 16.
9. Baird, p. 26.
10. Baird, p. 84.
11. Robert D. Richardson, Myth and Literature in the American Renaissance, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 201, 202.

12. Richard H. Brodhead, "Mardi: Creating the Creative," New Perspectives in Melville, (ed) Faith Pullin, (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1978), p. 32.

13. Evert Duyckinck, unsigned review, Literary Review, April 1849, Melville: The Critical Heritage, (ed) Watson G. Branch, (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 154.

14. Duyckinck, Branch (ed), p. 153.

15. Unsigned review, Bentley's Miscellany, April 1849, Branch (ed), p. 149. The distinction I make in the comparison of critical responses and the reviews in Melville's day is perhaps more one of tone and of attention than it is one of pejorative evaluation. The modern scholar, it must be admitted, quite readily accepts as a given the formal qualities of literary works; but this acceptance and the intent of the writers of the American Renaissance are two different things. As Charles Feidelson observes, "The unified phase of American literature which began with the tales of Hawthorne and Poe and ended with Melville and Whitman was not recognized as such by the men who made it. Certainly none would have called himself a symbolist. Yet today the family likeness can be discerned, and the pattern is that of symbolism" (Symbolism and American Literature, p. 1). My point is that it is fruitful for the purposes of our discussion of Melville to separate a purely

literary perspective on symbol and on language in general from the wider cultural perspective of Melville's age.

16. For discussions of the relationship of these figures to the literary achievements of the American Renaissance see Philip F. Gura, "Language and Meaning: An American Tradition," American Literature, 53: 1 (March 1981), 1-21; and his The Wisdom of Words: Language, Theology, and Literature in the New England Renaissance, (see Chapter 5 on Melville), and Charles Feidelson, Symbolism and American Literature, pp. 151-57, 311-15.

17. Branch (ed), p. 149.

18. Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness, (New York: Bantam, 1969), p. 7.

19. Richard Henry Dana Sr. wrote his son Richard on 16 April 1849: "Hasn't Melville written an absurd book? Mr [George] Ripley read me a very absurd passage yesterday. He speaks of it as a strange compound" (Leyda, I, p. 298).

20. Letters, p. 70.

21. Letter to Richard Bentley, 5 June 1849, Letters, p. 86.

22. Ernest Gellner, Legitimation of Belief, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 20-22.

23. Herman Melville, Mardi: A Voyage Thither, (eds) Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle, (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1970), p. 352. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. Page numbers appear in parentheses in the text.

24. The symbolic approach to the study of "primitive" culture differs from the "intellectualist" approach in three respects: 1) it sees a difference between science and religion; 2) religion and magic are distinctive "in that beliefs and rituals taken together constitute a symbolic system which describes the pattern of social relations in the society in which they exist"; 3) and consequently, the symbolist approach "distinguishes in some way the literal meaning of religious and magical discourse and the perhaps overtly intended meaning of religious or magical actions, on the one hand, and their symbolic meaning on the other" (John Skorupski, Symbol and Theory: A Philosophical Study of Theories of Religion in Social Anthropology, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974], p. 18).

25. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, (ed) J. Shawcross, (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), Vol. I, p. 100.

26. Coleridge, p. 202.

27. At the end of his discussion of Mardi, Milton Stern concludes that Melville is dedicated to showing how meaning is derived from the material, the historical, and the relative nature of human experience (The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville), p. 89). Yet, as I have attempted to show thus far, Melville's relationship to both the idealism inherent in spiritual transcendence and the historical nature of symbolically social meaning is more complex than Stern's view suggests.

Melville is far more committed to the transcendental imperatives operating in his culture, for one thing. And for another, the nature of history (i.e., the legacy of transcendental appeals to the other-worldly), suggests that Melville is not dealing with a clear-cut either/or proposition of the historical world on the one hand, and the spiritual world on the other.

28. For a discussion of the Romantic warnings against the fetishizing of things see David Simpson, Fetishism and Imagination: Dickens, Melville, Conrad, (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 11-15.

29. As Bruce Franklin has shown in his The Wake of the Gods, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), Melville obtained his knowledge of the similarities of Greek, Roman, Polynesian, and Hindu mythologies from the published studies of Sir William Jones as well as from his earlier

acquaintance with William Ellis' Polynesian Researches: (Franklin, pp. 18-25). But while these commentators were pressed by their Christian bias into accounting for the similarities among such geographically dispersed groups as the ancient Hebrews, Polynesians, and Hindus, Melville was able "to steer clear of the perilously strained diffusionism of Jones and Ellis" because he forged in Mardi the identity of Asiatic, Pacific, and Mediterranean gods--Brami (Brahma), Manko (Manco Capac), and Alma (Christ)", (p. 23). But in spite of having circumvented the riddle of how these disparate cultures arrived at the same kind of avatar, Melville struck upon perhaps a more fundamental contradiction between the existence of historical evidence of these comparative studies and the absolutist claims of each respective religion. So while he may have spared himself from those nagging discrepancies between contrary bodies of religious thought from the various cultures, Melville confronted another conflict between the transcendentalist's and the positivist's modes of understanding religious experience. As Taji's encounter of the artisan at Hevaneva suggests, Melville could not ignore the contradiction between what appeared to be a human need for transcendence in a human history and the call from the spiritual beyond.

30. Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, (trans) Willard R. Trask, (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 5.

31. "Myths . . . narrate not only the origin of the world, of animals, of plants, and of man, but also all the primordial events in consequence of which man became what he is today--mortal, sexed, organized in a society, obliged to work in order to live, and working in accordance with certain rules. If the World exists, if man exists, it is because Supernatural Beings exercised creative powers in the 'beginning'. [Man] is mortal because something happened in illo tempore" (Mircea Eliade, p. 11).

32. Merrill R. Davis, Melville's "Mardi": A Chartless Voyage, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 81.

33. Gay Clifford, The Transformation of Allegory, (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 28.

34. Barnard Cowan, Exiled Waters: "Moby-Dick" and the Crisis of Allegory, (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), p. 11.

35. Cowan, p. 32.

36. In this respect Mardi is a testament to Paul de Man's assertion that "the prevalence of allegory always corresponds to the unveiling of an authentically temporal destiny. This unveiling takes place in a subject that has sought refuge against the impact of time in a natural world to which, in truth, it bears no resemblance. The secularized thought of the pre-romantic period no longer

allows a transcendence of the antinomies of the created world and the act of creation by means of a positive recourse to the notion of a divine will; the failure of the attempt to conceive of a language that would be symbolical as well as allegorical; the suppression, in the allegory, of the analogical and anagogical levels, is one of the ways in which this impossibility becomes manifest. In the world of the symbol it would be possible for the image to coincide with the substance, since the substance and its representation do not differ in their being but only in their extension: they are part and whole of the same set of categories. Their relationship is one of simultaneity, which, in truth, is spatial in kind, and which the intervention of time is merely a matter of contingency, whereas, in the world of allegory, time is the originary constitutive category. Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin" (Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality", Interpretation: Theory and Practice, [ed] Charles Singleton, [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969], p. 190).

PART II

P O L I S

And the Lord said, Behold, the people are one, and they have all one language; and this they began to do: and nothing will be withheld from them, which they have imagined to do. Come let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from there upon the face of all the earth: and they ceased building the city.

--Gen. 11: 6-8.

The procreation or children of a commonwealth, are those we call plantations, or colonies which are numbers of men set out from the commonwealth, under a conductor, or governor, to inhabit a foreign country, either formerly void of inhabitants, or made void then by war.

-Hobbes, Leviathan.

For a ship is a bit of terra firma cut off from the main; it is a state in itself; and the captain is its king.

-Melville, White-Jacket.

They were nearly all Islanders in the Pequod, Isolatoos too, I call such, not acknowledging the common continent of men, but each Isolato living on a separate continent of his own. Yet now, federated along one keel, what a set these Isolatoos were!

-Melville, Moby-Dick.

Chapter 5

ON THE PROCREATION OF COMMONWEALTH I: THE GENTEEL POLITY OF THESE STATES

Art goes yet further, imitating that rational and most excellent work of nature, man. For by art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMONWEALTH, or STATE, in Latin CIVITAS, which is but an artificial man . . .

-Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan. [1]

It is treason towards God himself, and a mockery of the majesty of Heaven, not less than an injury to the rights of man, for any merely human being to arrogate a claim so high as that of sovereignty over a race of the same rational and moral nature as himself.

-George Sidney Camp, Democracy. [2]

The summer of 1849 brought upon Herman Melville a mood of resignation in a period of high literary production. Disappointing reviews of Mardi had begun to appear and the negative reaction of the reading public to Melville's imaginative, yet frustrated flight to the transcendental heights of Spirit was soon apparent. Mardi's disappointing sales forced Melville to write two novels quickly in order to remain financially solvent. In his letter of 6 October 1849 to Lemuel Shaw, Melville confesses that "no reputation that is gratifying to me can possibly be achieved" by either

Redburn or White-Jacket. We could not ask for a better example of the paralysing alienation of the artist from his own labour. Melville tells Shaw that these novels

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--Being books, then, written in this way, my only desire for their "success" (as it is called) springs from my pocket & not from my heart. [3]

There is no reason to doubt Melville's word here; financial need certainly would have contributed to the distraction he admits to suffering while he wrote both Redburn and White-Jacket. And the speed with which he wrote them suggests the pressure of time and dollar on the young professional writer with a family to feed. But Melville's attempts at large-scale popular "success" with these two books is also evidence, I think, of another kind of alienation and distraction that originated not merely in the physical, external circumstances of Melville's life, but before these circumstances arose, in the interior domain of his rapidly developing imagination. Financial need perhaps only exacerbated that distraction Melville suffered earlier when he inserted the political allegory of the Western world among the later chapters of Mardi.

There were definite consequences to Taji's frustrated ascent into the ethereal regions of spiritual transcendence.

Redburn and White-Jacket confirm this in several ways. Most visibly, Melville reverted in both of these novels to a narrative of facts. In Redburn, this took the form of Melville's autobiographical, nostalgic reminiscences of his first voyage, a transatlantic excursion to Liverpool. In White-Jacket, the narrative of facts assumed the form (and limited depth) of a spirited documentary account of Melville's own sailing days on the U.S.S. United States, the frigate which ended Melville's career as a Polynesian rover and returned him home to America from Honolulu in 1844. In this one respect, the documentary form Melville employed in these books represents a regression to an earlier and less sophisticated means of recounting experience. As he did in Typee and Omoo, Melville relied upon a vast somewhat inert body of material, inert in the sense that the "facts" concerning Great Britain and the U.S.S. United States retain a certain public status. In Redburn and White-Jacket, respectively. The facts as Melville employs them do not seem to pass through the same scattering concern with image, value, and equivocation that Melville yielded to in Mardi. In short, Melville restrained the imagination which, as "something unmanageable", had soared in diverse directions in that novel.

While the new novels were perhaps a return to an earlier narrative method, they were not an abdication nor a regression of Melville's imagination. He resorts to earlier

narrative practice, but he does so in a context of new concerns which open him up to new problems. The relationship between cultural "image" and social "fact" which underwent such persistent examination in Melville's Polynesian novels is altered in Redburn and White-Jacket. The subject matter has of course shifted the settings from the South Pacific to a European and American world much more familiar to Melville. The "Polynesian" version of this relationship turned to a great extent upon the drama of resistance and suspension that a strange culture provided a narrator-hero such as Tommo. With the allegory of Vivenza in Mardi, that wall of resistance collapses to reveal a landscape familiar to Taji.

The self has even less autonomy in Redburn and White-Jacket. It is more closely bonded to its cultural context in these works. The narrators of Melville's Polynesian novels did not know their world; they were, after all, strangers to it. In their home cultures, Redburn in the Anglo-American World, White-Jacket on his American frigate, do not suffer from these kinds of dislocation. They acknowledge these places as their worlds.

Implicit in this new distinction of fact and image are two kinds of "Americanness" which, I will explore respectively in this chapter, and the next. These are central in defining the stresses and strains of Melville's

imagination in his middle period. The terms "fact" and "image" remain aesthetic polarities in Melville's fiction, but their connotation changes considerably. The American fact is communicated in the notion of the "United States" of the laws of these states made according to the gentility and moral propriety of the New Republic. The fact of the United States conveys the mechanics of the Enlightenment political institutions. This is the grammar of Redburn and White-Jacket's rhetoric of selfhood. An American image, on the other hand, suggests "America", that frontier where he discovers in himself organic liberty, intrinsic goodness, a natural aversion to the constraints of civilization amid the mythology of the New Jerusalem and the renovated self. From this lexicon will emerge Ishmael and Ahab both.

Even with these alterations of "fact", "image", and self, Melville retained a fascination with the concrete experience of dislocation as a motivating concern for fiction. Only in one respect--as characters "at home"--can Redburn and White-Jacket feel entirely comfortable amid surroundings. That they move in a general culture of which they are a part does not absolve them from estrangement. It helps, rather, to throw into relief new issues and new anxieties which Melville will work increasingly into his fiction from this point on. The narrators of his interregnum novels Redburn and White-Jacket which take him from the Pacific, and Moby-Dick which returns him to the Pacific again with a post-

Mardi imaginative fervour have one thing in common. The disturbance of the frames of culture and belief is a factor of space (the geographical) for Tommo. For Redburn, White-Jacket, and Ishmael, that kind of disturbance becomes a factor of time (the historical).

This more complex narrator will eventually carry the problematic of self much further in Melville's later fictions. From Ishmael's perspective, a whole society can lose its sense of collective identity within its own cultural space before the equally estranging face of history. In both Redburn and White-Jacket Melville registers the widening of the self into that collective domain of cultural identity. He begins with the sense of Redburn and White-Jacket as Americans. They have a personality which is socially and culturally defined. When those definitions begin to fade we move from the actualization of fact to the larger typological and phenomenal concerns of Redburn and White-Jacket as aspects of American man.

2.

The young Redburn undergoes a rite of passage into a kind of liminality analogous to that experienced by Tommo and the narrator of Omoo. He has of course literally sought passage to Liverpool in shipping aboard the Highlander. This novel of reminiscence also charts the passage from innocence to

experience, a passage which entails rites of confusion for the hero. But in addition, Melville portrays "being at sea" as a condition of being in itself; it is not merely a means of going somewhere or of growing into manhood. While these latter processes of development assume a sense of self, the being of "being at sea" temporarily obliterates, erases Redburn's assumptions of who and what he is before gradually re-asserting them within a new atmosphere of self-consciousness. Redburn is, in small part, like Tommo or Lem Hardy. Going to sea "is like going into a barbarous country, where they speak a strange dialect, and dress in strange clothes, and live in strange houses." [4] The givens of Redburn's social self are in effect made to justify themselves in a similar kind of existential liminality. Between shores, then, Melville posits an in-between self on the way to settling with the assumptions of selfhood. This he argues is a fundamental characteristic of sailing. The consequences of the liminality gives the naive Redburn moral pause:

Yes, I now began to look on [sailors] with a sort of incipient love; but more with an eye of pity and compassion, as men of naturally gentle and kind disposition, whom only hardships, and neglect, and ill-usage had made outcasts from society; and not as villains who loved wickedness for the sake of it, even in Paradise, if they ever got there. And I called to mind a sermon I had once heard in a church in behalf of sailors, when the preacher called them strayed lambs from the fold, and compared them to poor lost children, babes in the wood, orphans without fathers or mothers (47).

But there is a difference between the marginal existence in those Polynesian accounts and that experienced by Redburn's sailors. If the liminality of Lem Hardy and the beachcombers of Tahiti resulted from a process of acculturation, the lot of sailors is an existence in the marginality produced by the illusory but still experiential process of de-culturation, the apparent departure from cultural influences. Redburn will later admit, from a more seasoned perspective, that sailors bear "the same relation to society at large, that the wheels do to a coach: and are just as indispensable." Culture, whether it be Europe's on the one shore or America's on the other, is the coach of fine door-panels and hammer-cloth. Sailors do the dirty work, lifting good society from "out of the mire" (139). This is Redburn's way of acknowledging that every society creates a proletariat; sailors, in their globe-wandering mobility are a privileged group within that lower stratum of mankind. They contribute to the mercantile networks sustaining the good society.

This should not suggest all sailors relish their role by any means. Others do not speak as glowingly as Redburn does about the social function of the seaman's vocation. Redburn discovers in one shipmate named Larry "certain illiberal insinuations against civilization" (100):

"Snivelization has been the ruin on ye; an it's spiled me complete; I might have ben a great man in Madagasky; it's too darned bad! Blast Ameriky, I say." And in bitter grief at the

social blight upon his whole past, present, and future, Larry turned away, pulling his hat still lower down over the bridge of his nose (101).

Taji might well have come to the same conclusion about the lot of the Hamos in Mardi's Vivenza. The accident of being born in America determines in rather arbitrary terms the role the common sailor will have in civilization. Of course Larry's view is based on the assumption that there is someplace "beyond" civilization where such roles would not exist. Life aboard ship offers Melville a kind liminality within civilization which allows for a social critique of Melville's America and its ideals. The marginality of sailors really occurs within the fissures of Western culture and not outside of that culture. Going to sea for Redburn is thus quite a different matter than it was for the Tommo-type of narrator and cognitive agent. Melville sends Redburn to sea, ironically, to register concerns about the Western world as a whole. But in travelling back to the European place of American origins, Redburn does not travel far from home.

Nonetheless, the illusion of the loss of self-identity that Redburn experiences in this space of cultural suspension remains a powerful one. Even men of high cultural achievement, he contends, would be starting from scratch if they went to sea:

Few landsmen can imagine the depressing and self-humiliating effect of finding one's self, for the first time, at the beck of illiterate sea-tyrants, with no opportunity of exhibiting

any trait about you, but your ignorance of every thing connected with the sea-life that you lead, and the duties you are constantly called upon to perform. In such a sphere, and under such circumstances, Isaac Newton and Lord Bacon would be sea-clowns and bumkins; and Napoleon Bonaparte be cuffed and kicked without remorse (257).

In the apparent absence of the points of reference provided by the civil society of the land, the practices and rituals of ship-board life take over. Ship's language replaces the language of the shore, even when it applies to the objects familiar to a land-lubber. In fact, there may well be a surplus of sea-names, "more words than things", Redburn suggests (66). Negotiating through the cargo of language is a dizzying task. One can drown in words, Redburn discovers.

All of this may conjure up a premonition of the Pequod. Moby-Dick will register the same etymological plurality and cultural redundancy in the word for WHALE in numerous languages. Redburn does confess to finding "himself a sort of Ishmael in the ship, without a friend or companion" (62). And his ruminations about the "unscrupulous use of [the captain's] power" (263) will materialize later in Ahab. There is a sense, however, in which the emphasis of this kind of foreshadowing distorts the character and the ambitions of Melville's narrative as a whole. Redburn resembles Ishmael only superficially, and the Pequod is a different class of vessel from Redburn's ship.

Aesthetically, the Highlander performs a different function and exposes its crew to a different perspective on the world. It conducts Redburn from one port of culture to another; the Pequod knows no such comfortable, safe destination.

Only initially, in the ecstasy of youthful idealism brought on in the ship's passage from the narrows into the wide Atlantic, is Redburn able to see himself getting "fairly 'outside'". Only in this restricted literal sense is he "thrust out of the world" (36). Redburn is not concerned with a place outside of the Western world as Typee and Omoo were. Nor is it out, over, and beyond it with the transcendental ambitions of Mardi even though the ocean is still there to encourage the contemplation of large vistas. Ironically, Redburn's glimpse of the great expanses of Ocean precludes oceanic transcendence. With the unfurling of sail and the ship running before the wind, Redburn vows to "race and pant out [his] life, with an eternal breeze astern, and an endless sea before" (66). All too soon these "raptures" abate, however. Significantly, it is the captain's call to physical toil that restrains Redburn's flight, just as the call for "success" restrained Melville's.

If Redburn's immersion in physical labour ends his reverie, it also grounds him pragmatically in an identity as a common sailor. Once Melville has shorn him of his status

as landsman and dreamer, he begins to address the re-making of Redburn. This process of reconstruction continues when he reaches Liverpool. No longer a boy who has gone to sea, the Redburn who wanders through Liverpool with his father's guidebook in hand is a representative American man tracing the very contours of a social landscape from which he is culturally descended and historically displaced. Once Redburn is ashore in Great Britain, the physical labour of the ship is replaced with the hermeneutical task of piecing together the past.

Redburn in Britain finds himself in a liminal zone of existence similar to that which he experienced aboard ship. Coming ashore, for him, entails transition and ambivalence. He experiences in this rite of passage a mixture of the strange and the familiar. This mixture of sensations is an accurate description of one's encounter with one's own historical character in any circumstances. But for the American Redburn, sighting the British coast inspires a special kind of ambivalence:

And did a real queen with a diadem reign over that very land I was looking at, with the identical eyes in my own head?--And then I thought of a grandfather of mine, who had fought against the ancestor of this queen at Bunker's Hill (125).

His first views of the city of Liverpool confirm this familiarity in a mood of bitter disappointment. The warehouses along the shore bear a strong resemblance to

those "along South-street in New York." More to the point, they are "matter-of-fact" buildings perceived from a matter-of-fact perspective (127).

The visible panorama of England, for Redburn, is a matter of fact. The dreams and imagined realities which attach to Melville's experiences of England are absent. Redburn's romantic expectations--those which promise to distinguish England from the United States--never appear in the England that confronts Redburn in Liverpool: "Why, no buildings here look so ancient as the old gable-pointed mansion of my maternal grandfather at home, whose bricks were brought from Holland long before the Revolutionary war!" (159). Redburn recovers from his initial disappointment to assert a compensatory vision of a Western world transcending national boundaries and characteristics.

Our ancestry is lost in the universal paternity; and Caesar and Alfred, St. Paul and Luther, and Homer and Shakespeare are as much ours as Washington, who is as much the world's as our own. We are the heirs of all time, and with all the nations we divide our inheritance. On this Western hemisphere all tribes and people are forming into one federated whole; and there is a future which shall see the estranged children of Adam restored to the old hearth-stone in Eden.

There is a hint of Polynesian allegory in the reference to "tribes", a sense of cultural de-familiarization which makes Melville sound universalist. Sentiments such as these lead Redburn to think of his own America as the site of a "new Pentecost" in which "the curse of Babel [shall] be

revoked" (169), for while the federation will involve all Western peoples, America will be the exemplary and final place in which it is manifest. It is a universalist declaration in that America, the site of the harmonizing of humankind, is an absolute culture.

Even in these expressions of mythic restoration, Redburn is not blind to basic differences between American and European society. Contemplating the pride with which the black man in Britain can carry himself, Redburn concedes that "Americans leave to other countries the carrying out of the principle that stands at the head of [the] Declaration of Independence" (202). Yet, as if to strike a social balance between the societies on opposite shores of the Atlantic, he distinguishes British streets from American by the multitude of beggars he finds on the former. In America, he notes, a "native beggar is almost unknown; and to be born an American citizen seems a guarantee against pauperism; and this, perhaps, springs from the virtue of a vote" (202).

England and the United States are part of the same historical and cultural frame, and as a result subtleties of both continuity and discontinuity emerge in Redburn's comparison of the two places. Melville, through a kind of wavering reflection, attempts to work into that quality of difference which marks off the two countries as distinct

communities. The umbrella term "Civilization" emphasizes shared values in the Anglo-American tradition of law and custom. In doing this, it points to the single most radical difference of all; Redburn in his ruminations on cultural difference uncovers a dialectic at the heart of the American experience. An Enlightenment society with utopian ambitions to break from history, American culture is engaged in an argument with history. Melville registers clumsily in his narrator-hero two incompatible views of history. Redburn is attentive to the cultural landscape as an historical place, definable in terms of its age, object, and events. He is at one level a man of surface and propriety, an enthusiast of social manners given to an atomistic listing of differences. This is Redburn's Enlightenment sensibility. It registers an interest in "history" perhaps, but not one which sees man as historical in character.[5] Yet Redburn also voices a contrasting view of history which addresses the specifically American restoration of a human harmony, and the renovation of man. The latter view, because of its mythic sensibility, situates man in history, makes man historical in character, in a way that Redburn's Enlightenment empiricism fails to. The two conceptions are linked: Redburn is saying that the American commitment to the mythic restoration of humankind is a further distinction between the two societies in their visible, material form as aggregate institutions belonging to the one Western tradition.

The character of Redburn is caught between these two opposing views. The lack of focus in his conception reflects the socio-cultural concerns that Melville handles through him. The newness of the United States requires that he speak of the New Republic as a society historically broken off from the Old World of history and social practice. But there is also the Redburn who must force that denial of historical connection into an historical context. To revoke the curse of Babel after all is to overcome the "spoiled" history of the Old World.

The mythos conveyed in the term "America", which carries the overtones of man's moral restoration, must establish itself in an actual society, one with its own laws, politics, and cultural institutions. The connotation of the "United States" is that tangible aspect of Enlightenment certitudes of checks and balances and of a written Constitution. Redburn is both a citizen of those contracted United States in an actualized society, and a believer in a mythic restoration of all mankind in the renovated history presided over by American democracy. He is, therefore, both a man in a society broken off from one continuum of history and a man engaged in the typological historical process of self-renovation.

Redburn is a work which cannot really accommodate the implications of its hero's divided concerns. Melville has

restricted his ambitions in this novel to the recounting of a nostalgic experience. As he did in Typee, he works in an atmosphere of social certitudes, of popularly held social "facts", eliding them with images of deeper cultural aspiration. This is not to say that Melville has reverted to an earlier level of reflection. The European "facts" concerning Marquesan man were applied to an alien culture by Tommo. Melville, though Redburn, now approaches another set of facts applied this time to his own Western culture. On such familiar ground, Melville is poised to scrutinize those certitudes and to assess their validity. Those facts stand in relation to the images of cultural aspiration. Yet Redburn does not shed light on those cultural aspirations. Melville restricts its narrative to the enumeration of surface differences between English and American societies. White-Jacket is a more penetrating examination of those differences. It afforded Melville more room to expand the cognitive centre of his own concerns into a narrator-hero possessing symbolic power. The hero of White-Jacket, placed as he is in the centre of the metaphor of the man-of-war world, confronts the paradox of American history as both the concrete existence of the institutions in a society and the transcendental aspirations of American culture.

3

Reviewers of White-Jacket construed Melville's return to earth from the transcendental heights of Mardi in his

shifting of narrative technique from wild poeticizing to documentary fiction. It was for them Melville's turning over of a new leaf, a conscious attempt "to reinstate [himself] in the best good-graces of the reading public." [6] John Bull magazine declared that Melville "is no longer the wanton boy that used to give rein to his wit and fancy, indulging in refined licentiousness of description, more seductive and mischievous than open violations of decorum, and in that smart dare devil style of remark which perverts, while it dazzles, the mind, inducing habits of levity and irreverence of thought." This reviewer saw in Melville a new ability to create characters "exhibiting, by the magic effect of a few mastering touches, each man in the complete individuality of his person and his office." Finally we get from Melville "admirable life-pictures." [7] The author of Mardi, another reader noted, had in White-Jacket "not deemed it worthwhile" to fictionalize. [8]

One can understand these reactions. Melville's turning away from the holistic mythic visions of the Mardian world, a decision he held to for the most part in Redburn, took him into an Anglo-American world of concrete, recognizable, and individualized realities. White-Jacket portrays individual human beings who live within larger aggregations of distinct societies which themselves actively declare their unique qualities in visible features of difference. True to the observations made by his reviewers, Melville does not

engage freely in the myth of absolute harmony as he did in Mardi. And unlike the more idealistic moments of Redburn, White-Jacket is restricted to an examination of the post-Babel world of social and cultural difference. Moreover, White-Jacket is a narrative self designed expressly to inhabit the world of such differences. Wearing his tabula rasa garment like the ancient mariner did his albatross, he stands ready from the outset of his journey to bear the imprint of difference. The empiricist's metaphor becomes for Melville an actual characteristic of the self.

Evert Duyckinck, among Melville's early readers, struck closest to the underlying concern of White-Jacket in his review of the novel for The Literary World. Beneath its autobiographical and documentary surfaces, he saw the "union of culture and experience, of thought and observation, the sharp breeze of the fore-castle alternating with the mellow stillness of the library, books and work, imparting to each other mutual life, which distinguishes the narratives of the author of Typee from all other productions of their class." [9] He saw in the metaphorical thrust of the "world in a man-of-war" an underlying principle of fragmentation. Beyond the separation of the ship's all-male crew from women, Duyckinck perceived in Melville's new novel a "divorce" of greater implication:

Truly it is a world, the frigate, of every stage of civilization, of each profession, of all arts and callings, but--of one sex. And therein is a significant key to the particular position of

the "Navy" in the affairs of the race. The man-of-war is divorced from civilization,--and we will not repeat the stale phrase, from the progress of humanity,--but from humanity itself. How thus divorced, through all the windings and intricacies of the artificial system White-Jacket will show. [10]

Both Duyckinck's observation and Melville's metaphor of the ship of state are acutely American. For precisely what constitutes the divorce, the break-away from civilization and how it occurs in history are factors that inspire Melville to construct a version of the American polis. The Neversink is the political anatomy of a culture which in 1850 retains at its centre that paradoxical tension of being an historical society of severed ties with a typological destiny of restored human harmony.

White-Jacket can be seen as the outcome of Redburn's disorientation in history. The tensed character of an American culture, fragmented from the European parent culture, weighs on White-Jacket the character. As an individual citizen in the great man-of-war state, he feels it as a kind of alienation. In this respect, Melville is concerned about the self as an individual whose selfhood is bound up with a civil society, the United States. The pursuit of the social reforms urgently needed in the American navy, while in some sense a continuation of the allegory of Vivenza, turns inward from the expansive metaphysical backdrop which characterized Mardi toward, a strictly and narrowly American cultural and historical

world. White-Jacket, more than any other novel Melville wrote before or after, seals itself into the consolation and consolidation of his home culture. The "World in a man-of-war", as the novel is subtitled, is a large-scale irony; in it the United States is imaged in such a way as to turn in on itself. The Neversink may be a prototype of the Pequod, but it is sealed off from those metaphysical and natural landscapes of Moby-Dick.

In general terms, White-Jacket as a narrative centre also differs from those of Melville's earlier Polynesian novels. Present in those accounts of exotic South Seas islands was an "outside" which lay, in front of the protagonist, varying degrees of undifferentiation. For Tommo, the surrounding landscape was the inscrutable Marquesan culture. For the narrator-protagonist of Omoo, it was the liminal zone created by the acculturation process in Tahiti. For Taji, it was a metaphysical realm of potential transcendence, where he could be at once St. Paul and Montaigne "with all the past and present pouring in" on him. [11] Melville's transformation of the Puritan City on the Hill into a "city on the sea" [12] in White-Jacket blocks out an interior region of civilization from the "indefinite background" (393) of Nature and Spirit (the preternatural). White-Jacket is a portrait of man as an American locked into a deliberate, intentional construction of the Commonwealth, a social region distinct from these. Even when that ocean

background becomes suddenly very definite with the appearance of dry land, White-Jacket "must again forbear; for in this book [he has] nothing to do with the shore further than to glance at it, now and then, from the water; [his] man-of-war world alone must supply [him] with the staple of [his] matter" (266). The Neversink is its own contained American world; other worlds, earthly and cosmic, lie beyond the horizons of the protagonist. The spiritual rover's life--"sailing in heaven's blue as we do on the azure main"--can encourage a kind of reverie of reflection, a kind of transcendentalism which gives a man "a very fine feeling, and one that fuses us into the universe of things, and makes us part of the All" (76). [13] But there is no room for a spiritual rover aboard the nation-state of the Neversink. Dreams and idylls have little space in the man-of-war United States: "life in a man-of-war, with its martial formalities and thousand vices, stabs to the heart of all free-and-easy honorable rovers" (77).

If the deliberate construction of the American state forecloses on the transcendental and the natural worlds, it also blocks off White-Jacket from the rest of humanity. Once broken off from its pre-symbolic realm of undifferentiated Nature and its historical submission to old tyrannies, the Neversink is destined to become a "lofty, walled, and garrisoned town like Quebec, where the thoroughfares are mostly ramparts, and peaceable citizens meet armed sentries at every corner" (75). [14]

These walls of the civilized American state separate it from two outer human realms; the European world of American origins and the primitive world of all human origins are removed from the social compact of the Neversink's crew.

The ship encloses a cell of humanity, setting it adrift and preventing the inhabitants from direct converse with the European historical surround from which their civilization has evolved. Even though the Neversink is an autonomous community, the European world threatens to encroach upon it in the form of the Articles of War. The encroachment of that anterior European world, symbolized in the American navy's observance of the British Articles of War, like the landless horizon, "hoops you in" (295). American autonomy becomes an ironic isolation when coupled with the new unquestioned practice of European laws.

These walls also serve to keep out any version of Rousseau's natural man who possesses none of the social graces of the city-dwellers: "As in a Chinese puzzle, many pieces, are hard to place, so there are some unfortunate fellows who can never slip into their proper angles, and thus the whole puzzle becomes a puzzle indeed, which is the precise condition of the greatest puzzle in the world--the man-of-war world itself" (164). The Commodore's Polynesian servant Wooloo is an example of such an exclusion. White-Jacket himself is given to a mild anthropological musing with a relativist and liberal perspective.

In our man-of-war, this semi-savage, wandering about the gun-deck in his barbaric robe, seemed a being from some other sphere. His tastes were our abominations: ours his. Our creed he rejected: his we. We thought of him a loon: he fancied us fools. Had the case been reversed; had we been Polynesians and he an American, our mutual opinion of each other would have still remained the same. A fact proving neither was wrong, but both right (118).

This open-mindedness, however, is deceptive. His opinion is part of a more complex attitude towards civilization, one which contains in it the desire to make two kinds of distinction. Wooloo becomes the focus of White-Jacket's American assumptions on civilization as they relate to Nature and to the particular blend of nature and culture in a United States placed in sharp contrast to Europe. He benefits, consequently, from two conceptions of civilization. When he migrates from Polynesian savagery into the condition of semi-savage crewman, Wooloo crosses the boundary separating Nature and Culture, at least from White-Jacket's Western perspective. Even with his assertion that neither the savage nor civilized view can be judged as the "right" one, White-Jacket maintains the priority of his own state. This "right" view, however, is a privileged civil status which derives from a theory arguing that men submit themselves to laws and moral standards unknown to that most uncivil status, the state of nature. White-Jacket is thus secure in his own civil order. From his position within it, he can view Wooloo with tolerance. There is a

Lockean component to this moral structure, as well, which further defines what man lacks and desires in his "state of nature":

- 1) a received law and moral standard;
- 2) an indifferent judge to settle differences according to that law;
- 3) the ability to see injustices properly rewarded.

According to Locke's formulation, all of these missing factors eventually drive man into society, and prompt the formation of mediating structures of "civilized" behaviour. [15] The problem arising in Melville's novel is that from the perspective of the American these factors of civility are European. In an important sense, they are no more his own than are the "barbaric" rites of the Polynesian "semi-savage."

The inability to judge the authority of one system over the other blurs the line White-Jacket wants to draw between Nature/Culture, aliens/citizens, outside/inside. In fact White-Jacket's conception is such a liminal and ambiguous response to Wooloo the wandering barbarian precisely because the line separating culture from nature is so near at hand in America. White-Jacket's perspective is liminal in situating the interrogation into human nature between what is "natural" and what is "social" or cultivated in it.

A concern about the interplay between the "natural" and the "social" in an American society dominates White-Jacket in a way that reveals much about the American re-adjustment

of European Enlightenment ideas concerning civil society. Hobbes and Locke used the "state of Nature" as a literary device to illustrate a hypothetical contrast to organized political culture. For Melville, as an American, it becomes a literal phenomenon, an American frontier, much as the image of the white jacket worn by Melville's protagonist becomes a literal tabula rasa. [16]

The hermetic character of the Neversink blocks out the barbaric elements inherent in the notion of an actual territory of Nature.... But as human traits they survive, unacknowledged, to be incorporated into the formal structure of the society--of a place in nature, populated by citizens possessing "natural" rights. The American anxiety surrounding the character of man also touches on the perceived differences between Europe and America. Melville is more painfully aware than were Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman of the act of denial implicit in the New Republic's political separation from the terra firma of European civilization. His allegory of the world as a man-of-war shows how the placement of European political values into the United States results in certain ideological omissions in the new nation's conception of a human nature within a social setting. For Melville, these blind spots occur in the efforts of the New Republic to adjust its idealized conception of human nature to the political reality of establishing an actual social structure. Louis Hartz, in

the idiom of his own argument, has touched on the resultant difficulties:

if we study the American liberal language, if we look for silent omissions as well as explicit inclusions, we begin to see a pattern emerging that smacks distinctively of the New World. It has a quiet matter-of-fact quality, it does not understand the meaning of sovereign power, the bourgeois class passion is scarcely present, the sense of the past is altered, and there is about it all, as compared with the European pattern, a vast and almost charming innocence of mind. [17]

Hartz provides in his analysis one explanation for Melville's allegory of fragmentation of the American civil society from Europe. But it is not sufficient in explaining the conflicts among the Neversink's characters. The New World language Hartz refers to may indeed de-emphasize certain Lockean principles of restraint by government in order to accentuate the freedom of the individual. In addition to these crucial omissions of Lockean thought there are also unacknowledged inclusions of Hobbesian civil philosophy in the American appropriation of Enlightenment political ideas, which are far less flattering to the democratic motivations of the American Revolution than popular democratic sentiments concerning the New Republic. [18]

This Hobbesian strain of thought is present in White-Jacket. But it is instructive at the outset to consider that Melville was not alone in expressing it. A veiled Hobbesian frankness also floated through the popular culture

of the day in the form of Romantic appeals to democratic individualism. [19] George Sidney Camp's Democracy, published in the popular Harper's Family Library, is a contemporary account which reveals the extent to which Americans revised their European inheritance without acknowledging it as revision. [20] The meaning of sovereignty, for example, is blurred in the American mind when Camp declares that "One man has no right by nature to make laws for another. He may repel another when his own rights are infringed, but he has no right to govern him. He is sovereign merely over himself, not over another." [21] Laying aside for a moment Melville's working out of this notion of sovereignty with regard to the officers of the Neversink and eventually the captain of the Pequod, we should be alert to Camp's ideological revisionism of American Revolutionary orthodoxy. A definite change has occurred between John Locke's argument concerning the "natural state" of man and Camp's conception of "natural liberty". Camp writes:

This natural liberty is by no means irrespective of our condition as social beings. Since it regards man in his natural, it must comprehend his social and related capacity. . . . Natural liberty is, therefore, entirely compatible with the social condition of man; and as nothing can be more unnatural than the wild and savage state which is common, under the sanction of great and numerous authorities, to consider as a necessary condition to natural liberty, so nothing can be more absurd than the theory which defines natural liberty to consist in the unrestrained allowance of every man's inclination or caprice. [22]

At a crucial point, Camp deviates from Lockean philosophy. He will not submit to Locke's balancing counter-statement that "The only way whereby any one divests himself of his natural liberty and puts on the bonds of civil society is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community." [23] On the issue of sovereignty, Camp is intransigent.

Man is by nature the free and sovereign arbiter of his own actions; and as it has been proven that there is nothing in the nature of society, either in the rights or the sacrifices, incompatible with the unlimited exercise of his natural freedom, so we have shown that he does not, because it inheres in his nature, he cannot resign it upon becoming a member of organized community. [24]

Camp's radical de-emphasis of the constraining power of the state is fully consistent with Hobbes' theory of sovereignty. For Hobbes the natural right of the individual, motivated by self-interest, to pursue his own course in life overrides the public authority vested in natural law. Hobbes does not equate natural right and natural law; he distinguishes them. The American democrat, like Hobbes, deprives "the sovereign of authority to seek to procure the salvation of the members of society through an ideal pattern of law." [25]

That adjustment to Lockean philosophy evident in Camp's view has been taken by Louis Hartz to be a definitively American paradox in which the rationality of doctrine

becomes the centre of an irrational devotion. Under this transformation the doctrine is no longer recognized as European liberal democracy. Instead it becomes a sovereign principle, "the American way of life", which "does not know Locke himself is even involved." [26] In one respect, then, Locke ironically is not involved. But Hobbes is. For in the American appropriation of Enlightenment political theory sovereignty is vested not in the offices of civil authority but in the individual who assumes office. [27]

4

For Melville, whose earlier works depicted a "sovereign" self moving independently through alien cultures, this peculiarly American ambiguity over the limits of modern political sovereignty was bound to hold some interest. In White-Jacket, he translates these theoretical political and social concerns into issues of self and self's relation to the cultural matrix which holds these concerns to be "self-evident" facts. The floating city of the Neversink, a bit of terra firma cut off from the mainland, becomes in Melville's novel the site where this dilemma can be experienced directly at the individual level.

This is a dilemma of "sovereignty" in several senses of the word. The idea of the rights of man suggests the Hobbesian notion of sovereignty of a man over himself. These are rights which are said to be "natural" and

inalienable... But the Neversink is an artificial community. The artificiality, the distance from the seat of nature (an actual distance in Melville's literal version of the "state of Nature") manifests itself in the form of a rigid hierarchy aboard the Neversink. That hierarchy is also a borrowed, foreign structure which sustains the class distinctions and interests and jeopardizes the individual sailor's natural rights. The midshipmen, for example, are nurtured to be officers, irrespective of their innate talent for leadership. But Melville complicates the crisis over the rights of men considerably by placing the role of the individual man in his social order within a larger context of American man in his historical relationship to the old orders of Europe. In White-Jacket, the isolation of the protagonist from both the natural world of Ocean and the company of sailors is bound up with the historical problems of the United States of America in its political and ideological separation from the cultural heritage of which it is still in some respects a part. Melville voices this larger fragmentation of Western culture in the language of that very historical denial of history made from the ramparts of the American polis. This city on the hill, or city on the sea as White-Jacket calls it, is a human community equidistant from Nature and Europe.

The inclusion in the American formula for democracy of the Hobbesian idea of sovereignty over self produces in

White-Jacket, as it does in Melville's United States, a balance of action and reaction, a discordia concors of individual and social interests. The Neversink is a garrison housing a sustained tension between order and disorder which has been deflected into a consciousness of the whole mechanism of American history. We see in Melville's documentary novel something deeper than the invective against the abuses in the U. S. Navy. We also see the individual provided with the Hobbesian mandate to overrule public authority when personal interest has been encroached upon.

This epitomized, artificial, historicized version of national authority and individual nature originates in Hobbes with his contradistinction of natural law and natural right. But it becomes part of Melville's America under the guidance of an unlikely eighteenth-century triumvirate: Burke, Paine, and Jefferson. Under their auspices, and more importantly without the acknowledgement of both the partial borrowing of Lockean thought and the tacit adherence to the Hobbesian sovereignty over the self, tradition and rebellion co-exist in White-Jacket, out of necessity and thwarted idealism. Political necessity and the thwarting of such idealism become fused in Melville's mind after the allegory of Mardi. There idealism submitted to the realities of self-interest of demi-gods. In White-Jacket social idealism is meshed into competing philosophies and interests.

1) Burke: precedent and continuity; but in Melville's novel this amounts to being the entrainment in the logic of inductive history; this is the real tyranny Melville fears, the curse of precedent.

2) Paine: the Rights of Man, embodied in Jack Chase among others, Chase being the foremost personage in the Fourth of July Theatrical, a leader with natural and cultivated talents; in this way he is both a common sailor and a gentleman.

3) Jefferson: White-Jacket himself; his own declaration of independence; the natural spirit of the "People", yet free to author his own demise within the artifice of commonwealth.

While the surface concern in White-Jacket is the cruelty of flogging aboard American naval vessels, the means by which Melville makes his case carries us into the centre of the crisis of White-Jacket's unsure sovereignty. The mixture of philosophical strands in the fabric of American constitutional thought transforms sovereignty into a kind of political bricolage. The principle of the sovereign self, in this synthesis of theory and political practice, becomes a commodity used in the construction of both the society as whole and the individual's role in that society. The solidity of state and citizen rests on this patchwork of conflicting views of sovereignty. Concerns about national identity for the American arise as a consequence of his perceived release from the "state of Nature" on the one hand, and from the rigidities of European society on the other. Although it is a rhetorical device designed to exploit the patriotism of his readers, Melville's reference

to the Articles of War as the holdover from colonial days also confronts American man with the in-between character of his civil origins:

Whence came they? They can not be the indigenous growth of those political institutions, which are based on that arch-democrat Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence? No; they are an importation from abroad, even from Britain, whose laws we Americans hurled off as tyrannical, and yet retained the most powerful of all. [28]

But we stop not here; for these Articles of War had their congenial had their origin in a period of the history of Britain when the Puritan Republic had yielded to a monarchy restored This is the origin of the Articles of War; and it carries with it an unmistakable clue to their despotism (297-298).

At the heart of this paradox White-Jacket exposes on the one hand the organic nature implicit in the "indigenous growth" of Jeffersonian democracy and, on the other, the artifice of Burkean tradition which demands the continued adherence to the Articles. White-Jacket must concede that the American man declares his independence at the same time as complying with questionable European institutions. He cannot deny that the Articles of War constitute a set of precedents which commit the American ship of state to a fixed course "like a world in its orbit" (115). The Burkean strain sounds beneath the American outcry for liberty:

Our political system is placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world, and with the mode of existence decreed to a paramount body composed by the transitory parts--wherein, by their disposition of a stupendous wisdom, moulding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race, the whole, at one time, is never old or middle-aged or young, but, in a condition of

unchangeable constancy, moves on through the varied tenor of perpetual decay, fall, renovation, and progression. [29]

The "unchangeable constancy" of the Neversink is evident enough in Melville's passing reference to the layers of paint in the old ship's hull, barely hiding the scars of thirty years' service (315-316). In being "unchangeable", this tradition submits the individual sailor to a sovereignty vested outside himself in a higher, legalistic office of authority. The influence of such constancy shows up in small, seemingly out-of-the-way places. Melville exploits every opportunity of registering America's bonds with the European culture of origins. Indeed even the ship's chaplain, who "had drank at the mystic fountain of Plato," who shows the influence of the "Germans", and whom White-Jacket has seen reading the Biographia Literaria, is steeped in the cultural importations from Europe to such an extent that he fails to see the repeated abuses of authority committed before his eyes by the officers. Tied into the culture of precedence, the higher sovereignty threatens his own ability to react prudently to the demands of the moment.

The Articles themselves are the most painful imposition of precedence upon the sovereign American man. Article XLII shows this constancy to be a fixed principle defying the Americanized principle of natural rights:

In all cases where the crews of the ship or vessels of the United States shall be separated from their vessels by the latter being wrecked,

lost, or destroyed, all the command, power and authority given to the officers, shall remain, and be in full force, as effectively as if the ship or vessel were not so wrecked, lost, or destroyed (295).

What Melville cannot abide is the way that this Article disallows the possibility of a man reclaiming his primary and original place in the natural world. Even when the "city on the sea" is destroyed, the social hierarchy remains intact. White-Jacket concludes that natural right cannot exist under these absolutist conditions. Without the solidified expression of this natural right in the institutions of a free society like the United States, the true sovereignty of the self falls before the false sovereignty of abstract principles of law.

In Melville's novel, then, the activity of making distinctions between the Old and New Worlds is a gesture of an American morality. Perceptions of cultural difference become both moral and necessary, in nationalist terms necessarily moral. Equally, the question of sovereignty becomes central in White-Jacket, especially in the way it gets bound up with the question of freedom. Men who are born into freedom carry into the exercise of that freedom a sovereignty that is bestowed on them by nature. This assertion follows from the Hobbesian emphasis of natural right. For Melville, the American Revolution is an event which enacts, in the separation of the New World from the Old, the emergence of natural right and of an authentic,

self-defining sovereignty. This natural right replaces, in Melville's terms, the rule of Law represented in the allegory of the Neversink by the British connection.

In an atmosphere where morality, history, and national identity mesh, the hierarchy of officers on the frigate violates the Hobbesian view of natural rights and the individual's unconditional sovereignty over himself. Through the importation of a British precedent, in the form of Article XXXII, for example, "the Captain is made legislator, as well as judge and an executive." This strikes White-Jacket as a clear violation of the American constitution's separation of powers (143). In practice the captain is an absolute sovereign, free to make the entire system of law aboard ship. He also has the power to decide what actions of the crew constitute crimes. White-Jacket sees this as a purely arbitrary activity (138).

Melville's reference to Blackstone and to the Law of Nature should in effect undermine the comparatively "artificial" character of historical precedent. This is the intent of White-Jacket's rhetorical outcry against the Articles. He argues that the Law of Nature is a universal law of human rights which has priority to any civil law that might later seek to contradict it. There is a confusion here between right and law which Hobbes was able to avoid, but it serves Melville's rhetorical purposes on this occasion.

On these grounds alone, every American, says White-Jacket, "would be morally justified in resisting the scourge to the uttermost" (145). The invocation of a specifically national sentiment in his outcry against the brutality of the officer class of the Neversink is Melville's ritualistic re-creation of the breaking off of an "American" system of values from the European tradition in which those values have originated. In this fragmentation, hostility to tradition detaches and consolidates itself from the European order of things and names itself "American". White-Jacket's republican leanings provoke his claim that "[a]ny American landsman may hope to become President of the Union--commodore of our squadron of states. And every American sailor should be placed in such a position, that he might freely aspire to command a squadron of frigates" (114).

By this point in American history, this was an increasingly remote ideal. The United States of Melville's day has already produced what Louis Hartz calls a "frustrated aristocracy" whose station in life is an unnatural contrivance of civilization by White-Jacket's reckoning.[30] The class of aspiring officers, the midshipmen, answers the need for this aristocracy in a state committed to the authority of historical precedence. Melville is quick to cite the weaknesses in both the system as a whole and the candidates for promotion within it. He appeals to the democratic sensibility of his readers:

That the king, in the eye of the law, can do no wrong, is the well-known fiction of despotic states; but it has remained for the navies of the Constitutional Monarchies and Republics to magnify this fiction, by indirectly extending to it all the quarter-deck subordinates of an armed ship's chief magistrate (217).

Melville now addresses a rule of law and precedence which is out of control. It now appears to him that this fiction of the sovereign as immune from his own law has distorted the principles of the democratic state.

The abuses of naval authority Melville documents are finally abuses of history. To make the connection between the particular concerns of the common sailor on his frigate and the philosophical implications of an individual placing his natural rights before the State, Melville jumps from the laws of the Navy to the laws of the Nation. Both are tyrannical in their operation. What captures Melville's attention, however, is that the laws of his nation are the accomplices of a repressive, corrupted history. The allegorical form of White-Jacket is the medium of this analogy. White-Jacket's rhetoric of course already exists. It merely requires restatement by a new generation of spokesmen:

But in many things we Americans are driven to a rejection of the maxims of the Past, seeing that, ere long, the van of nations must, of right, belong to ourselves. There are occasions when it is for America to make precedents, and to obey them. We should, if possible, prove a teacher of posterity, instead of being a pupil of by-gone generations. More shall come after us than have gone before; the world is not yet middle-aged (150).

In this declaration of independence Melville voices the need for the American man to command his own destiny and to do so as a self-reliant agent. But in this respect, he requires the complicity of history and a culture which will respond to his aspirations. Only the advent of a flexible and easily interpreted typology can accommodate the man of ahistorical natural right within the structures of history. For if precedent is to be Americanized, history must reveal previous moments of natural liberty:

Escaped from the house of bondage, Israel of old did not follow after the ways of the Egyptians. [31] To her was given an express dispensation; to her were given new things under the sun. And we Americans are the peculiar, chosen people--the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world. Seventy years ago we escaped the thrall; and besides our first birth-right--embracing one continent of earth--God has given to us, for future inheritance, the broad domains of the political pagans, that shall yet lie down under the shade of our ark, without bloody hands being lifted (150-151).

Liberated from a "house of bondage" the American people are given the mandate to reshape the domains of "political pagans" according to democratic virtues. History has thus provided for the novelty of ahistorical model states through divine intervention, "an express dispensation" from the course of history.

When history becomes typology and thus man historical in character within that typology, the problems for the American of realizing himself inside this moralized space--

the problems of being and of self -- combine in the act of "being American". This is what enables Melville to assert without fear of contradiction that "the Past is dead, and has no resurrection" on the one hand, and yet still appeal to the destiny of the Republic on the other. To establish a typology of the American national experience is to deny the infringement of the artifice of the particular version of Old World history. That version of history is the legalistic conception of precedence, an understanding of tradition as a body of institutions and customs to which the sovereign self is forced to submit. Of course that history is in reality not denied but only broken off from its European continuum and entered into as world unto itself, "a piece of terra firma broken off from the main." [32]

In Louis Hartz's terms, we might say that Melville in his floating city, divorced from (European) civilization, achieves a "shattering of the time categories of Europe, [a] Hegelian-like revolution in historical perspective [which] goes far to explain one of the enduring secrets of the American character: a capacity to combine rock-ribbed traditionalism with high inventiveness, ancestor worship with ardent optimism." [33] White-Jacket's call for an American messiah (151) confirms Hartz's suspicion that early American thought espouses an "Hebraic separatism" rather than the universalist version of Christianity. [34] Another way of putting this is Coleman's: the Hobbesian strain of

American constitutional thought does not flatter the individualism of the Protestant commercial class: it merely calls it what it is--self-interest vested in the sovereignty of the self, not in the traditional or idealized office of authority. [35]

The separateness of the self defines the Neversink's hermeticism in terms of both the self-defining United States and the sovereign selfhood of the citizen. It is as much a Hegelian new world as the mythological region of Mardi was. But in White-Jacket Melville is working within the limitations of American political and social realities, and also within the narrow margins of allegory which as a literary mode allows him to work through the wrinkles of American society in a concrete and topical manner. The American typology that emerges from the allegory of the Neversink is consequently a much lower order of transcendence than are the myths that Melville invented in the earlier novel. Here is the suitable birth-place for the American messiah.

The transition of Melville's prose strategy from the documentation of precedent to the declaration of typological destiny of the United States--(literally, the U.S.S. United States of Melville's personal experience) produces a Romantic hero with Mosaic wisdom. In the liminality created between the natural man of innate freedom and the Hobbesian

"artificial man" of the cultural Leviathan emerges Jack Chase. He is a patchwork construction built from the political-philosophical fragments available to Melville in the American world. Pressed into the service of the wide and divergent needs of the American revolutionary version of human nature, Jack Chase reflects the liminality inherent in the Neversink's paradoxical notions of history and its American ideology of fragmentation. Chase is certainly not a victim of a frustrated aristocracy. But he is a victim of a frustrated cultural narcissism which strains for the perfection of man. As a typological figure Chase struggles within the hermetic domain of American suigeneris individualism to reclaim what is assumed to be universal and antecedent to the European corruption of human nature. We are told early in the novel that Jack Chase has abandoned ship not from self-interest but

from a higher and nobler, 'nay glorious motive. Though bowing to naval discipline afloat; yet ashore he was a stickler for the Rights of Man, and the liberties of the world. He went to draw a partisan blade in the civil commotions in Peru; and befriend, heart and soul, what he deemed the cause of the Right (17).

A Briton like that American patriot who wrote The Rights of Man, Jack Chase straddles the contrary American aspirations to national self-identity. For he is an "oracle" capable of tapping into the history of civilization variously as a student of Byron, Scott, and Camoens, as a

speaker of numerous languages, and in being a "whole phalanx" unto himself (14). In all these traits, he is a testament to the eclectic European heritage underlying the American idea. And yet, his virtue is consolidated in the posture of a lone hero and is focussed in the iconic "Fourth of July Theatrical", in which he appears as "THE TRUE YANKEE SAILOR" (92), "with true quarter-deck grace and self-possession." Significantly, the Theatrical dramatizes the rescue by Percy Royal-Mast of "fifteen oppressed sailors from the watch house" (94). The effect of this performance is the all too fleeting leveling of officer and common sailor. This egalitarian interlude gives way to only "the temporary rupture of the ship's stern discipline" (95). In terms of the allegory of the ship of American state, this rupture is also a ritualized social drama commemorating that earlier break of these states from the European world. [37]

Chase's role as revolutionary hero is the high point of Melville's allegory. In fact true to the figure he cuts, Jack Chase promises, however briefly, to lift Melville from the imaginative mode of allegory into the greater sophistication of myth. The Fourth of July Theatrical, if it could have become something more than the temporary respite from the oppressive conditions of naval life, could have attained a status of "image". [38] It could have become an existential region of the renovated American self. White-Jacket could have inhabited the mythos of liberty and

"self-possession", a territory which might have given him a personal autonomy of cultural significance. For what is the true yankee sailor but a remade cultural icon which commemorates a pre-European condition of social virtue? The almost mythical status of Jack Chase allows Melville to conjecture the widest potential for man, despite the fact that such potential is "hooped in" by the American reality.

The typology represented in the heroic figure of Jack Chase cannot easily escape the limitations of the fact-base of history. Where history cannot be given over to the harmonious unities in illo tempore it can be rectified in part by the actions of a messiah who fulfills the typology for his own epoch. The allegory of the Neversink therefore does what it can with history. In his depiction of the historical origins, dilemmas, and limits of American polity, Melville puts into practice Henry Steele Commager's maxim that the "philosophy" of history has always been closely linked with the uses of history." [36] Melville's creation of allegorical interpretation of history shifts his discussion from Burkean precedence to concerns deriving from Thomas Paine's version of the American condition, from the "unchangeable constancy" of the aged empires of the Old World to the "infant colonies" of the New World.

What Jack Chase cannot do within the limits of his personality, his alter-ego Mad Jack can; his countermanding

of the captain's order when the Neversink rounds the Cape in a storm both saves the ship and prompts White-Jacket to consider by what right those in command come by and maintain their authority. Compared to the wild actions of Mad Jack, Jack Chase appears as he really is, a representation of a moderate Hobbesian sovereignty which does not destroy the social order but only re-contracts it. The liberation he comes to represent is not as unrestrained as the sentiment expressed in the Theatrical might initially indicate. It has a function within the political culture of the Neversink. Jack Chase's brand of sovereignty, rather than being a seed of revolution, is a concrete commodity of self-interest that can be paid out in exchange for the benefits of civil society. He never gives up his sovereignty entirely, nor his right to advance it; he never relinquishes his cultivated reputation as "a little bit of a dictator" (15). Even though his "whole demeanor was in strong contrast to that of one the Captains of the foretop", he is still, first and foremost, a "gentleman" (14). The difference between Chase and the officer class is not that between civilization's oppressive authority and the individual man in his natural state, but rather between arbitrary despotism and the contractual retention of the individual's rights as a kind of reserve to be tapped when the interests of the self have been jeopardized by the civil authority.

In the final analysis, Jack Chase possesses a mobility that Melville bestows upon all his rover heroes. Yet unlike those later characters--Ahab, Ishmael, Pierre--Chase is burdened by a political innocence that goes unchallenged by the oppressive rigidities of life on the Neversink. In Typee and Omoo such spirited rovers are sacred. So is Chase--as sacred as a European gentleman in his new found America can be. He is a curious balance between the charmed wanderers among the Polynesian islands and those later exiles who have been touched by God in their isolation.

The same cannot be said of White-Jacket. His freedom is, by contrast, less heroic and less comfortable. His mobility around the factions of the Neversink's crew is a curse of exile imposed not by God or Fate--White-Jacket denies the existence of Fate (320-321)--but from the social order. The oppressive restrictions of Melville's socio-political allegory, and by extension, the limits of the mythic impulse in the figure of Jack Chase, are manifest in the kind of exile Melville bestows upon his narrator. There is no curse in the jacket his protagonist wears. Melville assures us of that. Nonetheless the isolation White-Jacket experiences on the ship can never been sacralized as Chase's liberty is. Neither has White-Jacket the mystical power characteristic of an "omoo". Consequently he has no protection from the isolation imposed on him when the "people" of the Neversink exile him. In this regard, White-Jacket represents the dark

side of the sovereignty of self-interest, the same sovereignty that elevates Jack Chase. Ironically, far from having a charmed mobility, White-Jacket earns his loner status because the crew think the jacket is an evil omen, a source of bad luck. The selfhood White-Jacket has turns out to be a hollow centre. He has a sort of negative presence within the social community of the Neversink. His natural rights remain undefined; in no way does he participate actively in the social world of the crew. And yet, as the narrator, he focuses his experiences into a coherent body of information. His ambiguous social position veils an epistemological ambiguity. Is the self finally self-generated from an interior locus of consciousness or is it merely an imprint of empirical data and social conditions? The Hobbesian model of political sovereignty would suggest that there is innate centre of the self; the premise of the natural liberty of the individual depends on this being so.

In the context of the American ship of state, White-Jacket's ambiguous selfhood has political as well as metaphysical implications. Is natural liberty in fact "natural", innate, and individual, or is it an expedient construction of society, necessary in the competition among various interest groups. The fact that White-Jacket could be internally exiled aboard the ship suggests that the latter case is the true one, that within these conditions the "natural" liberty of individuals is easily subordinated

to personal aims of factions in the political culture. Underlying this reality is the pragmatic assertion and manipulation of Hobbes' notion of sovereignty. If no innate authority can be legitimately vested in the offices of command, power and influence will emanate from those individuals most skillful in their use.

White-Jacket's growing unpopularity with his shipmates attests to the fickle opinions of the common man. He is caught between the tyranny of office and the ruthless pragmatism of the "people" of the Neversink's crew. On the one hand, he is too much an individual, too strong a sovereign self. The uniqueness of his own jacket, a product of self-creation, threatens to make him too readily distinguishable from his brothers. As a result, a crisis of competing sovereignties ensues, and White-Jacket is now a victim of the imprinting of external reality. On the other hand, then, the whiteness of his tabula rasa jacket renders him, like the great White Whale, a blank slate onto which any prejudice can be projected. Mistaken for a ghost in the rigging when he is aloft, he immediately asks for and is denied paint to darken the coat (78). He becomes unpopular with the black cook because of the "disagreeableness of a perpetually damp garment in the mess, especially when that garment was white." His departure from one mess group and the open-armed acceptance by another whose members are "a glorious set of fellows" (62) may well be a disclosure of

White-Jacket's latent Whigishness. But it may also be Melville's ironic comment on a sovereign self who possesses little in the way of innate selfhood and, in the end, even less sovereignty. If this is the case, the individual bereft of innate self-interest falls upon the social, racial, and political conditions in America.

One need not go so far as to align Melville's view with the aristocratic manifesto of James Fenimore Cooper in the face of White-Jacket's clear rationalizations concerning the nature of the "people": "On board of most men-of-war there is a set of sly, knavish foxes among the crew, destitute of every principle of honor, and on par with Irish informers. In man-of-war parlance, they come under the denomination of fancy-men and white mice. They are called fancy-men, because, from their zeal in craftily reporting offenders, they are presumed to be regarded with high favor by some of the officers" (307). By the same token, White-Jacket will shift allegiances according to personal need, not high-flown principle. About to be black-balled by the assembled mess-group, he resorts defensively to the language of offended decorum: "Such a want of tact and delicacy! Common propriety suggested that a point-blank intimation of that nature should be conveyed in a private interview; or better still, by note. I immediately rose, tucked my jacket about me, bowed, and departed" (62). The earnest foppishness of White-Jacket in this instance recalls Redburn's naive

assumption that all he need do is dress respectably in his hunting jacket and knock on the captain's door to merit a private audience. The pretense of wounded dignity is a poor substitute for an internal resourcefulness and motivating self-interest.

Beyond the temperamental delusions of Melville's protagonist lies a world of the "people" whose Jeffersonian theory and mythos remains fully intact. The Neversink sails on, despite the fact that it contains "a social condition which is the precise reverse of what any Christian could desire" (375). Certain operative realities survive the decay of idealism. The impact of Melville's allegory of civil society derives from its exposure of the latent Hobbesian presupposition buried in this model of democracy. Even a politically conservative viewpoint, given that White-Jacket is motivated by one, cannot sufficiently support an individual devoid of a self and self-interest who must negotiate a path through the thickets of personal will and competitiveness. The claim that White-Jacket makes repeatedly is that the whiteness of the jacket is the secret object of his enemies' scorn. If we take whiteness to be blankness, there may be some truth in this. Suddenly this civilized world of statecraft, for him, becomes filled with cannibals intent upon devouring their weaker compatriots. White-Jacket's various laments are valid perhaps, but they may be misdirected, for he may not be entirely innocent

himself. It may be true that, aside from the cook's prejudices, the mess crew has no reason to react to the mere whiteness of the coat; and Priming's refusal to believe that White-Jacket has no role in Baldy's demise does not merit his harried claim that "thou hast much to answer for, jacket!" (334). Absent from the Neversink's crew is a protean Starbuck who might chastize White-Jacket for investing an innocent object with sinister designs.

It may be more valid, though, to suggest that White-Jacket is guilty of a sin of omission. In an ironic twist of events, he is victimized by his own notion that

all events are mixed in a fusion indistinguishable. What we call Fate is even, heartless, and impartial; not a friend to kindle bigot flames, nor a philanthropist to espouse the cause of Greece. We may fret, and fight; but the thing called Fate everlastingly sustains an armed neutrality . . .

Each mortal casts his own vote for whom he will to rule the world; I have a voice that helps to shape eternity . . . In two senses, we are precisely what we worship. Ourselves are fate (320-321).

It is the hermetic polity of the Neversink, however, that is in the end that "armed neutrality". White-Jacket himself is an individual who does not possess the selfhood necessary for these projections onto the world that surrounds him. Melville's hero is passively suspended in the web of peculiarly American contradictions: the Burkean orders of precedence, the Painean call for cultural and political separation, and finally the Jeffersonian invocations of the

"people" all conspire to define White-Jacket in his blankness. Hobbesian foundations of self-interest and self-definition may inform White-Jacket's arguments concerning the ambiguous character of American cultural independence. But he does not acknowledge them in practice; he fails to recognize them as the motivation of the competitive struggles among the Neversink's community of individual, sovereign selves,-- the "People". Obsessed with America's retention of the old structures of authority, he is tragically blind to the pragmatic and shifting structures of personal sovereignty among his crewmates while he is among them.

It is no wonder that the only way for him to shed the whiteness, the curse of this tabula rasa, is by plummeting into the sea. In his fall he denies the civil sovereignty of the American polis altogether. In White-Jacket that fall into the ocean is a cathartic immersion into the indefinite background the narrator, in his blankness, so cherishes. It offers him anonymity. It also affords him the perfect vantage point from which to gaze at the frigate, the world of assigned roles, "gliding by like a black [sic] world in the water" (393).

Notes to CHAPTER FIVE

1. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 132.
2. George Sidney Camp, Democracy, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1840), p. 46-47.
3. Leyda, I, p. 316.
4. Redburn, His First Voyage, (eds) Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle, (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1969), p. 65. All further references to the novel are taken from this edition. Page numbers are cited in parentheses in the text.
5. "[A]s Collingwood has pointed out, even the historical conceptions of the Enlightenment were not essentially historical. History was a painted scene on which figures moved, but the conception of man as an essentially historical being was yet to come" (Marjorie Grene, The Knower and the Known, [London: Faber and Faber, 1966], p. 143). The distinction becomes clear in the words of Octavio Paz: "Man, it seems to me, is not in history, he is history" (The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico, [trans] Lysander Kemp, [New York: Grove Press, 1961], p. 24).

6. Frederick Swartwout Cozzens, unsigned review, Knickerbocker, 34 (May 1850), Melville: The Critical Heritage, (ed) Watson G. Branch, (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 235.

7. Unsigned review, John Bull, 2 February 1850, Branch (ed), p. 220.

8. Herman S. Saroni, unsigned review, Saroni's Musical Times, 30 March 1850, Branch (ed), p. 230.

9. Evert Duyckinck, "Mr Melville's White-Jacket," unsigned review, The Literary World, 16 March 1850, Branch (ed), p. 226.

10. Duyckinck, p. 228.

11. Mardi, pp. 367-368.

12. White-Jacket, or The World in a Man-of-War, (eds) Harrsion Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle, (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1970), p. 144. All references to the novel are taken from this edition. Page numbers appear in parentheses in the text.

13. Melville's reference on this occasion to the "All" calls to mind his letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne about two years later (1? June 1851):

In reading some of Goethe's sayings, so worshipped by votaries, I came across this,

"Live in the all." That is to say, your separate identity is but a wretched one, --but get out of yourself, spread and expand, and bring to yourself the tinglings of life that are felt in the flowers and the woods, that are felt in the planets Saturn and Venus, and the Fixed Stars. What nonsense! Here is a fellow with a raging tooth-ache. "My dear boy," Goethe says to him, "you are sorely afflicted with that tooth; but you must live in the all, and then you will be happy" (Letters, pp. 130-131).

As Howard Vincent argues in The Tailoring of Melville's "White-Jacket", (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), this passage "goes far to illuminate Melville's enchanted dreamer passages in his novels" (pp. 77-78). But this conclusion overlooks the nature of those contingencies which are imposed finally on those dreamer characters. In White-Jacket particularly, a cultural displacement undermines the dreamer's reveries. American man's removal from the cosmological realm of existence in the first place necessarily restricts his contemplations.

14. Vincent (pp. 74-75) refers to these images of enclosure as "semi-Homeric." Cf. R.W.B. Lewis, (The American Adam, pp. 140-143), who argues that Melville's reliance on Homer, particularly The Odyssey, was a "trying out" of a traditional poem in a new application. Lewis thus articulates Melville's sensitivity to the fundamental historical displacement of American literary culture.

15. John Locke, The Second Treatise on Civil Government, (ed) J.W. Gough, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1847), pp. 62-63.

16. "The State of Nature is the literary device employed by Hobbes to advance the claims of modern egoism. The device requires the imagining away of constituted authority while retaining, in the mind's eye, the dominant characteristics of the political culture" (Frank M. Coleman, Hobbes and America: Exploring the Constitutional Foundations, [Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977], p. 58). In White-Jacket, Melville has rendered literal phenomena both the "State of Nature" (the natural world beyond the tyrannical bounds of the Neversink) and the tabula rasa (in the form of the protagonist's makeshift coat).

17. Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1955), p. 7.

18. Hartz's portrayal of an American culture built on crucial omissions of Locke's otherwise balanced polarity of social authority and individual interest benefits from a fuller description of American constitutional foundations provided by Frank Coleman. He argues that American politics also conforms to Hobbes' emphasis of individual rights rather than to the Lockean theory of authority vested in political office. (See Hobbes and America, especially chapters 4 and 5).

19. In resorting to Hartz's and Coleman's portraits of American political culture I propose to circumvent what has

become something of a critical impasse of contrary views on Melville's sympathy (or lack of sympathy) with the democratic thought of his time. Traditionally, it has been thought that Melville used the novel to express his democratic idealism. Henry W. Wells concludes, for example, that Melville "is a democrat in that he is a great humanitarian who seeks to ameliorate the hardships of the underprivileged and submerged classes" ("An Unobtrusive Democrat: Herman Melville", South Atlantic Quarterly, 43, [1944], 50). The democratic emphasis on Melville's thought has been restated in William Ellery Sedgewick, Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1944), p. 49, and in Ray B. Brown, Melville's Drive to Humanism, (Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1977), pp. 31, 34.

Later readings of White-Jacket have sought a more qualified understanding of Melville's democratic thought. Larry J. Reynolds ("Antidemocratic Emphasis in White-Jacket", American Literature 48: 1 [March 1976], 13-28) argues that Melville employs the symbol of the jacket, for instance, "not to emphasize White-Jacket's need to become involved with the 'people', as many critics have suggested [Mumford, Anderson], but rather to emphasize White-Jacket's admirable superiority to them" (21). James Duban in Melville's Major Fiction: Politics, Theology, and Imagination, uses reference from the American Whig Review to

illustrate the origins of "the conservative dimension of White-Jacket's world view" (pp. 71-72). Gene Bluestein attributes to Melville the best insights of his age "into the combination of radical and conservative attitudes" ("The Brotherhood of Sinners: Literary Calvinism", The New England Quarterly, 50: 2 [June 1977], 198). While I have more affinity with the conclusions of these later critics, my impression is that Melville is touching on a cultural structure of which he is only superficially conscious. In this respect, he is more indicative of the American condition than he is capable of consciously expressing his own opinion on it.

20. "In 1840 an inconspicuous citizen named George Sidney Camp wrote a small volume which he called Democracy, and which Harper & Brothers thought to express so well the mood of the age that they published it in the Family Library and later brought out a second edition" (Ralph Henry Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought, [New York: The Ronald Press, 1956], p. 13).

21. George Sidney Camp, Democracy, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1840), p. 44.

22. Camp, pp. 42-43.

23. Locke, Second Treatise on Civil Government, (ed) G. W. Cough, p. 48.

24. Camp, p. 48.

25. "Hobbes rejected the cardinal assumptions of classical tradition that rights and duties, the good of the individual and the good of society, are harmonious and coincident. He deprived the sovereign of authority to seek to procure the salvation of the members of society through an ideal pattern of law" (Coleman, p. 59). Alexander Passerin D'Entreves, in his Natural Law, (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1967), (p. 59, makes the same point, quoting from Hobbes himself:

though they speak of this subject, use to confound jus and lex, right and law: yet they ought to be distinguished: because RIGHT consisteth in Liberty to do, or to forbear: whereas LAW determineth, and bindeth to one of them: so that law and right, differ as much, as obligation and liberty (Leviathan, [ed] Oakeshott, Part I, chapter 14, p. 103).

26. Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America, p. 10.

27. "Locke differs from Hobbes in vesting sovereignty in a pattern offices, a representative and hereditary assembly and monarchy, rather than a single office, monarchy" (Coleman, p. 100).

28. Only Melville's tone distinguishes his expression from the popularized version of Camp: "Deriving our origin and our language, from Great Britain; having one common literature, one common religion, and to a great extent, common habits and common laws; deriving a great many of our

political principles, more of our political institutions, and all of our love of liberty, from the old country, we have been slow to discover where our pupilage should have ended, and what bounds the stern dictates of principle should have placed on our filial reverence. We have thus adopted, to a great extent, British politics, with British laws and literature. Thus it has come to pass that, in our politics we are yet tributary to the Old World; that while we have been so original in action, we have been so strangely servile in theory" (Camp, p. 16).

29. Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, Edmund Burke: Selected Writings and Speeches, (ed) Peter J. Stanlis, (New York: Anchor Books, 1963), p. 439.

30. Hartz, p. 8. We should not overlook Melville's own family background, a lineage traceable on both sides back to the American Revolution, but which saw a gradual decay ending in Melville's father financial problems shortly before his death.

31. Melville, in his depiction of America as the New Israel, has imparted to his countrymen the moral imperative of separation which is reminiscent of an earlier generation than that of Andrew Jackson, as Duban suggests (p. 63): From Thomas Paine, Common Sense, The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine, (ed) Philip S. Foner, (New York: The Citadel Press, 1945), p. 23: "'Tis repugnant to reason, to the

universal order of things, to all examples from former ages, to suppose that this continent can long remain subject to an external power. . . . Reconciliation [with Great Britain] is now a fallacious dream; nature has deserted the connection, and art cannot supply her place."

32. One can easily appreciate how this is a cultural imperative, particularly in a new nation in the throes of doubt concerning its own identity. And of course Melville himself was a vocal advocate of an enforced cultural separation. He did, after all, insist (in "Hawthorne and His Mosses", published in The Literary World, August 17 and 24, 1850) that his burgeoning nation should not produce "American Miltons". On 5 August 1850, at the home of Dudley D. Field, Oliver Wendell Holmes "said some of the best things and drew the whole company out by laying down various propositions of the superiority of Englishmen. Melville attacked him vigourously. Hawthorne looked on" (Evert Duyckinck to his wife, 6 August 1850, quoted in Leyda, I, p. 384).

33. Hartz, p. 50.

34. Ibid, p. 36.

35. This "Hebraic separatism" also highlights the individual's separateness in a free society; he is separate in being sovereign over himself. But Melville, like Hobbes,

senses that this separateness was not necessarily a virtue in its own right. "Another reason why Hobbes has been misunderstood as the opponent of liberal democracy is that he did not, like Locke, flatter the self-image of the commercial Protestants" who rose to power in the social and economic revolution early in the reign of Henry VIII (Coleman, p. 65). Or, as A.P. D'Entreves suggests, "Hobbes' political theory is the extreme outcome of rationalism and individualism--as it were the reductio ad absurdum of both" (Natural Law, p. 56). Melville is similarly engaged in what amounts to being a testing of the individualism that lies at the root of American society.

36. Henry Steele Commager, Jefferson, Nationalism, and the Enlightenment (New York: George Brazillier, 1975), p. 125.

37. See Duban, p. 72: "The [American Whig Review] also prescribes something like White-Jacket's nearly sacred homage to Jack Chase: 'What is now needed more than anything, is for the good and great men... [to] place themselves where they belong, at the head of the mases, to guide, teach and save them' ["Ancient Greece," American Whig Review, 7 (March 1848), 296-297]; Responsibility of the Ballot Box; With an Illustration," American Whig Review, 4 (November 1846); 442]."

38. Charles Roberts Anderson concludes that this episode was Melville's invention, as "no record of [the theatricals], official or otherwise, has survived. To dispel any lingering doubt, it may be pointed out that Melville's censorious shipmate, Harrison Robertson, in his copy of White-Jacket opposite this chapter wrote with finality the single word: 'Fiction'" (Melville in the South Seas, p. 399). It is precisely because this interlude is a fiction that we can regard Jack Chase as a mythic figure who is blocked in by the surrounding allegorical impediments, just as he is blocked in by the social contract of civil society. He has, in effect, purchased his place in the political culture with his personal sovereignty.

Chapter 6

ON THE PROCREATION OF COMMONWEALTH II: THE MORAL HIERARCHY OF AMERICA AND MOBY-DICK

The culture of a people, then, is its total equipment of ideas and institutional and conventionalized activities. The ethos of a people is its organized conception of the Ought. The national character of a people, or its personality type, is the kind of human being which, generally speaking, occurs in that society.

-Robert Redfield, The Primitive World and Its Transformations. [1].

White-Jacket and Moby-Dick, while clearly dissimilar in terms of their overall quality and sophistication as literary works, are both concerned with the nature of man in the domains of cultural community. The relationship between a moral order and civilization is inherent in this concern. The perspectives from which these novels deal with this relationship is different. White-Jacket depicts a world which is politically and socially artificial. This artificiality assumes the form of the United States of America. The Neversink is an artificial social construct primarily because it is removed from the context of a natural setting. Moby-Dick depicts a social order whose interpenetration with Nature has been restored. The Pequod

has appropriated within its space that natural world from which the Neversink was hermetically sealed.

Both the Pequod and the Neversink are ships of state. Each relates American society to a different conception of history. In White-Jacket, the ship of American state is a static portrait of the separation of the United States from the European world. It is a place which consciously denies historical continuity in the Declaration of Independence. Even with this rupture in Western culture, America is also viewed as a site for the renovation of human nature in a typological fulfilment of history. Within this structure of meaning Israel and America become phases, events, of separation contained in a new vision of history. This paradox in effect denies history (understood as precedence) in the assertion of an American typology of revolution and autonomy (history understood as a dynamic of utopian intention). White-Jacket is Melville's sifting through of the logic and the validity of Enlightenment America's practice of the ideas of Burke, Locke, and even Hobbes, the bricolage constituting the operative realities of America's political culture. It is Melville's test-case of the laws of good commonwealth. Like the United States itself, White-Jacket is a critique of the old orders of tyranny, voiced in a language of checks and balances, of contract and abuses. It portrays the artifice of democratic values, the self-sufficiency of Enlightenment versions of human community.

In Moby-Dick Melville becomes interested in a beginning other than that of the United States at the end of the eighteenth century. Now he goes back to the beginning of history itself, to a moment of primordial, sacred consciousness when the natural and the human are close with the intimacy of a first Creation. Melville returns to the grounds of origin, and to myth as the imagination of origin. Moby-Dick therefore evidences more than Melville's change in subject matter, more than a change from his account of life on a naval vessel to an epic adventure based on his knowledge of the whaling industry. The Pequod sails into those waters where Taji came upon the mythical islands of the Mardian archipelago. This is a region Melville occupied imaginatively before he embarked on the allegory of the modern world, a region where he seeks to discover the first prints of Creation. Melville seeks in Moby-Dick to discover the origins of civilization which provide the basis for the moral shape of his own America. America in this context, however, is a notion more sophisticated than the visible structure of polity conveyed in the very words "United States". By "America" I mean something else: the mythic conception of man transcendentalized into a primordial frontier. In this place man is not governed by the contingencies of political culture. For the Melville of 1850-1851 the frontier is the site of that myth and that metaphysical reflection he had developed a sensitivity for in the aftermath of the shattering of the Mardian heavens.

The Pequod is the symbolic register of this mythic American frontier. It is a ship of state, representative of a human community. But it is one that has been "radicalized", defined in terms of the primordial roots of human civilization the artifacts of which Melville had experienced himself in various forms. When he constructs the world of the Pequod, Melville gathers together bits and pieces from everywhere and every moment in human history. The different kinds of bricolage comprising the Pequod come from the natural world, the pre-civilized world, and from Melville's own America. The dead indefinite world of Nature which lay outside the massive hull of the Neversink has come alive in Moby-Dick. No longer a purely physical Nature, the Pacific world of the Pequod has been animated by Western man's cultural consciousness. This frontier is no Hobbesian void. Ishmaeleen man takes up residence in a crowded landscape of primal memories, trepidation, mythical suggestion of prior harmony, and orders of civil and divine powers.

Release into the swirling waters of Ocean was for White-Jacket a fall from the artifice of Enlightenment history. The difference between the inside and the outside of the Neversink is that between day and night, between whiteness and blackness, between the artifice of the Leviathan commonwealth and the indefiniteness of Nature outside it. Melville never draws the line between the inside and the

outside so heavily in Moby-Dick. Pip's fall into the same waters is of an entirely different imaginative scale: "He saw God's foot upon the treadle of the loom, and spoke it; and therefore his shipmates called him mad." [2] The American world of the Pequod cannot be understood as a place hermetically sealed off from a voided wilderness because Melville characterizes man's advance into the natural world of the sea as an entry into a bountiful primal landscape. Columbus, declares Ishmael, "sailed over numberless worlds to discover his one superficial Western one" (235).

The human and cultural bricolage occupying Melville's mythic frontier stands in an ambiguous relation to the natural world. The outer world of "Nature" has been absorbed into the civilization of the Pequod. It has been transformed into the varied forms of cultural mediation. Moby-Dick is a compendium of these forms ranging from the primitive to the technological, from Polynesian, African, Amerindian, Quaker cultures. It deals with the idols, beliefs, fears, myths, totems and taboos of a whole history of cultural mediation.

Along with the varied forms of cultural mediation of nature the Pequod also houses varied structures of social order. The Renaissance world of Shakespeare, emerging in Ahab, fascinated Melville for reasons other than the genius of Shakespeare himself. It provided him with a version of

moral and social hierarchy quite distinct from the Jeffersonian model of measured, rational democracy. Melville saw and exploited the Elizabethan tragedy's potential for subverting of civil order to expose man to the impulses of anarchy and absolute authority. Sovereignty ceases to be a genteel matter in this subversion. It is no longer a feature of an exclusively political culture. It now emerges as a first principle of the human in Creation.

From a biographical perspective, the Pequod is a cultural surround into which Melville has placed the accumulated personal bricolage of his own experiences as a traveller and an author he had recorded from Typee to White-Jacket. Moby-Dick, in this regard, is the aesthetic culmination of these previous works. Melville compresses into it an amazing host of facts and a great variety of more diffuse images. Many of these are fragments of earlier Melville experiences, actual and fictional. The Polynesian world of an earlier Melville survives in the person of Queequeg and in the anecdotal references to South Seas belief and custom. But the novel also retrieves from the Melville of Mardian wanderings the transcendental imperatives inherent in the speculations of individual "mast-headers" and entire mast-header cultures such as ancient Egypt. (Chapter 35, "The Mast-Head"). Moby-Dick revisits the political and social world of the Neversink, as well, when Ishmael describes the orders of command aboard the Pequod. Officers and common

sailors are easily distinguished at sea; the former live aft and the latter live forward (128). In terms of aesthetic, Melville's whaling novel is a survey of the worlds of his earlier accounts of fact and fiction. In the process of Ishmael's narrative, the concreteness of fact takes on the glow of image.

As separate structures of bricolage these artifacts of meaning are a cataloguer's nightmare. But Melville is more than just a cataloguer in Moby-Dick. He is a bricoleur. In this role he imposes upon himself the task of co-ordinating these disparate pieces of information in one text. [3] Melville builds a coherent structure out of these divergent fragments by placing Nature and Culture at opposite extremes of a single continuum of American consciousness. Moby-Dick is a cosmic retrospective glance by modern America, looking back to the Creation. Rather than moving up from Eden, American man moves in the reverse direction back beyond the beginnings of the human story, from

--the civilized and the morally circumscribable
Pegud, maniacally conscious of itself and of
"the great God absolute! The center and
circumference of all democracy!" (104),

back to

--the primitive, the primal kinship of "A Squeeze of the Hand" (Chapter 94), of Queequeg, a "George Washington cannibalistically developed" (52), and finally,

back to

--the natural, the pre-civilized, the "half-formed foetal suggestions of supernatural agencies" (156).

In Moby-Dick the civilized and "primitive" phases of this evolution are made morally cohesive in an evolving history in the record of the traces of one civilization overlapping those of another. Melville's imagination engages this historical process with an acute awareness of the synthetic potential of imperial power and the endurance of earlier cultural forms. In its most concrete terms, Melville's novel depicts on a mythic scale what Robert Redfield calls a "period of syncretism":

Expanding civilizations have come into contact with one another, and elements of belief have been learned by the people of one civilization from those of another. But they have entered without that violence, deracination, or sweeping missionary effort which breaks down a moral order almost entirely. The foreign elements have been introduced slowly enough, or locally enough, so that within not many generations they have been incorporated into the tradition generally prevailing in the community. [4]

The Pequod is a community in which the traces of cultural contact testify to the survival of earlier cultures (Polynesian, African, Amerindian) within the American culture of the Nantucket whale fishery. While there is never any doubt that the Americans are in command aboard the Pequod, the natives retain their "primitive" character.

Moby-Dick also reaches back to a time before the emergence of those concrete structures of civilization. The presence on the Pequod of the primitive orders of culture gives Melville access to the mythic orders belonging to a human community in Nature, not set against it. The further

leap back into the natural order, an existence before the "primitive" existence of man, gives access to the phenomenal world. As Paul de Man says of Proust, Melville "turns toward the past in the hope of finding there a firm and natural link between himself and the world." [5] In Moby-Dick Nature is the base level of man's stratified history in the world. The movement from the structures of Quaker America back to the natural order involves a kind of "undoing" of history in the phenomenal ever-present of the Pequod world.

This retrospective deconstruction is fraught with moral urgency. Melville wants none of this to drift out of his encyclopaedic field of vision. He cannot afford to let his careful moral evolution recede into the undifferentiation and blind unknowing that baffled Tommo in the Marquesas. He cannot permit himself to lose the thread of primordial history in the rubble of the allegorical present as he did in Mardi. The moral focus he maintains on this panorama of American man in the natural and cultivated worlds is one way of accounting for man's primordial breaking away from the harmony of the universe. The story of the tower of Babel was another. But short of being able to reconcile the human with the elemental in the bulding of one vast pyramid rising out of the "uncivilized seas" (155) under the Eye of God, a kind of Ahabian tower of Yankee ingenuity, Melville resorts to an expansive, subversive fiction. He builds with words-- as Anatole France said of Rabelais--like children piling

pebbles into heaps. Moby-Dick is one such verbal pyramid, a monument comprised of the sediment of historiographic versions of human experience, built on a shifting foundation of unrestrained violent human desire, primitive energy, the intentions of Jehovah in his universe. This is Melville as cultural bricoleur, guided by fierce moral intention back to the place and the moment in time when the gods receded from history.

Moby-Dick is a "wicked book", as Melville confessed to Hawthorne.[6] It is a raid on the icons and beliefs of sacred history, a consolidation of what was dispersed at Babel by divine fiat. Moby-Dick is then a counter-narrative of creation renegotiating the linguistic and cultural fragmentation of Babel. Ishmael as narrator cannot resist transforming the Pequod into an historical place--a place knowing and making history. Ahab by contrast ventures into the absences between Ishmael's collected artifacts. He enters the voided Hobbesian frontier his own America purports to inhabit, a region he, like Tommo in Polynesia, believes to be devoid of history and transcendental reality. The respective selves that Ishmael and Ahab represent are complex constructions, and they merit separate discussion in the next chapter. For the balance of this chapter, I want to explore the Pequod as a cultural environment these selves inhabit. My present concern is with the Pequod herself, a polis overwhelmed by a titanic wave of Melville's symbolic imaginings.

The Pequod is a field of intention which becomes visible through the presence of its surrounding environment. As such it can be defined only by the "outer" world of ocean into which it sails. That world is absorbed into the domain of intention: the historical distinctiveness of the civilized, the pre-civilized, and the natural order of the primordial world now co-exist in the form of phenomenal "present things" immediate to the Pequod.

* * *

Moby-Dick does not, however, begin with this phenomenal field of conflated history. Initially, the Pequod brings into focus two important features of the America of Melville's time: technology and cultural typology. Moby-Dick begins with a claimed fidelity to the facts of the American whale fishery. As Charles Olson advises, "Don't think whaling was any different from any other American industry. The first men in it, the leaders, explorers, were WORKERS." [7] Melville realizes from the start of the Pequod's quest that "it was not the will to be free but the will to overcome nature that lies at the bottom of [Americans] as individuals and as a people." [8] This is only partly true of Moby-Dick, and not at all true of White-Jacket. Nature was banished from the Neversink the maintenance of social order was all. In Moby-Dick the relation of man to nature becomes important, especially at the point where culture meets, in the appropriating centre

of the human mind, the natural. This is perhaps the greatest transformation in which man is involved. Nature, by an act of mind, is transformed into consciousness.

The world of Nature was excluded from White-Jacket as a kind of political discourse about the United States. Initially in Moby-Dick Melville seems to be continuing this focus on the politics and the civil orders of his own country. At first glance, the Pequod is a balanced hierarchy of authority much like the Neversink. It has certain cultural and racial symmetries which hold it on an even keel of polity and superficial civility:

headsmen

Starbuck
Stubb
Flask

harpooners

Queequeg (Polynesian)
Tashtego (Amerindian)
Daggoo (black African)

The headsmen are very much products of the occidental world: Starbuck, a "revivified Egyptian" (103); Stubb, whose tobacco smoke blows from his various pipes as a disinfecting agent, cleansing the air of a host of human maladies; and Flask, "very pugnacious concerning whales" (106). It is not the politics of the United States, in the form of power and expropriation, that now interests Melville. It is the pieties of appropriation, especially those that would transform the natural into the human, that assumes priority in Moby-Dick. This act of appropriation is inherent in human consciousness; it is a great drama of transformation that primitive man was more elegantly and urgently aware of than his civilized counterpart.

The Pequod is entrusted to the spirit of Quaker Nantucket America in ways more subtle than Melville's portraits of Yankee enterprise initially suggest. The whaling ship is also the manifestation of an early American confrontation between the self and the natural world. At the point of contact, the individual withdraws, seeking refuge from Nature. Father Mapple's pulpit, "an impregnable little Quebec", is an emblem of this separateness: "by that act of physical isolation, he signifies his spiritual withdrawal for the time; from all outward worldly ties and connexions" (43). The important word here is "outward"; the Pequod's Quakers live in a morally self-contained crust of the world, faithful to a God outside Nature not within it. The allegiance of these men to this God precludes a sympathetic attitude toward the natural world. Melville's presentation of this moral dismissal of Nature is consistent with historical fact. In 1698 Thomas Chalkley, a Quaker minister, visited the island of Nantucket to organize meetings among the residents. He noted in his journal the spiritual fervour of one citizen in particular: "At this time a friend was convinced whose name was Starbuck, who became very serviceable, and lived and died an eminent minister of Christ, on that island." [9]

His namesake aboard the Pequod will engage Nature in such a way to render it serviceable, an object of technological utility. Starbuck's presence goes far to explain the roots

of the separation of ethics from the material realm of present things pervading the American command of the Pegud. The utility of nature and the distant Christian God dwelling beyond the horizons of man-in-nature are related notions. It is to these combined origins of American polity that Ishmael pays tribute when he declares that

this august dignity I treat of, is not the dignity of kings in robes, but abounding dignity of which has no robed investiture. Thou shalt see it in the arm which wields a pick or drives a spike; that democratic dignity which, on all hands, radiates without end from God; Himself! The great God absolute! The centre and circumference of all democracy! His omnipresence, our divine equality! (104).

Ishmael's proclamation fuses two components of American belief: every man traces his "democratic dignity" back to a genesis in God. There is no room here for the natural world of pure, brute energy. It has in a sense been disenfranchised. The fusion of the "democratic dignity" of man and the divine order results in a pragmatic yet abstract inwardness of the individual set over and against that natural world from which man is removed. Starbuck puts it best: "I am here in this critical ocean to kill whales for my living, and not to be killed by them for theirs" (104). This is indeed a "critical ocean" in which critical transcendence forecloses on the oceanic transcendence of Nature.

Pressed into the economics of whaling, Starbuck sees in Nature a tissue of "superstitions" which have neither moral

nor metaphysical meaning. For Starbuck, who is eventually consumed by a utilitarian brand of Christian piety, business excludes the "holy". There is a territory of the unsanctified which one may exploit, which is not part of an I-Thou pact. Nature is, quite literally, in Starbuck's world, despirited. This response is emblematic of Starbuck's social hermeticism "which in some organizations seems . . . to spring, somehow from intelligence than from ignorance" (103). Starbuck wears his Quaker soul on his sleeve as White-Jacket wore his Lockean empiricism over the blank surface of his make-shift coat.

Against the conquerable moral void of natural resource — this spiritualized Quaker democracy of industry and production becomes differentiated into discrete individuals. At the same time, the natural world begins to appear undemocratic, despirited, sacrilegious. The contrary opinions of Ahab and Starbuck highlight the brewing conflict. Ahab's presumptions of a secret intention in Nature, behind its "pasteboard masks", not only threaten to jeopardize the enterprise of hunting for whales. "To be enraged with a dumb thing" is also "blasphemy" (144) from Starbuck's enclosed perspective.

The dualism of man's "spirited" beliefs and of nature's despirited moral void fortifies the Pequod for her holy war against the material world. The Nantucketers who ship aboard her retain

in an uncommon measure the peculiarities of the Quaker, only variously and anomalously modified by things altogether alien and heterogeneous. For some of the same Quakers are the most sanguinary of all sailors and whale-hunters. They are fighting Quakers; they are Quakers with a vengeance.

These fighting Quakers, epitomized by the Pequod's commander, are "formed for noble tragedies" and are "modified by individual circumstances" (71); cast into the moulds of a Starbuck and an Ahab. Put another way, these vengeful Quakers are thrown into high relief by a way of looking at the world which emphasizes them as separate sovereign selves who stand defiantly against Nature. Melville's Quakers hate that unbroken flow of natural space. They are "Isolatoos" who are "federated along one keel" (108), consolidated under the charge to name the dead things of the world, to sort, identify, and utilize them. These fighting Quakers are a civilized "mighty pageant creature", set against "nature's sweet and savage impressions" (71). Their mandate is Christian. Their method is prescriptive.

These Quakers are American versions of the Marquesans whom Melville could not figure out years before. Despite their seafaring missions, they actually flee to the centre of the democratic world of individual subjects. They "try out" from the inanimate flesh of the world a moral order in the "psychosis for security". [10] The drama of the Pequod entails the debt of man to the natural world for its preservation of the unique individuation of man. The debt

is paid by these Quakers, as it was by the Typees, in totem, taboo, and sacrifice without their conscious awareness that it is the payment of a debt. Nonetheless the forces of Nature must be appeased. Goethe's version of the guarded relationship man must maintain with Nature attracted Melville's interest in the early stages of his writing of Moby-Dick: "When one enters once into the world, and gives way to it, it is necessary to be very cautious, lest one should be carried away; not to say, driven mad by it." [11] The civilization of which both Nantucket and the Pequod are emblems in Moby-Dick is the repository for the whole history of cultural appeasements of Nature. It contains the legacy of agitation and trauma caused by this contact with the Outside.

The Quaker authority of the Pequod is instituted and maintained by an unspoken covenant of Hobbesian artifice. It is a compact defensively concluded, and pugnaciously upheld in the Pequod's voyage into the natural world that it both needs and hates. Yet something primitive and primordial about this distorted ship of state predicts the final breakdown of the commonwealth of difference and individuation. She is a "cannibal of a craft, tricking herself forth in the chased bones of her enemies" (67). Indeed it is is a culturally rooted cannibalism--what D. H. Lawrence called "the maniacal fanaticism of our white mental consciousness" [12] --that suggests in Flask, more

innocently, the belief that "the great Leviathans had personally and hereditarily affronted him" (106). His pugnacity differs only in degree from Stubb's more "easy and careless" perspective. He presides "over his whale-boat as if the most deadly encounter were but a dinner, and his crew all invited guests" (105). Though an artificial one, the ship is a Leviathan very much like the creature she hunts. Melville read and clearly committed to Moby-Dick Sir William Davenant's assertion that "God ordain'd not huge Empires as proportionable to the Bodies, but to the Mindes of Men; and the Mindes of Men are more monstrous, and require more space for agitation and the hunting of others, than the Bodies of Whales." [13]

2.

The fact that Melville sees "the Pequod as a cannibal craft undercuts the moral separatism of its Quaker commanders. These noble personages constitute, however, only the upper half of the social order of the Pequod. They are the expressions of an exclusively mercantile and documentary part of Melville's account of the whale fishery. The ship, like the historical Nantucket from which she sails, is also faithful to several important attributes of an American society undergoing a rapid change in its homogeneous and hermetic character. From Obed Macy, Melville learned that "the number of vessels increasing very fast, rendered it sometimes difficult to procure, on the island [of

Nantucket], enough men to navigate them. It therefore became necessary to resort to the continent for a considerable portion of each crew, whence there were brought some Indians and a great number of negroes." Add to this the fact that the Revolution had put new strains on the community. Even with the subsequent enjoyment of peace in the early years of the new century,

the effect of the [Revolutionary] war on the manners and customs of the inhabitants yet remained. Coming from various parts of the world where they had been deemed as prisoners, or whither they had wandered as exiles from their native home, many had brought with them the fashions and the morals of other nations. The change was observable in their dress and mode of living: it added materially to their expenses, and sometimes led to permanent injury. The great success in whaling, though it pretty generally over-balanced the increased expenses in living, had no tendency to lessen the immoralities which were introduced into the society. [14]

The influx of new citizens and the return of the old ones with new ideas and customs transformed Nantucket into a second New World. In Moby-Dick Melville documents the effects of these pressures from the Outside on the Quaker landscape: "in New Bedford actual cannibals stand chatting at street corners outright; many of whom yet carry on their bones unholy flesh" (37).

This transformed America could not have been strange to Melville. He depicts in the collection of Isolatoes from Nantucket a process of acculturation reminiscent of Tahiti. The same problems exist here as in the Pacific. Patchwork

identities emerge from out of the fragments of the shattered heavens of America. These fragments constitute the bricolage that decorates the hull of the Pequod: "She was apparelled like any barbaric Ethiopian emperor, his neck heavy with pendants of polished ivory. She was a thing of trophies All round, her unpanelled, open bulwarks were garnished like one continuous jaw, with the sharp teeth of the sperm whale" (67). Her harpooners testify to the interpenetration of the primitive and the morally homogeneous American world. In one sense, then, Melville is aware of the similarity between his own America and the outer bounds of Western empire he had visited earlier.

The presence of these "savages" signals Melville's egalitarian sentiment (which he succinctly expressed in his published response to Francis Parkman) that "we are all of us--Anglos-Saxons, Dyaks, and Indians--sprung from one head, and made in one image." [15] But Moby-Dick goes beyond the mere statement of this to trace the process by which these living cultural artifacts have been federated along one keel. Melville shows them in the midst of their enactment of the dynamic rituals of liminality. Ishmael's bemused observation of the alien yet familiar semi-savage character of Queequeg indicates Melville's sensitivity to the relationship of the white American to the primitive in Moby-Dick on the whole:

But Queequeg, do you see, was a creature in the transition state--neither caterpillar nor

butterfly. He was just enough civilized to show off his outlandishness in the strangest possible manner. His education was not yet completed. He was an undergraduate. If he had not been a small degree civilized, he very probably would not have troubled himself with boots at all; but then, if he had not been still a savage, he would not have dreamt of getting under the bed to put them on (34).

Melville learned from his experience in the Pacific that where there is acculturation, there is also moral ambiguity, even anxiety. Societies undergoing such a transition also experience a proliferation of symbols which seek to unify the fragments of values, customs, and beliefs in a coherent structure of explanation. The Pequod begins to register the same proliferation in Melville's novel. But this proliferation also serves purposes that are specifically Melville's and not merely part of his rendering of an factual occurrence. The accumulated trophies the Pequod carries are historical in two sense. They do reflect an American reality which Melville would have known first-hand from his own experience in the whale fishery as well as from his later research on the subject. But in a second sense, the bricolage of the Pequod sparks Melville's imagination. It opens him up to a mythical dimension of human history in which he envisions the status of man before and after the originary event of Babel. He sees in the savage crew of the Pequod both the effects of the curse of Babel and the mythical prehistory when man formed one great mat.

Amid the bricolage of the American world shattered by the presence of the primitive, Melville becomes fully aware for the first time of the role of the artist as bricoleur. Only now is he fully conscious of the symbolic potential the liminality inherent in the acculturation process has for statements about the nature of humankind. Those early portraits of Marnoo, Lem Hardy, Taji, and Redburn were sharply outlined figures whose sovereignty in the world was threatened perhaps, but never obliterated. But the outlines of those primitive figures Melville draws in Moby-Dick dissolve in sfumato shadings. The solidity of a Lem Hardy was guaranteed in Omoo because he occurs there as a fait accompli. He is a figure whose acculturation occurred years before Melville ever heard of him. The narrator in Melville's Polynesian novels produced accounts of experience which were limited to the surface of reality. It was later that Melville learned to appreciate the "divers" among thinkers.[16] The semi-savages in Moby-Dick reveal, for example, Melville's attempt to enter into the deep structures of cultural experience. The native harpooners of the Pequod, unlike Lem Hardy, are captured in medias res. Their acculturation is a fluid current of change rushing between the well defined hierarchy of American enterprise and the wild barbarisms of the primitive.

The non-white members of the Pequod's crew are not strangers to the Quaker-driven whale hunt. Yet nor are

they fully integrated into its hermetic and dualistic moral world. All that is primitive aboard the Pequod must therefore find expression in the ritualistic acts and symbols that lead back to the origins of civilization. The Quaker hierarchy has long forgotten those origins. In the fullest sense of the term the savages in Moby-Dick are images of cultural "transition". They participate in rites of passage, much as Melville's earlier cross-cultural heroes did. But now Melville registers in the description of these rites an increased sensitivity to the moral pluralism and interplay among symbolic cultural meanings. Against the backdrop of the "great God absolute" and "the centre and circumference of all democracy", these fragments of the primitive assume an importance not in themselves but in their relationship to the American world which has appropriated them.

Queequeg's rescue of Tashtego from the oil-filled tun of the sperm whale's head (Chapter 78, "Cisterns and Buckets") is one of these rituals. Queequeg's "delivery" of the Indian harpooner subverts the hermeticism of the Quaker conflict between man and whale, culture and nature, and even between one culture and another. This symbolic event immediately submits the technical procedure of baling the case to the language of primal entry into a world of suddenly charmed significance. But at the same time, Tashtego's "birth" is his initiation into the American world

of enterprise and industry. Had he been lost in the enormous head, "coffined, hearsed, and tombed in the secret and inner chamber and sanctum sanctorum of the whale," he would have been sealed off in the hermetic exclusivity of myth. Melville sees a Western equivalent to this kind of imprisonment. Tashtego resembles the thinker who has "likewise fallen into Plato's honey head, and sweetly perished there" (290).

Contact with the great Platonic Idea and by extension the Quaker God isolated from nature is undesirable, as "sweet" as it may be. And yet Melville is still aware of the fact that his American polis has sought this contact ever since the days of Puritan America, when the forces of the Invisible were extracted from the Puritan conception of the visible wilderness and enshrined in the Covenant with an absent God. Cotton Mather saw the human world as an outpost garrisoned against supernatural agents: "An army of devils is horribly broke in upon the place which is the center, and after a sort, the first-born of our English settlements." [17] This is a centre dislocated from the European locus of Western culture. This new culture is now centered in a mythscape of frontier. For the American Puritan, Nature is forest of symbols, a field of animate phenomena. In this world, Nature is enchanted, haunted by the mythic Powers Western man has brought with him to the frontier. In much the same way, Chapter 78 of Moby-Dick

depicts a ritual of mythic-recentering. Tashtego's "birth" is restorative sacrament, a baptism, which ushers American man into the indefinite world of phenomena. For Ahab in Melville's Pacific, the natural world is haunted by the spirits of Puritan memory: it is a place where "a herd of remorseless wild pirates and atheistical devils were infernally cheering him on with their curses" (321). Ahab's Pacific Ocean is a liminal region located between the tangible resources exploited by Yankee enterprise and the totemic unities of the primitive world.

The presence of whales near the Peguod widens this marginal space in Melville's imagination. The reference to the "symmetrical unaccountable cone" of the whale in Chapter 95 ("The Cassock") highlights the totemic value of the Leviathan. As James Baird has noted, "this cassock is patterned after the garment of the Christian priest who extends the sacrament of the deity in flesh, as the mincer cuts the flesh of the whale; and in the same moment it is the apparel of God in the tiki of Polynesia and the greater Orient." [18] For Ahab the pursuit of the flesh of the whale becomes a rite involving the "heathen flesh" of the Peguod's semi-savages. Using the blood of Queequeg, Tashtego, and Daggoo in a ritual baptism, he exploits the totemic bond primitive man has with the divine forces behind the natural world. He declares, "Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli" (404). Charles Olson observes that

this is but a shortened version of an inscription written in Melville's hand on the fly-leaf of the last volume of his edition of Shakespeare which reads in full:

Ego non baptizo te in nomine Patris et
 Filii et Spiritus Sancti--sed in nomine
 Diaboli.--madness is undefinable--
 It & right reason extremes of one,
 --not the (black art) Goetic but Theurgic magic--
 seeks converse with the Intelligence, Power, the
 Angel. [19]

The role of Ahab as the subject producing and manipulating this view of the world deserves special attention in the following chapter. This description of a world between heaven, hell and earth, a liminal cultural space, explains how men are bound to one another and to the primordial energies of the natural world. The Pequod federates its Isolatoes along one keel not in the checks and balances of the commonwealth of the United States, but in a form of kinship which predates that formal union. The community of Isolatoes constitutes the mythscape that is "America". It is a frontier where myth forges the union of human spirit and natural energy in the tidal forces of history.

The whale is more than the object of Ahab's solitary quest. It is the nexus of a historiographic reduction to the common roots of human and demonic evil. Ahab's obsession with the whale is only an apparent confrontation between unlike intelligences. It reduces to a violent and

estranged kinship which is actually affirmed and not broken by Ahab's resorting to the primitive. What Ahab's vengeance requires and finds in the community of Isdiatoes aboard the Pequod is the ontological boundary that can be transmuted into a moral one. That boundary separates the flesh of man from the flesh of the surrounding world. When he crosses it, Ahab enters into a primitive conception of cultural space which unites man, landscape, and the powers behind both into a single field of violent energy. Nothing could be a more wicked transgression of the "Hebraic separatism" of the Quaker world of the sanctified Inside.

The details of this primal kinship with the flesh of Leviathan must await discussion in the next chapter. The more pertinent issue for the moment is the process of cultural development Melville has reversed in order to break the hold of the civilized dualism of Inside and Outside, spirit and flesh, Culture and Nature. These assertions of primal kinship are vaguely reminiscent of Yillah's self-delusion at the hands of Aleema in Mardi. Like the myth surrounding the white maiden, Ahab's quest derives from the aboriginal memories aroused elsewhere in Moby-Dick. The sacramental fount of primal memory is the Pequod's try-works. It is a symbolic medium, an instrumental filter of meaning through which "the profound mathematical meditation" (352) of a fully civilized man such as Ishmael must pass in order for the Pequod to become "the material counterpart of

her monomaniac commander's soul" (354). The demonic metamorphosis depends upon the reduction of technical function to a primal symbolic covenant with the dark powers. The symbolic value of the try-works, in effect, transforms industrial technology into the vaster and more ambiguous status of "technic".[20] This transformation is indeed a kind of reduction, a "leading back" to a first ground, bringing together, as Lewis Mumford has said, "the personal, the objective, and the subjective sides of our life, in order to establish them once more in an organic working relationship." [21] This entails a "collision of alien elements" in Moby-Dick, a conflict between the "modern" ambitions of commerce and the "primitive" desires for harmony. It is therefore not accurate to say that the Pequod sails into conflict with the natural world. The aboriginal memories unleashed in the ritualistic burning of the whale's flesh reveal the paradigms of the primitive through the demonic images of Melville's Western culture.

The try-works reflect the stages of this regression. They are part of the technology of the modern America. But the fires burning in the furnace cast the Pequod back to tribal civilization. By its light, the Pequod's "Tartarean" harpooners narrate "to each other their unholy adventures, their tales of terror told in words of mirth" (353). In Melville's moral cosmology, remembrance of first things lies on the periphery of the Quaker centre of democracy. A

demonic primal frontier surrounds the ramparts of Melville's modern civilization. On that frontier the origins of civilization, of mythic man in nature, still survive. The instruments of American technology are thus engaged in symbolic interactions, with an important result: "selfhood is continuously created, recreated and maintained (in the faces of subversive processes both from within and from without) through symbolic action." [22] The Isolatoes of the Pequod become visible to themselves and to Melville in the midst of such subversion. This is hardly a genteel vision of good commonwealth.

The Pequod, in all of its technological utility, becomes fringed with the aura of the primitive. An electrifying force bestows upon the mercantile function of the whaler a kind of symbolic mobility. It breaks free of the empirical commercial world; it becomes a taboo craft as the "electric" Marnoo, in Typee, was a taboo man. The radiant energies of a bewitched Nature illuminate the ship, as Chapter 119, "The Candles", dramatically illustrates. And native energies are also released in the lightning of the storm: "Daggoo loomed up to thrice his real stature" (415), Queequeg's tattooing "burned like Satanic blue flames," and the "parted mouth of Tashtego revealed his shark-white teeth" (416). The interlude of enchantment concludes in the compliance of the technological knowledge of civilization, knowledge as technique, with the secret, undecipherable intentions of the phenomenal and preternatural world.

These primitive rituals reveal a natural world which can no longer be resolved into the atomized "facts" comprising Western knowledge. Man and nature now share a common space where discrete shapes become indefinite, blurred. This blurring forces Ishmael into uncertain categories of description. His metaphysical musings about the plural meanings associated with "The Whiteness of the Whale" (Chapter 42) sketch the indefinite properties of an enlivened human/animal/spirit place, a far cry from the "palsied universe" (170).

"Melville's nature," one critic has declared, goes "beyond a natural realm. Or if nothing is beyond, he charted zones of the phenomenal universe that naturalists evade, the paradoxes of matter and motion." [23] But Ishmael cannot remove his own subjectivity from the landscape he sees; he cannot delve into the physics of Nature with quite the ease and clarity this statement ascribes to him. The natural world comes into the forefront of Ishmael's narrative when human sympathy reads animal behaviour, when, for example, Ishmael penetrates to the centre of a pod of whales in the chapter entitled "The Grand Armada": "Had these leviathans been but a flock of sheep, pursued over the pasture by three fierce wolves, they could not possibly have evinced such expressive dismay" (322). Such human sympathy is also cultural intelligence, greater than Ishmael himself. It is not merely an anecdote of human experience. Being human

entails a whole language of cultural mediation, a structure which conducts the realm of the Outside into the soul of man through the reversed flow of history. It is not an empty trope expressing a lost idealized unity, though. Melville's faith in poetic language guarantees a kind of revelation of the true character of man, true in the intimacy it had with the natural order at some prior moment in history. Indeed Melville himself pointed to that moment when he inscribed a copy of The Whale to his brother-in-law John Hoadley on 6 January 1854 with these words: "'All life' says Oken [Elements of Physiophilosophy] 'is from the sea; none from the continent. Man also is a child of the warm and shallow parts of the sea in the neighborhood of the land.'" [24]

The lesson taught by this devolution, Melville's faith in language notwithstanding, is that cultural mediation fails to attain the mythic restoration of the man/nature/spirit unity lost to human history. Ishmael admits: "The more I consider this mighty tail the more I deplore my inability to express it. At times there are gestures in it, which though they would well grace the hand of man, remain wholly inexplicable" (317). Ishmael must content himself with Nature's retention of at least some degree of its namelessness. In this respect, Melville's position resembles the plight of Tommo. Limitations of knowledge are not cultural events of "misunderstanding. They are ontological boundaries separating man and gods. Nature must

remain in part an unnamed territory in order for man to remain within the limitations of the human. Absolute naming is the province of the gods.

Notes to CHAPTER SIX

1. Robert Redfield, The Primitive World and Its Transformations, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1953), p. 85.

2. Moby-Dick, (eds) Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1967), p. 347. All subsequent references to the novel are taken from this edition. Page numbers appear in parentheses in the text.

3. In the language of Husserlian phenomenology we might say that the world of the Pequod, comprised of its bits and pieces of cultural bricolage comprises the object-side of the relation Melville establishes between knower and known, subject and object, man and world. The subject-side of this relation is the Ishmael persona of Melville himself as bricoleur. I wish to leave the discussion of the subject-side, however, to the next chapter. In this chapter I am interested in focussing on the Pequod as a world of objects.

4. Redfield, p. 66.

5. Paul de Man, "The Work of Georges Poulet", Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 95. Elsewhere, Paul de Man refers to the act of reading described in Proust's fiction in terms that may also be applied to the structure of the Pequod as a world, a place.

"Thus reading is staged, from the beginning of the text, as a defensive motion in a dramatic contest of threats and defences: it is an inner, sheltered place (bower, closet, room, cradle) that has to protect itself against the invasion of an outside world, but that nevertheless has to borrow from this world some of its properties" (Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust, [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979], p. 59). The difference between the Quaker-American realm of the civilized and the realm of the natural in Moby-Dick is that between an sheltered inside and the outside, between the hard kernels of facts and the luminous halos of image.

6. "I have written a wicked book, and feel spotless as the lamb." Melville to Hawthorne (17? November 1851), Letters, p. 140.

7. Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael, p. 21.

8. Olson, p. 12.

9. Obed Macy, The History of Nantucket, (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, and Company, 1835), p. 58.

10. This term is taken from John Wilson, "Egypt," The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man, (eds) H. and H.A. Franfurt et al, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), and is quoted in Robert Redfield, The Primitive World and Its Transformations, p. 78. Elsewhere in his study,

Redfield discusses the distinction between the Judeo-Christian and the primitive placement of God with respect to the natural world. The Hebrew culture places God outside the physical universe while the primitive culture places God within the physical cosmology (p. 102).

11. Melville triple-scored this passage in his copy of The Auto-Biography of Goethe Truth and Poetry from My Own Life: Also Letters from from Switzerland Travels in Italy, (Leyda, I, p. 354).

12. D.H. Lawrence, "Herman Melville's 'Moby-Dick'", Studies in Classic American Literature, (New York: Viking Press, 1971), p. 160. Lawrence's sentiments require some qualification in light of what Melville knew of "primitive" culture; this "blood consciousness" is not unique to "white" or Western man. Melville's view of Typee society indicates that all cultures, at some level of perception, distinguish themselves from Nature.

13. "The Preface to Gondibert", Works of Sir William Davenant, Knight, p. 14. Melville scored this passage, (Leyda, I, p. 360).

14. Obed Macy, p. 138.

15. Herman Melville, "Mr. Parkman's Tour," The Literary World, 4 (31 March 1849), p. 291.

16. Melville wrote to Evert Duyckinck on 3 March 1849, after hearing Emerson lecture; he acknowledged that he "did not oscillate in Emerson's rainbow", preferring instead the company of "that whole company of thought-divers, that have been diving & coming up again with bloodshot eyes since the world began" (Letters, pp. 78, 79).

17. Cotton Mather, "The Wonders of the Invisible World," The Norton Anthology of American Literature, (eds) Ronald Gottesman et al. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1979), vol 1, p. 120.

18. James Baird; Ishmael, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), p. 297.

19. Olson, p. 52.

20. "Technics is a word that has only lately come into use in English; people still sometimes like to Frenchify it into 'techniques' and thereby give it a quite different meaning. We ordinarily use the word technology to describe both the field of the practical arts and the systematic study of their operations and products. For the sake of clarity I prefer to use technics alone to describe the field itself, that part of human activity wherein, by an energetic organization of the processes of work, man controls and directs the forces of nature for his own purposes" (Lewis Mumford, Art and Technics, (New York: Columbia University

Press, 1952], p. 15). In his poetic exploration of the limits of instrumentality, Melville relates man to his culture in terms calling to mind Mumford's "technics".

21. Mumford, p. 5.

22. Abner Cohen, "Symbolic Action and the Structure of the Self," Symbols and Sentiments: Cross-Cultural Studies in Symbolism, (ed) Ioan Lewis, (New York: Academic Press, 1977), pp. 117-118.

23. Richard Grossinger, "Melville's Whale: A Brief Guide to the Text," Io, 22 (1976), An Olson-Melville Sourcebook, Volume I: The New Found Land, North America, Io, 22 (1977), p. 101. But Grossinger's view differs from mine in that he sees in Moby-Dick Melville's embrace of a natural world through an unmediated vision. Grossinger continues: "Nature, for Melville, was but the fabric of creation, the spare visible space in which the intrusions of the unknowable occur. In this sense, he has little to do with Hemingway as Yogananda with Philip Roth. Even as he implicitly rejected the social physics of American liberalism and rahrah democracy, he picked the precise hole in Newton, in the closed and accountable systems of events" (p. 102). My point, however, is that while attributing to Nature this intrusion of the unknowable, Melville could not so readily disengage himself from the "social physics" which to considerable degree provided him with the language with

which to address the unknowable from the perspective of human community.

24. Leyda, I, p. 483.

PART III
T E C H N E

Yet the gross worlding think that money
settles all things--that insults have a
pecuniary tariff.

-Melville, circa 1861.

And thus it is eternity must act,
because to have a self, to be a self,
is the greatest concession made to man,
but at the same time it is eternity's
demand upon him.

-Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death.

From the earliest times until Plato the
word techne is linked to the word
episteme. Both terms are words for
knowing in the widest sense. They mean
to be entirely at home in something, to
understand and be expert in it.

-Martin Heidegger, "The Question
Concerning Technology."

Chapter 7

MOBY-DICK:
MELVILLE'S PACIFIC
AND THE POSSESSION OF A PACIFIED TERRITORY

Now comes the Baling of the Case. But to comprehend it aright, you must know something of the curious internal structure of the thing operated upon.

-Moby-Dick, Chapter 77.

In the growth of talent which occurs between White-Jacket and Moby-Dick, Melville significantly alters his narrative technique. The earlier novel used the allegorical mode to portray the political culture of the United States and to address human nature in terms of polity. Moby-Dick returned Melville to the symbolic and mythic modes of imagining which capture the essence of America as an historical place, a frontier of cultural fragments.

The surge of this possessive intention in Melville's fiction cannot be explained exclusively with reference to technical innovation. Between 1849 and 1851, Melville's habits of reflection changed radically. Out of a friendship with Nathaniel Hawthorne and out of his reading of Shakespeare emerged a Melville who could now perform a very subjective task of clearing a space from out of the field of

cultural knowledge in his own imagination. Goethe called this task "self-possession". In the famous letter to Hawthorne in which he praises The House of the Seven Gables, Melville locates the source of the inspiration for his self-possession:

There is a certain tragic phase of humanity which, in our opinion, was never more powerfully embodied than by Hawthorne. We mean the tragicalness of human thought in its own unbiased, native and profounder workings. We think that into no recorded mind has the intense feeling of the visible truth ever entered more deeply than into this man's. By visible truth, we mean the apprehension of the absolute condition of present things as they strike the eye of the man who fears them not, though they do their worst to him,--the man, who like Russia or the British Empire, declares himself a sovereign nature (in himself) amid the powers of heaven, hell, and earth. He may perish; but so long as he exists he insists upon treating with all Powers upon an equal basis. If any of those other Powers choose to withhold certain secrets, let them; that does not impair my sovereignty in myself; that does not make me tributary. [1]

These remarks say more about Melville's development than they do about Hawthorne's. Melville has packed into these sentences a number of concepts springing from his preoccupations about the power of the poetic imagination. The "tragicalness of human thought" in Hawthorne's art presents itself to Melville in the form of an entire complex of concern. He sees in Hawthorne's fiction the portrait of an enduring, "sovereign" self. He also sees the relation of that sovereign self to other "powers" existing around it. Man's awareness of the "absolute condition of present

things" stems from the "tragicalness" of the sovereign self's relation to the Powers of heaven, hell, and earth. Of greater importance to Melville is the fact that the "tragicalness" is manifest in Hawthorne's art in its "native" workings. In his portrayal of the primitive condition of man, from Typee to Moby-Dick, all that is "native" for Melville comes to refer to the primal character of humanity in its closeness to the first things of Creation. Melville means by "native" in this instance the origins of the "tragic phase of humanity", the historical beginnings of man. At the core of Melville's assessment of Hawthorne lies his own conception of the human spirit which places man in a spatio-temporal relationship with his surroundings--divine, demonic, human. For Melville, then, the tragic character of man derives finally from his placement in history (time) and in proximity (space) to the Powers that withhold the secrets of human existence.

Melville complicates the idea of the besieged man by addressing his sovereignty in contrary ways. Man must be free, liberated from contingencies around him, self-possessing, accountable to nothing beyond himself. This defines the subjective element of the siege. But he must also continue to exist among those surrounding presences. This co-existence invites a comparison with the Powers. It defines the intersubjectivity inherent in Melville's imagination. The acknowledgement of numerous Others and the

desire to deal with them "upon an equal basis" involves a democratic levelling of them. This relationship between the solitary individual and the Powers of the universe places man on the nakedest possible plain. What would happen if this condition were applied to nineteenth-century American culture, to the individual as artist?

Two years before, Melville ascribed to his own America the unique distinction of providing the artist with the opportunity of declaring himself a sovereign nature:

I would to God that Shakespeare had lived later & promenaded in Broadway. Not that I might have had the pleasure of leaving my card for him at the Astor, or made merry with him over a bowl of the fine Duyckinck punch; but that the muzzle all men wore on their souls in the Elizabethan day, might not have intercepted Shakspeare's full articulations. For I hold it a verity, that even Shakspeare, was not a frank man to the uttermost. And, indeed, who in this intolerant Universe is, or can be? But the Declaration of Independence makes a difference.[2]

The frankness that Melville speaks of here anticipates what he would later call the "absolute condition of present things". To be freed from the contingencies which fetter the imagination is also to declare independence which avails the imagination to that absolute condition. In Melville's eyes, this hypothetical American Shakespeare promenading the Broadway of the nineteenth century would be an unfettered, de-Europeanized poet of the truths of humanity. While writing Moby-Dick Melville came to acknowledge that Hawthorne was the American writer Shakespeare might have

been had he been able to reap the benefits of the Declaration of Independence. Indeed the same "American" sensibility that motivates Melville's claim for Hawthorne's Shakespearean greatness also allows him to use Shakespeare as the touchstone against which to gauge the rise of an American national literary expression. In his review of Hawthorne's Mosses from an Old Manse, Melville suggests that

this absolute and unconditional adoration of Shakespeare has grown to be a part of our Anglo-Saxon superstitions. The Thirty-Nine Articles are now Forty. Intolerance has come to exist in this matter. You must believe in Shakespeare's unapproachability, or quit the country. But what sort of belief is this for an American, a man who is bound to carry republican progressiveness into Literature? Believe me, my friends, that men not very much inferior to Shakespeare, are this day being born on the banks of the Ohio.[3]

In the assertion of American literary nationalism, Melville cites the features of a distinctly New World imagination rooted in American soil. This is an imagination which serves the Rights of Man and Liberties of the World. Melville substantiates his praise of Hawthorne with the claim that

while freely acknowledging all excellence, everywhere, we should refrain from unduly lauding foreign writers, and at the same time, duly recognize the meritorious writers that are our own;-- those writers, who breathe that unshackled, democratic spirit of Christianity in all things, which now takes the practical lead in this world, though at the same time led by us ourselves, us Americans.[4]

Melville's remarks identify America as both a site of and for a liberating/liberated imagination. It is the mythic place of liberty in the imaginations of her greatest writers. It is also the geographical place where that imagination matures. To Melville's thinking, an imagination such as this addresses what is universal in mankind precisely because of its particular "Americanness". The future holds the promise, for Melville, of the mythic restoration of all humanity to a primal apprehension of Truth by an imagination rooted in the native grounds of America. Standing on equal ground with the writers of other "Powers", American writers

should [not] studiously cleave to nationality in their writings; only this, no American writer should write like an Englishman, or a Frenchman; let him write like a man, for then he will sure to write like an American. Let us away with this leaven of literary flunkysm towards England.[5]

In this respect, Melville would be a worthy practitioner of what Tocqueville termed the "American philosophical method." His belief in the liberated American imagination exhibits what Tocqueville noted in Americans generally, a tendency

to treat tradition as valuable information and to accept existing facts as no more than a useful sketch to show how things might be different and better; to seek by themselves and in themselves for the only reason for things, looking to results without getting tangled up in the means towards them and looking through forms to the basis of things.[6]

The democratic and restorative promise of the mythic American imagination is only one part of Melville's development. A drift in the opposite direction also emerges in his thought during this period. This is a centripetal movement of the poetic imagination in on the "sovereign" self, rather than outward in the appeal to the world. Around 1850 Melville begins to refer to the imaginative act of "looking through forms to the basis of things", as Tocqueville phrased it, in more exclusive terms. He concedes that the awareness of "the absolute condition of things" conveys a meaning that counters the democratic freedom of the self standing free among other powers. Writing to Hawthorne on another occasion, Melville casts the activity of imaginative knowing in sentiments as American perhaps, but also more anxious than those of the Declaration of Independence:

I am told, my fellow man, that there is an aristocracy of the brain. Some men have boldly asserted it. Schiller seems to have done so, though I don't know much about him. At any rate, it is true that there have been those who, while earnest in behalf of political equality, still accept the intellectual estates. And I can well perceive, I think, how a man of superior mind can, by its intense cultivation, bring himself, as it were, into a certain spontaneous aristocracy of feeling,--exceedingly nice and fastidious,--similar to that which, in an English Howard, conveys a torpedo-fish thrill at the slightest contact with a social plebian. So when you see or hear of my ruthless democracy on all sides, you may possibly feel a touch of a shrink, or something of that sort.[7]

Melville in this passage brings into the same discourse his concerns about various aspects of the self. The aristocratic self he refers to lives in an atmosphere of aesthetic discriminations and perception. At odds with this notion is his own "ruthless democracy", an attitude derived from the ideological stance of the United States. This attitude is founded on a moral conception of self derived from Christianity. When he referred to an American Shakespeare, Melville credited the democratic sensibility of America with the unfettering of the muzzled European imagination. But, in this instance the heightened imagination is a product of the "intellectual estates". The question Melville asks Hawthorne implicitly at this time is: Can the artist engage in the imperial, self-conscious "sovereign nature" of the subjectivity of the imagination and still remain faithful to the principle of "ruthless democracy" which places all men on the same level? Despite the attraction of the "intellectual estates", Melville is reluctant to abandon the egalitarian code of the mythic America which "declares that a thief in jail is as honorable a personage as Gen. George Washington." [8]

During the period out of which Moby-Dick --or more specifically Ahab--was to emerge Melville became increasingly attracted to the Romantic posture of the artist. He began to yearn for the self-possession inherent in an artist's imprint of his own personality, and

temperament upon his raw materials. Melville also notes the need for the Romantic artist to withdraw from the surrounding society in order to apprehend the "absolute condition of present things." In his copy of Goethe's autobiography Melville scores this passage:

The rest of us whenever we wish to speak of the affairs of the soul and the heart, were wont to withdraw from the crowd, because in the many modes of thinking, and in the different degrees of culture among men, it is difficult to be on an understanding even with a few.[9]

In Goethe Melville found the model for the Romantic isolation and the paradigm of the private territory inhabited exclusively by the artist garrisoned against the adjacent realms of heaven, hell, and earth. But Melville depicted this isolation as a kind of psychological sacrament commemorating the fragmentation of humanity in the aftermath of Babel. He saw himself and Hawthorne as Isolatoes of the imagination: through the "infinite fraternity of feeling" engendered in his friendship with Hawthorne, "the Godhead is broken up like bread at the Supper ... and we are its pieces." [10] In this regard, Melville partook of the Romantic definition of the artist as one who contained within himself the wholeness of the divine spirit. But in doing so, he chose to emphasize the sense of fragmentation which pervaded the artist's dealings with the world around him. From fragmented godhead inside the artist, Melville turned his attention to the fragmented culture around him.

It is this external fragmentation that in practice defined for Melville the "tragic phase of humanity". For at this point in his career Melville internalized in the plight of the artist various events of fragmentation which he had observed previously in the outer, public world of his Polynesian experiences. In Mardi he began to internalize in his imagination the shattering of the Polynesian world that he had experienced in his travels in the South Seas. The bricolage of that Polynesian landscape becomes for him, in the writing of Moby-Dick, the bricolage of the human mind. In Redburn and White-Jacket Melville restated the fragmentation of the mind in historical terms of the American self's fragmentation of its prior European wholeness. Melville learned from Hawthorne that the human self could be reduced to bricolage, to a condition of indefiniteness. He discovered that if the world of values and beliefs could fall in, the sovereign self could well be one of the fragments. The co-incidence of these events of fragmentation in the self, the culture, and the values of both was, for Melville, a moment when the cultural horizon suddenly pervaded his personal thought.[11] By 1850, the relation of the fragmented self to a culture of fragmented values becomes, in Melville's mind, the sacramental sacrifice of self to the broken order of culture.

In Moby-Dick the Pequod is the register of the cultural order as a field of intention. A ship of state of social

and historiographic character it carries within its ivory-white hull the artifacts which define the evolution of human society from the natural, to the primitive, to the civilized. The ocean into which it sails is the site of all that is non-human and uninhabited. Those artifacts are the bricolage, the "trophies", of disparate cultures that Melville as bricoleur arranges within a discourse of culture in the form of America. Melville orders the things of the world according to the structuring capacity of empire, culture, self. The Pegud resembles the palace of Queen Pomare in the multitude of culture-fragments it contains. But in one important way, the Pegud and its artifacts differ. Queen Pomare's palace was a found place where the artifacts of several cultures had accumulated over time. The Pegud is a made place, more a product of Melville's imagination. And more specifically, the Pegud is the product of an imagination which has the ability to sort and organize these images into meaningful structures which extend beyond the personality of Ishmael, out into the field of intersubjectivity of Melville's American culture, which is also a made place. What we see in Ishmael is Melville's imagination consciously doing the sorting. We see the structure of his imagination, in fact, only in the visible objects, anecdotes, and pieces of cetological data that Ishmael collects in his narrative. The overall character of the Pegud as a site of culture is primarily the sum total

of the riches it comes to possess within its hull. Queen Pomare's palace accumulated its artifacts randomly. But the Pequod sails and gathers its cargo with a fervour of intention.

From his vantage point on the decks of the Pequod Ishmael has access to an entire world-in-knowledge. Early in his narrative he notes in passing that "there is no quality in this world that is not what it is merely by contrast. Nothing exists in itself" (55). All that he knows is part of a vast plane of public knowledge. Melville is concerned more with the intersubjectivity of that knowledge than with the subjectivity of Ishmael. Ishmael is a model for intersubjectivity. He is a collective self, and his consciousness registers cultural consciousness. In Moby-Dick Melville turns his attention to an application of the Kantian dictum that nothing can be perceived in itself to concerns with how a culture knows and retains a collective memory.

It is important therefore to separate the clearly philosophical vocabulary Melville employs in Moby-Dick from its finally unphilosophical application. Melville distinguishes philosophy from the "desperado philosophy" Ishmael practices. Ishmael issues repeated warnings against the immersion of the speculative mind in waters purely philosophic. "So soon as I hear that such or such a man

gives himself out for philosophy," he declares at the beginning of the Pequod's voyage, "I conclude that like the dyspeptic old woman, he must have 'broken his digestion'" (52-53). He later warns that to hover over "Descartian vortices" is a truly dangerous practice (140). By way of contrast, Ishmael also posits that there is "nothing like the perils of whaling to breed this free and easy sort of genial desperado philosophy." It is through the practice of this more flexible kind of philosophy that Ishmael comes "to regard the whole voyage of the Pequod, and the great White Whale its object". (195-196).

In one respect, then, "desperado philosophy" is the degenerate offspring of the purer, fixed systems of ideas conceived by Descartes and Kant. Philosophical rigour is a requirement for the contemplation of these ideas in themselves. But Melville begins by situating Ishmael within human experience mediated by structures of knowledge built by a culture. "Desperado philosophy" begins in the experience of a culture. Ishmael frames his philosophical speculations within his experience of the Pequod and the whale hunt. This kind of philosophizing is termed elsewhere in Moby-Dick, perhaps with more frankness, "possession".

Ishmael's statement that nothing exists in itself extends to a larger principle, that the things of the world must be possessed by somebody in order to be made visible.

Stated philosophically, the subordination of the objective world to the modes of its apprehension reshapes it. The imperatives in human perception which Melville sees in human culture place a heavy burden on the observer, a burden that he, inside culture, may not be consciously aware of. This is to say that the structures of knowledge are an expression of an "existential forestructure", what Heidegger would call the hermeneutical circle.[12] Stated in terms of history and culture, the creation of theological and metaphysical bodies of knowledge in the practice of "desperado philosophy" defines the American culture as the repository of specifically American knowledge, known in a distinctively American way. The "Americanness" of this process of appropriation involves what Louis Hartz calls "the historiographical hiding of the fragmentation process" which occurs in the fracture of an American society from its European roots.[13] In White-Jacket Melville played this out on the public stage of American commonwealth. In Moby-Dick Melville records the fragmentation of the European world, an event which describes the United States in terms of "America", in terms of a culture which retains the promise of man's mythic restoration to wholeness and democratic harmony. Ishmael's Pacific "culturescape" eventually becomes the site of a whole series of seizures, possessions of the world by consciousness. These seizures are theological, political, technological all at once, so

expansive is Ishmael's vision. But they share a common ground as knowledge, as facts or bits of information registered in the culture of the Pequod.

In their organization within culture, we might call these bits the "human sciences". But they are arranged within the framework of ethnology as a presiding science, since the Pequod, like Melville's Nantucket America, is held in a delicate ethnological balance. Jacques Derrida has commented on the priority of ethnology in the human sciences in a way that addresses the multiple "possessions" Melville undertakes:

What is the relevance of this formal schema when we turn to what are called the "human sciences"? One of them perhaps occupies a privileged place--ethnology. One can in fact assume that ethnology could have been born as a science only at the moment when European culture--and, in consequence, the history of metaphysics and of its concepts--had been dislocated, driven from its locus, and forced to stop considering itself as the culture of reference. This moment is not first and foremost a moment of philosophical or scientific discourse, it is also a moment which is political, economic, technical, and so forth. [14]

The Pequod in effect contains this bricolage, these bits and pieces of knowledge. As a field of intention, the Pequod lies at the centre of a world possessed in and by language. There are important consequences for the orientation of man within this structure. The terms of human existence are given in the task of possession. Georges Gusdorf writes: "The advent of the word manifests

the sovereignty of man. Man interposes a network of words between the world and himself and thereby becomes the master of the world." [15]

The hunt for the white whale in Moby-Dick consequently breaks down into several categories of possession. The whale is the object of possession, the focus of the cultural, theological, metaphysical, and technological de-centering depicted in Moby-Dick. The whale hunt is a cultural event. The quest, for Melville, becomes a structured, ritualized, sacralized activity of cultural man, forcing the unmediated realm of nature, the things in themselves, further and further into abeyance. In the face of this abeyance, Ishmael is led away from the immediacy of the natural world into the cultural analogues and representations which stand in for it; he then confronts a vocabulary, a language of the familiar that constitutes his culture. Ishmael, for example, transforms objects found in nature into cultural artifacts which carry symbolic values apart from their origins in nature:

What are the Rights of Men and the Liberties of the World but loose-Fish? What are all men's minds and opinions but Loose-Fish? What is the principle of religious belief in them but a Loose-Fish? What to the ostentatious smuggling verbalists are the thoughts of thinkers but Loose-Fish? What is the great globe itself but a Loose-Fish? And what are you, reader, but a Loose-Fish and a Fast-Fish, too? (334).

What we witness in Melville's prose is the transposition of Nature into the cultural commodities, items and fragments of bricolage, which are reconstituted in an American idiom of liberties and the Rights of Man. Even the terminology suggests the remoteness of the natural realm. A Loose-Fish is really only a transitory designation. In the whaling business all Loose-Fish ideally become Fast-Fish. A whale belongs to the "world" of Nature only as long as it remains untagged, Loose. But whales, in order to have value for the whaleman, must belong to somebody. In Ishmael's cetological culture, all of the things of the world can have the status of either Fast-Fish or Loose-Fish. Those things which exist "out there" are yet to be possessed, yet to be known. Those things existing within the walls of culture as artifacts are known. To know them is to possess them, to pacify them as knowledge.

Melville's philosophy turns "desperado" and maverick in this transformation of the natural world filled with "nameless things" (169) into a pacified territory circumscribed by the limits of culture and filled with a plenitude of named things. Possession in Moby-Dick is the seizure of the ontological domain of things in themselves lying beyond those boundaries of culture by theological and metaphysical perspectives belonging to the inhabitants of the culture. The Pacific frontier the Pequod eventually enters is thus appropriated by Ishmael and Ahab as a

transcendental "Other". The undifferentiated "palsied universe" becomes articulated into an array of the known and the knowable under their gaze. The named things surrounding the Reguod become finite, manageable objects precisely in the act of naming. Possession, as Melville means it, is the in-forming of the visible world by the barely visible transcendental traces of the moral imagination. The Pacific of Moby-Dick is a frontier invested with intention.

Melville bestows the responsibility for this possession upon Ishmael and Ahab. They inform the world with differing structures of meaning. They see and feel their way through it in dissimilar ways, ranging from Ishmael's benign cetological cataloguing to Ahab's private attempt to grasp the invisible divine essence of things behind the pasteboard masks of the phenomenal world. Ishmael and Ahab orient themselves, then, differently within the cultural knowledge of named things. Yet they share an interest in the whale. It becomes for both of them a metaphor for their respective desires for its possession. Ishmael regards the Leviathan as a cultural "tag", a "Fast-Fish" belonging to the history of culture. In Ahab's view the "manufactured man", as he pejoratively refers to human nature in its cultural, cultivated context, yearns for the blood of the Leviathan. Ahab and Ishmael are caught in a tension between the sovereign individual and the public intersubjective resident of the American culture. In both their perspectives,

however, the "things" of the world lose their status as things in themselves. Ahab confuses the outer world with his own subjectivity. Ishmael confuses it with the intersubjectivity of the culture. In these two acts of possession, both Ahab and Ishmael assert their sovereignty over the space they attempt to occupy.

From these two contrary perspectives, Melville privileges either the isolated self or the world of federated selves. In Ishmael Melville declares the kinship of the self with the wide reaches of a world possessed of a democratic culture. In Ahab Melville's aristocratic privileged self assumes full reign over the world. In Ahab Melville consolidates the energies of his imagination in an interior glowing ember of subjectivity. Ishmael and Ahab embody the contrary impulses of Melville's imagination and create in Moby-Dick a kind of psycho-cultural profile, of nineteenth-century America displaced into artistic expression. [16] The nervous political sentiments of Cooper's The American Democrat have become for Melville the "native" grounds of existence, of "being-American". To be democratic in Moby-Dick, therefore, no longer refers one to exclusively social or political descriptions of human behaviour as it did in Redburn and White-Jacket, for example. In Moby-Dick, democracy is defined by the availability to the individual of cultural knowledge, illustrated in Ishmael's cetological expositions. In his curiosity, Ishmael resembles

Tocqueville's "democratic citizen", a person who "sees nothing but people more or less like himself around him, and so he cannot think about one branch of mankind without widening his view until it includes the whole." [17] Ishmael is Melville's study of the assimilation of the self into the very substance of a culture's store of knowledge. Conversely to be aristocratic in Moby-Dick is to be far more than a ship's captain abusive of the Rights of Man. Ahab enagages in the reduction of human existence to the narrow re-creation of the world in the image of the privileged self. In Ahab Melville's aristocratic imagination has run wild. He has been driven mad by that world he has sought to possess. He has been left alone to pacify it with supreme violence.

2.

ISHMAEL:

In Ishmael Melville located what Howard P. Vincent calls the "cetological center of Moby-Dick." Vincent studied the aesthetic significance of Melville's use of his source materials on cetology and the whale fishery. [18] In his view, Melville's use of these cetological materials must be considered as the aesthetic centre of the novel, and not simply as incidental detail. I would like to take advantage of this notion of centrality. I wish to extend its scope, however, by examining the existential grounds for Melville's use of this factual material in his creation of

his narrator-protagonist. Ishmael is more than the register of cetological information; he is the focus of intention in the centre of the Pequod's field of intention. The sharpening of Melville's narrative focus is evident in the difference in aesthetics between Moby-Dick and White-Jacket. The empirical formations of human community in White-Jacket show man moving against the backdrop of history, without showing how man himself is historical. This explains White-Jacket's blankness. But that blankness is filled in the portrait of Ishmael. Melville's documentary fiction in the earlier novel gives way in Moby-Dick to what might be termed Ishmael's "will-to-form" [19], to an intentionality which accounts for the moral and transcendental values of things in the world through man's integration in the cultural world. Such transcendental values become visible to Ishmael in his act of intentionality, his ritual of cultural possession.

As the focus of intention, Ishmael's status in the novel changes during the Pequod's voyage. We recognize him as a distinct, flesh-and-blood character in the opening chapters of Moby-Dick.

The Ishmael who embarks on the expositions of cetological chapters, however, is perhaps more cultural voice than body. In the novel as a whole, then, Ishmael bears a tenuous relationship to the cultural fragments comprising his rich,

diversified narrative. Even his possession of his own name becomes a loose, indefinite activity belonging to the cultural bricolage from which he emerges, and from which he earns his name. Ishmael's retention of selfhood in the narrative assumes more importance when we consider Ernst Cassirer's thoughts on the activity of naming in the context of a culture:

the name is never a mere symbol, but is part of the personal property of its bearer, property which must be carefully protected, and the use of which is exclusively and jealously reserved for him. Sometimes it is not only his name, but also some other verbal denotation, that is thus treated as a physical possession, and as such may be acquired and usurped by someone else. [20]

Of course, Ishmael has usurped the name from a previous bearer. Before he assumes this name, the same collector-figure has appeared already in Moby-Dick. In this respect Ishmael is but one persona of several assumed by Melville. Even before he appears in the narrative, we are brought into contact with the corpus of the cetological world through the efforts of a "Sub-Sub Librarian", the fruits of whose labours comprise the "Extracts" at the beginning of Moby-Dick. At the outset of the voyage of the Pegud, Melville affirms in the "Etymology" the close relationship between the knowledge of WHALE in its mediated form as language and the fleshy substance of real whales in Nature. Ishmael's world is the etymological world of culture which registers the outer world of the Leviathan in its received texts. The

isolated words from many cultures, all designated by the same WHALE, are federated in the universal tendency of culture in general to represent the outer world through images meaningful to particular communities. It is from this gathering of cetological facts by previous cultural personae that Ishmael coalesces as character/narrator, asking now that he be called "Ishmael". Once he begins his narrative, Ishmael is aware that he himself is not the poet-creator of those images so much as the custodian and organizer of them. He does not undertake to shape his own symbolic version of cetology. Rather, he seeks to discover its origin in the history of culture. He seeks to penetrate to the "cetological center" of his own culture.

Ishmael's expositions on the natural history of the whale and on the history of the whale fishery comprise a body of knowledge which Melville clearly takes advantage of. But it is its distinctive function in Moby-Dick which is of interest: cetology is, for Ishmael, an elementary form of culture. As a body of knowledge it is rich with the responsibilities of mediating "things" in Nature, beyond Culture, into language. Ishmael inhabits a language. At times he dissolves into it. As an individuated consciousness, and as a recognizable character aboard the Pegquod he shades back into a collective consciousness, one expressive of Western culture itself. All of this within a ship that speaks of culture in its widest aspect as museum, mausoleum, and forum of empire.

Ishmael possesses knowledge in a specialized way. He does not manipulate or utilize it with specific aims in mind. Nor does he attain it in the formal, structured study of it as pure concept. He dwells with, and in knowledge. Jacques Maritain has spoken of this kind of possession in terms of the Thomist notion of knowledge through "connaturality":

In this knowledge through union or inclination, connaturality or congeniality, the intellect is at play not alone, but together with affective inclinations and the dispositions of the will, and is guided and directed by them. It is not rational knowledge, knowledge through the conceptual, logical and discursive exercise of Reason. But it is really and genuinely knowledge, though obscure and perhaps incapable of giving account of itself, or of being translated into words. [21]

Ishmael is this man of inclination, for whom the possession of knowledge involves dispositions of the will at the level of an entire culture. Whether it can be successfully translated into words or not, Ishmael remains dedicated to the task of giving such knowledge tangible form in a language of possession.

He becomes interested in the whale's presence in cultural consciousness, particularly as it assumes the form of recurrent and diverse images of the transcendental in various icons, symbols, and legends--the bricolage of culture. This bricolage is comprised of the forms of cultural mediation of Leviathan. They are, of course, not the whale itself, the whale as a thing-in-itself. They are

images of the whale as meant in and to a culture. The Leviathan is finally for Ishmael an object of "critical" transcendence.

His investigations into how the Leviathan is given to the forms of cultural mediation, as illustrated in "The Whiteness of the Whale" (Chapter 42), are gradually obscured by another concern with how bodies of diverse knowledge can occupy the same cultural landscape. Sharon Cameron identifies an important distinction between the conventional reading of Moby-Dick that emphasizes the epistemological dilemma inherent in interpreting the outside world, and a reading which focuses on the literal character of bodies in the novel. Arguing that Melville was concerned chiefly with the self's relation to the physical world as it is given to consciousness (and not with how the world can be correctly interpreted), Cameron suggests that

Moby-Dick dismembers the outside world of which the whale is an emblem, with the hope that, as a consequence of the dismemberment, the self could magically take the world--now sufficiently particularized--into its body. [22]

This way of looking at Moby-Dick is useful in a number of ways. It reminds us, for example, that Melville's great novel is an aggregate of multiple, tactile bodies of image: bodies of whales, bodies of water, the body politic, and the dispersed body of Ishmael himself. This approach also attributes substance to those bodies; they are not merely

thematic ideas that have been metaphorized. Melville wants them to possess material density and a kind of energy. They are "Powers" registered in an energy field of image. But the notion of the self as one body among other bodies in Moby-Dick becomes elusive. For this reason, Cameron's suggestion that the self takes in the particularized components of the body of the world requires closer attention.

The relation of the self to the world depicted in Ishmael is certainly more sophisticated than the prototypes of this relation that appeared in Melville's earlier novels. Tommo in Typee, the narrator of Omoo, and Taji as he roamed the Mardian archipelago--all these were more solid versions of the self than Ishmael. All were concrete individuals who bore strained relation to the European world from which they came, and even more tenuous relation to the alien Polynesian world in which they found themselves. Melville's early heroes wore the godhead of their broken selves with all the permanence of tattered Carlylean clothing. With desperado gestures, they defined their sense of themselves by their liminal position between two cultures. In Melville's early novels, we see the self against the backdrop of alien landscapes. The crises of cultural difference generate a distinct version of self in the experience of physical displacement.

Ishmael, however, is no stranger in a strange land. He is, like Redburn and White-Jacket, a self less "sovereign" and self-contained than were Lem Hardy and Tommo. Ishmael is more than an individual citizen of the cultural domain. This place of culture is wedged between the things of Nature and the lexicons of human history; all humankind resides here, not just the solitary hero of Melville's own experience or imaginings. The boundaries of self, for Ishmael, therefore extend outward into the public and intersubjective structures of knowledge. Those cultural structures absorb Ishmael's subjectivity and the privacy of his vision. He no longer thinks for and in himself when he ruminates on things cetological; he thinks on behalf of Melville's civilization. Fully possessed of that civilization, Ishmael carries into his isolation a mandate to possess all aspects of the world of cetology. By attributing to Ishmael such a wide angle of perspective, Melville holds in check his own Romantic inclinations. Ishmael defines himself in terms of historical anteriority. The body of knowledge forming the bulk of this history is no more Ishmael's private creation than is the Body of the Leviathan itself.

Ishmael knows only too well that these bodies, structures of knowledge, are only mediated descriptions of the world of "things". Yet he is undaunted in his task of sifting through the total number of "whales variously represented"

to separate those configurations which are clearly erroneous from those which are accurate. Ishmael lives comfortably with the pretense that image and thing are identical. For him, mediation is but the flesh of human knowledge, and knowledge but the sovereignty inherent in being human.

A human impress on the world is both necessary and distorted. The naturalness of the whale is always going to be lost to the artifice of its representation as an image. The natural creation of the whale and the origins of WHALE, as word, are two different events. The former is a natural event, the latter a human event in human consciousness. Ishmael traces the line of refraction of one into the other when he describes how cultural consciousness works:

Nor when expandingly lifted by your subject, can you fail to trace out great whales in the starry heavens, and boats in pursuit of them; as when long filled with thoughts of war Eastern nations saw armies locked in battle among the clouds. Thus at the North have I chased Leviathan round and round the Pole with the revolutions of the bright points that defined him to me. And beneath the effulgent Antarctic skies have I boarded the Argo-Navis, and joined the chase against the starry Cetus far beyond the uttermost stretch of Hydrus and the Flying-Fish (233).

The phrase "expandingly lifted by your subject" reveals the sleight of hand inherent in Melville's "desperado philosophy". For the subject of cetology expands Ishmael in two ways. He must literally lift his gaze upwards into the expanses of the night sky to see the starry constellations

of the whale. But, in addition, when Ishmael recognizes the constellations in the sky in the first place he is himself "expandingly lifted" from the status of individual observer to the status of an entire culture which traced out the constellation long before Ishmael the man was born. It is not the projection of categories of perception that interests Melville at this moment. Of greater importance to him is the fact that while the lore may vary from northern to southern culture, the configuration of WHALE remains constant and universal. What interests Melville more than the epistemological grounds for creating the outlines of whales in the sky is the degree to which these images are locked into the collective cultural memories of peoples everywhere in the world. It is the cultural universal that assumes priority in Ishmael's expansive expositions.

The course of Ishmael's wanderings through the cetological archives of his culture moves him from the individual perception of the whale as an animal in the natural world to the image of WHALE as a historiographic configuration in cultural consciousness. His gaze passes from the facts about the anatomy of whales which Melville would have culled from the books by Thomas Beale and Frederick Bennett for example, to the cultural images of whales constituting Western consciousness. This change of focus displaces strictly ontological concerns (what a whale is, or is composed of) into historical concerns about how

the whale has been schematized, and appropriated in the form of knowledge.

Melville illustrates this change of vision in the expository, "cetological" chapters of Moby-Dick. He accomplishes this transition structurally, for example, in the movement from Chapter 55 ("Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales") to Chapter 58 ("Brit"). Ishmael begins confidently with a declaration of intent:

I shall ere long paint to you as well as one can without canvas, something like the true form of the whale as he actually appears to the eye of the whaleman when in his own absolute body the whale is moored alongside of the whale-ship so that he can be fairly stepped upon there. It may be worth while, therefore, previously to advert those curious imaginary portraits of him which even down to the present confidently challenge the faith of the landsman. It is time to set the world right in this matter, by proving such pictures of the whale all wrong (224-225).

Ishmael's agenda, as he outlines it here, is significant in its circular reasoning. The object of his proposed survey of the representations of whales is an apprehension of the "absolute body" of the Leviathan. A means of achieving this goal, Ishmael suggests, is the preliminary consideration of various "imaginary portraits", cases of deviation from the "absolute condition" of the whale as present, unmediated thing. But the study of these imperfect, historical representations teaches that "there is no earthly way of finding out precisely what the whale

really looks like" (228). Perhaps the greatest testaments to this fact are those attempts by "the English and American whale draughtsmen" who "seem entirely content with presenting the mechanical outline of things, such as the vacant profile of the whale; which, so far as picturesqueness of effect is concerned, is about tantamount to sketching the profile of a pyramid" (230-231). In his review of J. Ross Browne's Etchings of a Whaling Cruise, Melville had previously noted how such "matter-of-fact details" destroy the image of the ocean as "the peculiar theatre of the romantic and the wonderful." [20] This is not the dead end of a process, but a beginning. The blank surface of the Leviathan, like the Marquesan monuments Tommo saw and the pyramids that Melville himself would visit in 1857, is a point of departure for the imaginative speculations comprising "desperado philosophy".

Ishmael's discourse on the representation of whales concludes with the image of man "encompassed by all the horrors of the half known life" of the ocean (236). This way of putting it addresses a condition of liminality that always threatens to destabilize man, literally to un-ground and un-house him. Disorientation of this magnitude is akin to Melville's placement of man amid the Powers of "heaven, hell, and earth", in a site where the secrets of the universe are withheld from him. The "half-known life of the ocean" is part of a new expression of liminality. Ishmael

is poised between half-knowledge and no knowledge. He inhabits that region of connaturality where Nature and Culture, fact and fiction, meet. In Ishmael's own words,

however baby man may brag of his science and skill, and however much, in a flattering future, that science and skill may augment; yet for ever and for ever, to the crack of doom, the sea will insult and murder him, and pulverize the stateliest, stiffest frigate he can make; nevertheless, by the continual repetition of these very impressions, man has lost that sense of the full awfulness of the sea which aboriginally belongs to it (235).

The awareness of this is itself a reduction to aboriginal first things. It applies to the world of land as much as to the world of the sea:

Wherein differ the sea and the land, that a miracle upon one is not a miracle upon the other? Preternatural terrors rested upon the Hebrews, when under the feet of the Korah and his company the live ground opened and swallowed them up for ever; yet not a modern sun ever sets, but in precisely the same manner the live sea swallows up ships and crews (235).

For Ishmael, history records the tentative and marginal character of human existence. It is precisely this liminality that finds expression in the best representations of the whale by the various cultures. The pursuers of the whale share a kind of savagery which impels them to seek out and to convey the "barbaric spirit and suggestiveness" of Leviathan (232). The whale can be represented accurately only in its reduction to a "native" form. In this respect, Ishmael concludes his survey by vindicating the mythic portraits of the Leviathan he initially criticized. For he

has found himself encompassed by the indefinite world mediated by myth.

Ishmael's denial of the matter-of-fact outlines of the world is Melville's attempt to distinguish scientific and non-scientific modes of perception. Louis O. Mink has made distinctions which lend themselves to Ishmael's survey of the modes of cultural perception. Mink characterizes purely scientific investigation as a "theoretical" mode of apprehension. The matter-of-fact cetology Ishmael disdains conforms to this mode. Mink refers to philosophical thought as a "categorical" mode. The understanding of history must be distinguished, Mink suggests, from both of these; the understanding of history is a "configurational" mode of apprehension, which engages an individual in the study of an object's relation to other objects surrounding it. In the configurational mode of apprehension, the observer's subjective reactions to the outer world become part of any historical event.[24] In most of his cetological expositions, Ishmael implicates the knower of history in its unfolding. He avoids the mere abstracting of the whale into a dry concept, unlike those "French and American draughtsmen", by focussing on the process by which the concept is given to the history of cultural consciousness. The configuration of human history supersedes the matter-of-fact outlines of the Leviathan in Ishmael's cetology.



There are moments, though, when Ishmael betrays his configurational mode of understanding. To illustrate how inadequate a picture of the whale's true shape its skeletal dimensions can be, he reminisces about an excursion he once took to a giant whale skeleton which had become the focal point of a native temple on an exotic island:

Now with the royal Tranquo I visited this wondrous whale, and saw the skull and altar, and with the vertical smoke ascending from where the real jet had issued, I marvelled that the king should regard a chapel as an object of virtue. . . . But more I marvelled that the priests should swear that smoky jet of his was genuine (375).

This is a younger and more naive Ishmael than the present narrator, an Ishmael not yet capable of showing reverence to the Leviathan's diverse possibilities for being a ritual object. His tattooing of the empirical dimensions of the skeleton on his right arm (396) foils the transcendental sacredness the temple has for the tribal priests. This is an Ishmael of the "theoretical" mode of apprehension. He has overlooked the symbolic value of the whale in this primitive culture's appeals to the transcendent order of the gods. The deeper meaning of the whale as an image within a cultural context of trophy-shrine has escaped Ishmael. In this episode Melville revisits Tommo in his Marquesan world. This naive Ishmael, in an enthusiasm for empirical measurement befitting a Beale, a Bennett, or a J. Ross Browne, forces into suspension the structures of meaning with which this tribe has imbued the whale's skeleton.

The present Ishmael by contrast--the one who has shipped aboard the trophy-ship Pequod and has lived to tell about it--transcends the limitations of empirical, "matter-of-fact" details of the visible Leviathan. He pores over the multiple and paratactic images of the whale with growing intensity. The structure formed by these icons, a history of accumulated images, leads Ishmael further into that web of known things comprising a culture. Ishmael's Pacific gets transformed into a cultural space, with "numberless worlds" in its historical depths, the further the Pequod sails. The more "native" the ocean depths become, the more elemental and diffuse becomes Ishmael's language of cetology. He discovers, as Wittgenstein did, that an entire mythology is stored in our language. His discovery densifies the Pacific world of cultural meaning; it becomes an energized field of suggestiveness.

For Ishmael, the mediating structures of knowledge rise up in the "palsied universe" of the Pacific like scaffolding in thin air. They reach out from the cultural world of the Pequod with its overlapping zones of the civilized, the primitive, and the natural, themselves the product of Ishmaels' restorative vision of the fractured post-Babel world. To Ishmael, the "facts" of the world are really historical artifacts, fragments of a previous epoch of mythical, prehistoric unity. In the moral light in which he views them, they are converted to images of loss and alienation within his culture.

Ishmael's concern for representations of the whale as phenomena other than direct, "factual" links to the world becomes an occasion for Melville's speculations on the myth-roots of human society. The fragmentary character of the items of knowledge inspires in Ishmael contemplations of a pre-Babel world of human harmony. Melville enacts the incorporation of the self into the federated body of culture in "A Squeeze of the Hand" (Chapter 94), wherein Ishmael squeezes the spermaceti, preparing it for the try-works, until he himself has "almost melted into it" (348). In this episode, Melville examines the social⁶ consequences of Ishmael's mythic transcendence: "I have perceived that in all cases man must lower, or at least shift, his conceit of attainable felicity; not placing it anywhere in the intellect or the fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side, the country" (349). This appeal to social integration is definitely a "shift" of Melville's attention from the oceanic, "vertical" transcendence of the self characteristic of Taji's interludes of reflection, for example. Ishmael has the presence of mind to resist the rarefied atmosphere of the intellect and the fancy. But this does not entail the same resignation that Melville suffered during his writing of the allegorical section of Mardi, and of Redburn and White-Jacket. The transcendental character of the culture is a viable and, in Ishmael's words, a safer substitute to the

mystical roving of the oceanic heavens. By restricting man's "conceit of attainable felicity" to the realm of custom and cultural institution Melville is in effect precluding metaphysical transcendence for the greater good. It is a somewhat egalitarian enterprise. Ishmael senses the exclusivity inherent in the private visions of the mystic. He recognizes that the mystic privileges the Isolato self in his vision of oceanic wholeness, and that the vision is not easily communicated to the body of mankind. Ishmael's myth of social oneness, by contrast, privileges the federated body rather than the individual self in the aim of attaining a kind of Universal American Self. Such is the nature of Ishmael's "desperado philosophy."

What makes these musings about a pre-Babel harmony more solid than spiritual idealism is that they are, for Melville, grounded in language as a network of meanings comprising a culture. Ishmael alone among the Pequod's crew has assumed the responsibility of an entire civilization for replacing that lost mythic integration with a historico-cultural surrogate of metaphor and analogy that compensate for the loss of wholeness. This surrogate is only partially effective. Ishmael is well aware that the past cannot be undone by trope and hyperbole. The cosmic process of individuation which has produced a history of Isolatoes, the bricolage of the broken Godhead, cannot be reversed. Mindful of this, Ishmael points to those instances when the

surrogate cultural configurations deviate from the natural world. He contends, for example, that all sailors "are by all odds the most directly brought into contact with whatever is appallingly astonishing in the sea". The mariner is thus "wrapped by influences all tending to make his fancy pregnant with many a mighty birth." Ishmael concludes that "the outblown rumors of the White Whale did in the end incorporate with themselves all manner of morbid hints, and half-formed foetal suggestions of supernatural agencies" (156).

The process of "incorporation" gives the isolated subjectivity of the individual sailor over to the structures of shared knowledge belonging to an entire culture. Ishmael joins the fraternity of superstitious sailors when he tells a tale about the White Whale, engaging himself in rumors of "supernatural agencies". The "Town-Ho's Story" is not, strictly speaking, Ishmael's story alone. It is, ironically, the "private property" of several tellers--in reality then, public property. It is also a myth of sorts, a language of explanation recited as a litany before the audience to whom it has been handed down. Its repeated telling is an act of making history out of words. Ishmael renders it public in one further sense by retelling it on this occasion in the form he told it to an assembled party in the Golden Inn. Even the content of the tale preserves its public nature, for it is itself an incorporation of diverse themes and concerns into one structure of meaning.

In this regard, the telling of tales--speaking the language that is culture--brings individuals into the community of myth. The tale Ishmael tells, with its diverse implications, resembles the inland empire of the Great Lakes, whose capitals, Cleveland and Buffalo, "float alike the full-rigged merchant-ship, [or] the armed cruiser of the State" (210), bringing together disparate cultural groups. This myth of mutiny and transcendental intervention, entwines the social implications of the Rights of Man with the "fated" justice served out by Moby-Dick himself. The tale demonstrates dramatically how the natural realm, the Polynesian world of adventure, and the political affairs of men motivate the appeal, through myth, to those "supernatural agencies".

Ishmael's concern for representations of the whale as symbolic phenomena of a scope greater than that of "factual", mimetic links to the outer world leads to an important relation between language and myth. Ernst Cassirer has defined the relationship this way:

the development of language appears to be the counterpart of the development which mythical intuition and thought undergo; for one cannot grasp the true nature and function of linguistic concepts if one regards them as copies, as representations of a definite world of facts, whose components are given to the human mind ab initio in stark and separate outlines. Again, the limits of things must first be posited, the outlines drawn, by the agency of language; and this is accomplished as man's activity becomes internally organized, and his conception of Being acquires a correspondingly clear and definite pattern. [25]

Ishmael himself isolates a connection between language and myth in Moby-Dick between Genesis--the Creation of the natural world--and the genesis of human consciousness. The "mighty birth" of myth (of which the "Town Ho's Story" is an example) refers both to the Creation, the source of all natural life, and to human consciousness made visible to man as a re-source, an echo of the Creation resonating throughout the history of humankind. At the core of both these events--Creation and re-creation--lies an epic displacement, a loss of memory of cosmic proportion, and subsequently, a kind of existential deprivation which defines man in the aftermath of Babel. The presence of the White Whale in the tale of Radney and Steelkit is a dim reminder of a mythical before-times when Nature and man were integrated in a continuous moral universe.

Melville brings to the event of Babel interests peculiar to the artist. For if God has dispossessed mankind at Babel, the artist, working with the raw materials of post-Babel language, attempts a kind of repossession. Moby-Dick, concerned as it is with the gathering of broken fragments of one master language, is itself a project of linguistic repossession and relocation.

As a "half-formed foetal suggestion of supernatural agencies", the "Town-Ho's Story" is an Ur-myth which registers the nativity, or the "native" element in human

self-reflection. The tale is perhaps the archetype for all of Ishmael's cetological expositions. Being the custodian of all these myths and anecdotes gives Ishmael considerable licence to see beyond the horizons of the individual sailor's superstitions into the deep structures of cultural lore. He apprehends two mighty births--Genesis and Babel, the Creation of the natural world and the re-creation of the human, cultural one.[26]

Ishmael's cetological culture of myths is Melville's effort to build a bridge linking the fragmented, Isolato parts of the post-Babel world. It is also a culmination of Melville's earlier attempts to describe that world in an effective language which restores to both self and world some coherent order. In his Polynesian novels, Melville witnessed the fragmentation of alien cultures into Isolato fragments under the pressures of cultural contact and acculturation. When he turned his attention to the Western world with the writing of Mardi, that fragmentation assumed the historical dimensions of the American Declaration of Independence. The splintering of the world into the atomistic "facts" of human knowledge is the enactment in the form of Melville's novels of his experience of fragmentation. The documentary fiction characterizing Melville's accounting of the "facts" up to and including Moby-Dick in one respect signals Melville's resignation to the bricolage of the human experience of the fractured

world. But Ishmael's distinctively American desire to federate the world along one keel promises the restoration of primal unities in the native grounds of the Pequod, and through the plastic, synthesizing, healing medium of image. With Ishmael, the facts of cetology assume the mythic potential of image. Only in the "foetal", originary ground of mythic, native, imaged America can physis and poiesis, organic Nature and "manufactured" man, ever be brought together under one moral order.

Not even Ishmael can overcome the lingering dualism, however. His consideration of the whale as fossil and text testifies to the artificial character of image, of its plasticity in the cultural consciousness, and to its estrangement from the organic unity of all things in illo tempore. "Having described [Leviathan] in most of his present habitory and anatomical peculiarities," Ishmael argues, "it now remains to magnify him in an archaeological, fossiliferous, and antediluvian point of view" (378). With this declaration, the task of anatomical description becomes one of cultural inscription of the configurations of history within the ever-expanding circumference of human knowledge:

Unconsciously my chirography expands into placard capitals. Give me a condor's quill! Give me Vesuvius' crater for an inkstand! For in this mere act of penning my thoughts of this Leviathan, they weary me, and make me faint with their outreaching comprehensiveness of sweep, as if to include all the generations of whales, and men, and mastadons, past, present, and to come, with all the revolving panoramas of empire on earth, and throughout the whole

universe, not excluding its suburbs. Such, and so magnifying, is the virtue of a large and liberal theme! We expand to its bulk (379).

All that is "unconscious" lies beyond the visible domain of Ishmael's personality as a single isolated subject. Beyond the solitary ego extends the cultural framework. In its general form, Ishmael's appeal to a transcendental order resembles those appeals Melville makes in earlier novels, in Mardi and White-Jacket especially. [27] Those appeals to transcendental realms are reactions by the respective narrators that are triggered by external stimuli, by the rush of the experience. Both Taji and White-Jacket are lulled into their meditative states by outside influences and circumstances. Something new is happening to Ishmael. His relationship to his world in general is symbiotic. Its contents are part of him in the form of his cultural experience. His necessary expansion to the bulk of this store of knowledge is an act of critical transcendence within his culture. Only a Leviathan pen and inkstand fulfil the requirement for the epic inscription of a Leviathan language.

In Ishmael, Melville passes the concerns of initially philosophical character through the prism of American "application". The philosophical ideas such as determinism, the nature of the "thing-in-itself", and the One and the Many, disperse before Ishmael's eyes into social, moral,

and political categories. The reigning issue for Ishmael is not the resolution of the philosophical quandaries, but their translation into cultural contexts. Ishmael is forever preoccupied with the cultural origins and consequences of his philosophical speculations. He is diverted from an examination of all these ideas as "things-in-themselves". How a culture as a grid of knowledge surrounding man possesses an idea (the whale, for example) and how the human subject comes to possess--and be possessed by--that culture are concerns more urgent to Ishmael than the contents of an idea.[28]

Here we have an indication that Ishmael's "cetological center" is fundamentally decentered. Melville's imagination faces certain limitations in its creation of Ishmael. Expressing his wish that man live within the limits of his cultural knowledge, Ishmael conveys the impression that in the final analysis, his affinity with the outer world notwithstanding, man must resign himself to his artificiality both as a cultural construct and as a constructor of cultural configurations. This has led some readers to conclude that as a result of his penchant for the systematic portrayal of his cetological world, Ishmael is self-enclosed, ensnared in a language system which seals him off from the world of "real" objects.[29]

That Ishmael has this tendency cannot be denied. But it is a mistake, I think, to submit Melville--particularly at this phase of his artistic development--to a language of Wittgensteinian limits.[30] It is not true that either Ishmael or Melville, within the frame of the novel, views his cetological cataloguing as a procedure of logic, of what can be said. Indeed, the historiographical character of the cetological expositions in Moby-Dick refers the reader only to what has been said. What has been said is characteristically collective, public, and unchangeable. It is descriptive, not prescriptive. The language of cetology embraces the cultural utterances concerning the nature of human existence in a fragmented, atomized world of individuated things. It never dawns on Ishmael that his world ought to be anything other than the aftermath of Babel. His optimism regarding the federating of the world's Isolato fragments into a new Commonwealth is not blind to the artifice entailed in such a reconstruction. However, its artifice does not prevent Ishmael from opening his language to the primitive and the natural realms as images. His portrayal of the Pequod, is evidence enough of that open language. For him, image is not limited in its function as mere representation. The image WHALE, in all of its cultural variations in the different languages of the post-Babel world, is more rich than the animal it represents precisely because it is a cultural congifuration

integrating, however artificially, the human and the natural.

Ishmael compensates for being unable to know the outer world beyond the mediated, possessed domain of his own cultural world by declaring that the latter is first and foremost home. He is a bricoleur who consoles himself with an appreciation of the richness of the image of nature his culture constructs. In his characterization of Ahab, Melville seeks to imagine what Ishmael does not dare or need to imagine. Ahab is the interrogator of those structured images, of that configuration of culture Ishmael inhabits. Ahab denies the fragmentary character of the post-Babel world.

3.

AHAB:

It is a temptation to regard Ahab and Ishmael as characters of equal standing in Moby-Dick. Structurally speaking, this is not the case. The world of the Pequod and the Pacific frontier into which she sails are presented to us entirely through the eyes of Ishmael. Ahab exists only as part of Ishmael's panoramic vision. In this respect, Ahab's maddened vision is born of, and contained by, the American world Ishmael depicts. This explains the terror Ahab lives with and the terror he inflicts. For had he been an outsider, not a citizen of the Pequod's commonwealth of

Isolatoës, his madness would have had neither context nor consequence.

In Ahab, Melville descends into the very spaces between Ishmael's words. He opens up an interior space between the "things" of Ishmael's federated world of language, myth, fragment. In this space Ahab assails the integrity of the symbolic language which upholds the Pequod's disparate, "desperado" culture. Ishmael's narrative, for the most part, registers man in a filled cultural space--space as home. Ahab divests that space of its varied contents. He uses language as a rhetoric of denial, obliteration, and a forcible return to the undifferentiation Melville's early protagonists encountered when they faced an alien culture. There is, however, a fundamental difference between alienation from a culture one does not understand, and alienation from one's own culture through an act of denial. Unlike Tommo among the Marquesans, Ahab experiences a "learned" undifferentiation. It is not derived from the blankness of the world around him such as the walls of vegetation and cultural resistance Tommo had to penetrate in Typee. Ahab's experience of undifferentiation arises from his deliberate negation of the body of knowledge defining Ishmael's Pequod-culture. His resort to the primitive constitutes the kind of wickedness from which Melville felt completely absolved. Absolution is an erasure of some event of personal history in the aim reconstituting the soul,

obliterating its past. Ahab's primitivism is a willful obliteration of human history.

By the time he wrote Moby-Dick, Melville knew that any flight from culture was either an illusion or a body of fanciful rhetoric. The naivety of a Tommo or a Taji was impossible to recreate once Melville himself saw the problems of the sovereign self in terms of the metaphysics, politics, and social constraints of his own culture. Melville had "read into" the thickets of Western culture. There were only two choices for the informed imagination, as a result. One could move either among the crowd of common men Ishmael style, or alone in the vacuum the self hollows out from the density of the cultural milieu. The flight from culture was clearly no alternative for Melville, who through his reading had descended into culture. In Ahab Melville dramatizes that hollowing out of the private territory of the aristocratic self. Within the walls of the American polis, a certain vacant, unarticulated subjectivity coalesces around the personality of Ahab. This subjectivity is vaguely reminiscent of the "sovereign power" Lem Hardy became in Tahiti. But the sovereignty of Ahab's subjectivity is suspect in a way that Lem Hardy's was not. For Ahab is bounded on all sides by Ishmael's plenitude of what has been said. A public, familiar world surrounds Ahab; it always challenges the privacy of his vision.

A moral issue therefore underlies Ahab's creation of the primitive flatness and shapelessness which did not exist in the actual primitive world the younger Melville saw in Polynesia. Ahab has chosen to clear out of the way the cultural configuration which Ishmael has constructed. Ahab acts under the assumption that he occupies a Hobbesian void. The success of this clearing of the land, as it were, depends on Ahab's ability to embark upon an odyssey of unlearning and to transform both the Quaker world of the Inside and Ishmael's world of the mediated Outside into something more raw, private, and indivisible.

It is a Promethean task. Ahab emerges from the same Quaker commonwealth as the rest of the Pequod's culture, and he is subject to the same mediated vision of the world as Ishmael. But he gives Ishmael the slip at a certain point and escapes into the silent channels between words that separate discrete objects in the Ishmaeleian universe. Ahab overthrows the "circumference of all democracy" and Ishmael's carefully balanced federation of Isolatoes. He becomes the absolute centre of the circle. From that hollowed and hallowed center of selfhood, Ahab assails with a vengeance Ishmael's historiographic accumulation of cetological images.

The conflict between Ishmael and Ahab rises out of the distinction between the centripetal and centrifugal impulses

of Melville's imagination. Ahab's appearance in the narrative jeopardizes Ishmael's incorporation of all images of the things of the world in the culture of the Pequod with a single expansive image of the "pure" ego, an imperial I AM. He subjects the individuated and discrete objects of Ishmael's world to a single panorama of undifferentiated matter. Consequently Ahab no longer sees a human world of separate selves. He cannot appreciate the autonomous existence of discrete objects in the physical world. The flesh of the world, human and inanimate, appears to him as one great mat, primordial and indivisible. Ahab submits all matter to the determinisms of unseen forces, "Powers".

For Ahab, God and man are both cast into suspension just as the cultural structures of Marquesan society were for Tommo. Metaphysical and theological concerns emerge as projections of Ahab's absolute subjectivity, from a black hole of undifferentiated and preformed matter. The "aristocratic" impulse in Melville's imagination, with its imperious designs on the world, seeks in Ahab to visit the moment of the world's Creation. It denies history and the separateness of objects in the post-Babel human world.

Ahab un-names the world in order to erase Babel from history. In doing so he professes a metaphysics and a theology based on a principle of physical extension which fills in the channels between objects. David Lowenthal has

suggested that such a principle would be the natural outcome of a fear of physical space:

Mystics, claustrophobics, and those haunted by fear of open space (agoraphobia) tend to project their own body spaces as extensions of the outside world; they are often unable to limit themselves from the rest of nature.[31]

Compared to Ishmael's vision of the federated world of individual things, Ahab's perceptions are "native" in the sense that they do not acknowledge the fecundity and the diversity imparted to the world by civilization's process of naming. But this is a learned, artificial primitivism. It is based on the insider's denial of the Pequod -culture rather than on an outsider's ignorance of it. Ahab must move from an Ishmaeleian sensibility into the depths of the savage world of the unknown and unnamed Nature through a rite of passage which reverses the Pequod's drift in history towards increased articulation of the world in restorative speech. Only this reduction to the barren ground of pure precept will permit Ahab's regression to the beginnings of Western cultural consciousness. But because it is an act of denying the cultural realities of the Ishmael world, Ahab's regression ends in madness and not in authentic deliverance into a re-created pre-Babel universe of oceanic Oneness. Ahab's rite of passage involves these backward steps:

RITUAL-->KINSHIP-->MYTH OF SPATIAL EXTENSION-->MADNESS

The individual stages of this process deserve our attention.

With these steps the I-Thou relationship between man and

gods and the subject-object relationship between self and the external world no longer define Ahab's perception of reality. The existence of the Other dissolves into a single field of "powers" where the discrete character of heaven, hell, and earth merge.

Initially Ahab requires the cultural rituals of the Pequod as much as any other member of the crew. But as the quest for the great White Whale progresses, he uses these resources for increasingly subjective purposes. Melville's decidedly moral vision colours Ahab's hermetic empty subjectivity in ominous shades at the outset. Ishmael early in his narrative correctly asserts that Ahab "is 'darned in the midst of Paradise'" (147). From Ishmael's perspective the federation of the Pequod is a surrogate Paradise, a synthesis of the many in an artificial One. The resistance of Ahab's stubborn subjectivity to this community looks to Ishmael like moral transgression.

Ahab becomes garrisoned in his subjective view of the world by denying his reliance upon the Pequod's culture. He denies the technological forms of knowledge, when he destroys the ship's quadrant for example:

"Science! Curse thee, thou vain toy; and cursed be all the things that cast man's eyes aloft to that heavens, whose live vividness but scorches him, as these old eyes are even now scorched with thy light O sun! Curse thee, thou quadrant!" dashing it to the deck, "no longer will I guide my earthly way by thee; the level ship's compass, and by the level dead-reckoning, by log and line; these shall conduct me, and show me my place on the sea" (412).

Implicit in this rejection of the technology of navigation is a denial of the outside world's expanse as an entity separate from Ahab.

Any suggestion that Ahab, in his rejection of the mediation of the Pegud's instruments, is stepping outside the bounds of his culture would be misleading. For his rejection is still tied to the metaphysics of predestination and the fear of those forces of determinism in the physical world, two very particular features of the Pegud's Quaker hierarchy. Ahab turns towards the primitive only so far as these culturally rooted obsessions will permit. His denial of the his own culture's knowledge is in effect only a metaphysical refinement of that amputation from culture suffered by the beachcombers of Tahiti and described by Melville in Omoo. Ahab is in this regard an interesting hybrid comprised of Melville's aristocratic imagination on the one hand, and the patterns of primitive behaviour on the other. Ahab has been thrown back to the primitive structures of mythic wholeness by a very sophisticated application of the Romantic impulse of self-possession. Like King Lear, Ahab confronts the primal imprint of the self onto the world--primal in being prior to awareness and not yet subject to scrutiny or articulation in a language of mediation. He lives "aboriginally", absolutely, in that state of connaturality that Ishmael consciously and painstakingly works towards. Ahab too will "ow'st the worm

no silk, the beast no hide." [32] To relinquish one's knowledge of the world and of one's position in its geography is also to rob the world of its points of reference and to set oneself adrift in a seascape ironically harmonized into a single neutral plane of existence. Ahab's ritual of harmony betrays the moral character of the Pequod's culture which, over history, paints a representation of various contours, differences, and personalities in the world. Ahab's performance of this ritual stalls the Pequod's onward course in history. In a parallel fashion, Ahab's correcting of the ship's compass (Chapter 124) is an intrusion of the renegade self into the cultural structures of knowledge.

Ahab's ritual of denial absorbs the cultural mediation of Ishmael's world into the private domain of the self. The technical methods by which man negotiates the external world are removed. Ahab effectively dissolves the interface of cultural mediation between man and nature. A field of primitive organic energies replaces the grid of mediation. For Ahab, magnetism is no mere analogy or metaphor. It is a literal force bonding man with the fleshy substance of the universe. Ishmael discerns this bond when he observes how the native harpooners seem "attracted" to Ahab beyond conscious volition:

As for the men, though some of them lowly muttered, their fear of Ahab was greater than their fear of Fate. but as ever before, the pagan harpooners remained wholly unimpressed;

or if impressed, it was only with a certain magnetism, shot into their congenial hearts from inflexible Ahab's (424).

Ahab's magnetic spirit draws human beings into a subversive pact with one another. This is a kind of kinship with the natural world, one which removes the individuality of human will. The ritual of blood-baptism of the harpoon destined for Moby-Dick is another means by which Ahab bonds himself instinctively with the primitive energies of his harpooners. But this human association is really only one part of a wider continuum of bonding which includes the world of natural phenomena as well:

"All thy unnameable imminglings float beneath me here; I am buoyed by breaths of once living things, exhaled as air, but water now.

"Then hail, for ever hail, O sea, in whose eternal tossings the wild fowl finds his only nest. Born of earth, yet suckled by the sea; though hill and valley mothered me, ye billows are my foster-brothers" (409-410).

There is something faintly nostalgic in Ahab's declaration of affinity with the natural world. Tommo--in the native landscape he was unable to differentiate into cultural structures--noted the same kinship between the Typees and Nature. The prime difference between Tommo and Ahab lies in the role of the will. Ahab chooses his union with external space. Tommo had no choice but to project this view of harmony onto an unfamiliar social world in order to negotiate his way through it as a coherent self. In Moby-Dick, Melville transposes a condition of inter-

cultural perceptual blindness onto the much more artificial, "manufactured" Western psyche of Ahab, onto an intra-cultural perspective.

This transposition produces what Melville knows to be a misshapen world located between the American world of difference and the Pacific world of mythic totality. In this regard, Ahab's "primitivism" is not authentic. It is born of the seeds of Quaker consciousness, and is in effect supported by the foetal skeletons of Western metaphysics:

"O Nature, and O soul of man! how far beyond all utterance are your linked analogies! Not the smallest atom stirs or lives in matter, but has its cunning duplicate in mind" (264).

The same Ahab who demands the blood of his heathen harpooners for the demonic baptism of the harpoon is also capable of Emersonian idealism. This is a hybrid idealism, married to the lushness of the primitive. The "analogies" of Nature that appear in the human mind are the leaden metaphysical echoes of Ahab's assertion of kinship with the natural world. He wants that kinship to be more than a mediated form, a mere analogy. But this is the closest in language he can come to the bonding that exists "beyond all utterance." Ahab's language prevents him from escaping the conceptual framework of a culture that divides the universe into individual things.

Yet while Ahab cannot simply erase his dependency on his culture entirely--go "native" with quite the naive bliss of

earlier Melville castaways such as Tommo and Lem Hardy--he does have in mind something other than the reading of Emerson's benevolent, abstracted book of Nature. His reference to the analogies between man and nature subordinates the external world to the self, not the reverse. The world must be subsumed in the "oceanic" self. Ahab in his monomania is contemptuous of the autonomy of single objects. Ishmael envisioned both the family of man and the bodies of human knowledge as aggregates federated along one keel of commonwealth. Ahab resorts to an organic order of kinship, fully destructive of difference.

In this order, atomized particles of existence blend into a single mat of spatial extension. Kinship, with either man or phenomenon in the natural world, does not mean to Ahab merely the institutional bonding of two or more discrete objects, as it does to Ishmael. It refers rather to the sacrifice of the self to the totality of structure. If Ishmael indulges in "desperado philosophy" in his possession of the world, then Ahab is surely an advocate of what might be termed "renegade mythology". His distorted view of physical space is mythological in its denial of a landscape circumscribed by that cultural evolution which, through its course of development, has named individual things of the world and has thus brought them into visibility. Ahab violently shatters the barrier between the extended body and the unextended mind. In his eyes they are both visible;

both extend, limitless and whole, out into the fleshy material of the world. It is in this regard that Ahab hurls humanity backward into the primordial chaos before American man, before European man, before Polynesian man. He has made himself blind to the plurality of things offered by the symbol-world of Ishmael's cultural reality. Having just set eyes on Queequeg's majestic coffin, Ahab mutters to himself:

What things real are there, but imponderable thoughts? Here now's the very dreaded symbol of grim death, by a mere hap, made the expressive sign of the help and hope of most endangered life. A life-buoy of a coffin! Does it go further? Can it be that in some spiritual sense the coffin is, after all, but an immortality-preserver! I'll think of that. But no. So far gone am I in the dark side of the earth, that its other side, theoretic bright one, seems but uncertain twilight to me (432-433).

All refinement has vanished from Ahab's judgement. The possibilities for symbolic meaning are lost to the twilight of an unrefined world in which only the literal is ponderable: flesh as flesh. Ahab drives himself to the before-times of mythic, oceanic oneness where the mediating function of symbol is both unnecessary and impossible. Yet he still sees with eyes that are nonetheless Western and metaphysical. Burdened with this prejudice, Ahab becomes literally suicidal in his desire to annihilate, metaphysically, the self in its role as either an individuated perceiving subject among other subjects, or as a thing acted upon by the outside forces of history, technology, or the fates. When this begins to happen, the

channels between discrete things are smoothed into an oceanic flatness. There remains only a world of the absolute self, the site in consciousness of the pre-Babel self.

Ahab soon begins to blend symbiotically with Fedallah and Pip as a consequence. Ishmael witnesses the sfumato deepening of the shades of man into the darkness of what Hawthorne called the "infernal region" of the human soul. [33] This is the dark side of the pre-Babel world, a moral liminality of the self inflated to envelop the world in shadow. But Melville goes one step further in the depiction of this unholy trinity. He locates one of its members in an almost mythical epoch of pre-Western undifferentiation. In Fedallah, Ishmael sees "such a creature as civilized, domestic people see only in their dreams." Fedallah calls to mind, Ishmael continues, the exotic character of

the unchanging Asiatic communities, especially the Oriental isles to the east of the continent--those insulated, immemorial, unalterable countries, which even in these modern days still preserve much of the ghostly aboriginalness of earth's primal generations (199).

Fedallah shares with Ahab characteristics of mythic pre-history. They share the visible manifestation of the origins of Western consciousness. The "primal generations" of the unalterable Pacific also mark the origins of Melville's imagination. The "ghostly aboriginalness" of

those Pacific islands recalls the undifferentiated world Tommo encountered in Typee. On the decks of the Pequod Ahab and Fedallah are "yoked together", as if "an unseen tyrant [were] driving them", and "as if in the Parsee Ahab saw is forethrown shadow, [and] in Ahab the Parsee saw his abandoned substance" (439). Such is the metaphysics of shadows: one self dissolves into the engulfing, cannibalizing Other.

Ishmael notes elsewhere that Fedallah occupies Ahab's shadow (278). And Pip declares his affinity with Ahab when he says, "I stand in his air,--but I'm alone" (437). The mergings of selves and their submission to the darkness fulfil Ahab's rhetorical query concerning physical extension and the occupation of vacated space by other bodies:

How dost thou know that some entire, living, thinking thing may not be invisibly and uninterpenetratingly standing precisely where thou now standest; aye, and standing there in my spite? (391).

Speculations of this sort drive the perceiving self to incorporate, paradoxically, the individuality of the recognizable human person. Ahab advances into the wider field of indistinct energies. In this way, he maintains both poles; he can focus his contempt on things, persons, and localized events; but he can also blur them into a single unbroken plane of reality. To use Ishmael's imagery, sky and sea fade into one another in front of Ahab: "But

though contrasting within, the contrast was only in shades and shadows without: it was only the sex, as it were, that distinguished them" (442).

The fact that opposites are subsumed into the monolithic self also means that Ahab's quest against the Leviathan transcends the particularized ideas of materialism, naturalism, or radical idealism. Each of these notions is but a thematized version of the world, delineated within a post-Babel world of difference, of "inward contrast" as Ishmael would say. They are names, convenient labels with which to enumerate difference. But in being so, they also disengage matter and spirit, the visible and invisible, with a precision that Ahab in his monomania has left behind. The dilemma for Ahab is, instead, that of the flesh-hood of the world, what he calls "the living act" of man's placement in body. The Inside and the Outside--the perceiving subject and the object perceived--unite in the endless expanse of the world of flesh. He has done away with the mediation of tool and word in his renegade mythology of the self. Invisible but now tangible traces form the outlines of body, and delineate the characteristics of Moby-Dick. Hence Ahab's "Carlylean dedication to striking through the pasteboard masks of the phenomenal world, through "the mouldings of [the whale's] features" (144) to the heart of some other substance.

This appeal amounts to being a kind of absolute identity achieved through the mythic co-extension in space of spirit. It also points to the meaning and perhaps to the trigger of Ahab's madness. If individual bodies have been, or need to be, annihilated by Ahab's extreme sovereignty of self over the flesh of the world, so has the multivocal quality of human expression in language. It is Ahab and not Ishmael who destroys the external world to which the language of our cultural knowledge always refers. From Ahab's perspective words, like tools and other forms of mediation, have all dissolved into this mythic co-extensiveness along with the objects they once negotiated into a state of human knowledge.

This myth of extension also defines the withdrawn solitary artist who moves toward his encounter with the absolute condition of present things. But such an encounter can only occur with the payment of a price. Melville knows the dangers inherent in this kind of oceanic, transcendental yearning. In his development of Ahab we can see Melville waging human sanity against the anticipated revelation of the Truth.

There can be no doubt that this pursuit is indeed "madness, maddened". Pip fell from the security of the whaleboat into the indefiniteness of primordial Ocean. Ahab falls through the threadbare fabric of cultural security

into the indefiniteness of "savage" metaphysics. Ahab records the dialogue of Melville's imagination with itself. He draws the boundaries of the self by inflating its circumference to the point of dissolving.

There are numerous modern explanations for Ahab's madness. Some readers have chosen to see Ahab's monomania as part of Melville's assault on bourgeois America in the nineteenth century.[34] But we can also locate the madness of Ahab in the power of Melville's written language, in the capacity of Ishmael's network of tropes has granted itself in order to possess a unified world. In its antagonism to this power of language, Ahab's madness suggests Freud's notion of "object loss", a condition requiring the intervention of language to break the schizophrenic's identification of idea and thing.[35] Ahab requires precisely what he knows he has rejected, a symbol system which would confine him safely to the Pegud's world of mediation, of the everyday experience of a culture. Dwelling in culture in this way would gently reveal the turbulent unconscious to the pacifying consciousness, as it does for Ishmael. Ahab requires of language its function as a medium of sublimation. We might also place this object-loss in an ethical context, as Ahab's deviation from the normative participation by cultural man in the symbol world of Ishmaelean culture. In Ricoeur's terms, Ahab has forfeited "existential assimilation"[36] in his solitary rage against Moby-Dick.

These models restrict our understanding of both the character and the imaginative impulse Ahab embodies to terms which fall short of explaining what Melville hoped to gain in the creation of his maddened hero. It is true that Melville himself regarded Ahab's quest as politically indiscreet (to say the least), mentally unhealthy, and contrary to the democratic aspirations of his own America. These perspectives on his madness shed light on what price Ahab has paid without convincingly revealing what he has purchased with his payment.

A fourth modern explanation assists us in our understanding of the madness of Ahab, and that is Martin Heidegger's concept of "techne". According to Heidegger, "techne" is "the violence of knowledge" [37]. We can discern the outlines of an Ahab in what Heidegger refers to in An Introduction to Metaphysics as the "violent one",

the creative man, who sets forth into the unsaid, who breaks into the un-thought, compels the unhappened to happen and makes the unseen appear--this violent one stands at all times in the venture In venturing to master being, he must risk the assault on the nonessent, must risk dispersion, in-stability, disorder, mischief. The higher the summit of historical being-there, the deeper will be the abyss, the more abrupt the fall into the unhistorical, which merely thrashes around in issueless and placeless confusion.[38]

Ahab conforms to Heidegger's Romantic vision of the artist, whose creation, "techne", is a kind of purified and unmediated knowledge of being [39], a knowledge which is to be distinguished from Ishmael's mediated knowledge of image.

Ahab's maddened quest for the great White Whale plunges him deeper and deeper into this abyss. He penetrates to the deep structures of historical consciousness, never leaving the culture of the Pequod, but rather interrogating the place from which it has arisen. This is a place which has given birth to the concept and to the psychological contours of the Western self, the individual cogito. Ahab's madness incorporates all knowledge into the self. This incorporation is the opposite of Ishmael's, for it clearly removes the self from the inter-subjective structure of a culture. Ishmael's vision submits the self to that structure.

The formal correlative to Ahab's lapse into the spaces between the cultural world in which Ishmael and all other citizens of his Isolato commonwealth reside is the disturbance of Ishmael's expository prose by occasional dramatic interludes. Moby-Dick is in this respect a strange topography of language much like Mardi with its volcanic eruption of political allegory in the midst of its mythic narrative. Ishmael surveys the wide flat plane of cultural images of the Leviathan. He charts the historiographic frontier of his culture. The very presence of Ahab creates Shakespearean undulations, dramatic ripples in the surface of Ishmael's image-world. His denial of the mediating function of image within the domain of human culture produces the high concentrations of subjectivity in the

Pacific world of the novel. Descending like Orpheus, Ahab literally under-mines that visible plane of artifactual images of the Pequod's culture. In formal terms, then, Moby-Dick shows us the sedimentary layers of Melville's imagination. The remnants of the long documentary book on the whaling fishery that Melville initially intended to write survives as a verbal surface above Ahab's maddened quest for the Leviathan. [40]

The tragic form intrudes into Ishmael's narrative and disturbs the peace with which he outlines the cultural images of cetological natural history and anecdote. The dramatic form delivers into Melville's prose a terrible expectancy. In Goethe's terms, Melville discerns the polarity of Necessity and the human Will with these dramatic intrusions. "Through the motive of Necessity, tragedy became mighty and strong; through the motive of Will, weak and feeble. Out of the latter arose the so-called Drama, in which dread Necessity is overcome and dissolved through the Will." [41] With this revelation, the tragic does indeed erupt in Moby-Dick as the volcanoes of revolution did in Mardi. The tragic mode lures the invisible into visible, and asks the phenomenal world to declare openly the true character of its forces, motives, determinisms. This is what Melville took from his reading of Shakespeare.

It is the pressure upon his democratic imagination of Ahab's private and aristocratic imperial space which dissolves the expository prose of the speaking Ishmael into the loose fragmentary edginess of stage directions, into those sudden shifts of narrative perspective away from the intimacy of Ishmael's first-person narrative to the tyrannical force of Ahab's soliloquies. The narrative sequence from Chapter 37 ("Sunset") through to Chapter 40 ("MIDNIGHT, FORECASTLE") gives us the strong sensation of the primitive violence that lurks beneath the surface of the Pequod's culture, beneath the pasteboard masks of day-to-day ship's routine. The running banter of Melville's sailors shows them quailing before a dark rising wave of Leviathan history; they chatter, Fool-like and idle, filling in the silences that Ahab will widen.

* * *

Ishmael and Ahab are the fruition of the polarities within the Pequod's culture. They are two forces that prey upon the ship, "one to mount direct to Heaven, the other to drive yawingly to some horizontal goal" (200). In their respective forms of appropriation, Ishmael and Ahab represent the two transcendences of Melville's imagination. Melville bestows upon Ishmael the task of configuring the artifactual remains of Western culture. The cultural, public space he inhabits is very much a "found" one, just as his cetological images pre-exist him in the form of facts.

His is the imagination of the bricoleur, whose federation of Isolato objects reconstitutes meaning—in a cultural structure. Ahab does not have the status of a symmetrical equal, a counter-Ishmael. Ahab develops in the absences between Ishmael's configurations of culture. Where Ishmael transcends the world "horizontally", critically, Ahab transcends it "vertically", oceanically, in an attempt to secure a private and rarefied territory of the self. The first is a form of transcendence which restricts Melville to the world of knowledge accumulated by the intersubjective forces in a culture; the second is an archaic human desire for the absorption of the world by the oceanic womb-like self.

Notes to CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Letter to Hawthorne, 16? April? 1851, Letters, Letters, pp. 124-125.
2. Letter to Evert Duyckinck, Letters, pp. 79-80.
3. Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," Moby-Dick, (eds) Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker, (New York: Norton, 1967), p. 543.
4. Ibid, p. 546.
5. Ibid, pp. 545-546.
6. Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, (ed) J.P. Mayer, (trans) George Laurence, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1969), p. 429.
7. Letter to Hawthorne, 1? June 1851, Letters, pp. 126-127.
8. Letters, p. 127.
9. Leyda, I, p. 254.
10. Letter to Hawthorne, 17? November 1851, Letters, p. 142.
11. Georges Gusdorf, Speaking (La Parole), (trans) Paul T. Brockelman, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p. 31. In Gusdorf's view, the intersection of the

personal and the cultural in this fashion displaces the personal perspective on universal human experiences into national and contingent terms, particularly in the age of nineteenth-century Romanticism. The same deflection defines Ishmael's accumulation of facts.

12. "It is not to be reduced to the level of a vicious circle, or a circle which is merely tolerated. In the circle is a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing" (Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, [trans] John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, [New York: Harper and Row, 1960], p. 195).

13. Louis Hartz, The Founding of New Societies, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1964), p. 61.

14. Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man: The Structuralist Controversy, (eds) Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), p. 251.

15. Gusdorf, p. 7.

16. Beongcheon Yu, "Ishmael's Equal Eye: The Source of Balance in Moby-Dick", ELH 32, (1965): "By juxtaposing these views we detect the peculiar polarity in which Melville's mind works, duplicating a related conflict in Romanticism: intellectual individualism or aristocracy culminating in the

cult of genius or hero, and political democracy leading to the upsurge of the common man. In Moby-Dick this clash defines the difference between Ahab's sultanism and Ishmael's 'divine equality' (p. 122).

17. Tocqueville, p. 439.

18. Howard P. Vincent, The Trying-Out of Moby-Dick, (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1949), p. 121. Vincent's long discussion of Melville's cetological expositions, and of Melville's adaptation of them to his aesthetic purposes revolves around Melville's specifically literary transformations of the factual material he would have culled from the pages of Thomas Beale's The Natural History of the Sperm Whale, Frederick Bennett's A Whaling Voyage Round the World, and J. Ross Browne's Etchings of a Whaling Cruise. For the purposes of my discussion in this chapter of the relationship of Ishmael's subjectivity to the cultural structures of knowledge presented by his cetology, I accept as given Melville's reliance on these sources. I wish, however, to extend this biographical and textual fact into a discussion of the implications of Ishmael's vast cetological knowledge.

19. The term is E.H. Gombrich's. "Will-to-form" carries the sense of Kunstwollen. "The 'will-to-form' is ... a 'will-to-make-conform', the assimilation of any new shape to the schemata and patterns an artist has learned to handle"

(Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation, [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960], pp. 21, 77). The use of this term is particularly relevant to Ishmael in two ways: his interest in the pictorial representation of whales by cultures introduces the issue of their configuration as visible objects in the imagination; but more to the point is the fact that Ishmael's discourse on whales evidences his role as the intentional focus and "conforming" intelligence in the novel, a role which subordinates the various pieces of cetological bricolage to cultural "schemata" in an artistic "assimilation."

20. Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, (trans) Suzanne Langer, (New York: Dover Publications, 1946), p. 50. Cf. Jack C. Wolf: "The use of the whale as a decoy to take the casual reader's attention from the significance of the voyage itself is, like the use of Biblical names and references, a technique for misdirecting attention of all but the most careful reader" ("The Two-Faced Whale: Naming as Misdirection in Moby-Dick," Literary Onomastics Studies, 7: 111-126). Cassirer's thoughts on the cultural act of naming provide a context for the numerous critical views on Ishmael's somewhat abstract presence in Moby-Dick. Charles Feidelson, for example, argues that Ishmael "increasingly becomes a presence, a visionary activity, rather than a man" (Symbolism and American Literature, p. 31). Richard Chase

suggests that he "all but disappears as a character", (The American Novel and Its Tradition, [New York, 1957], p. 94).

W.H. Auden contends that he is the "recording consciousness" of human experience, (The Enchafed Flood, [New York: Random House, 1950], p. 115).

21. Jacques Maritain, The Range of Reason, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), p. 23.

22. Sharon Cameron, The Corporeal Self: Allegories of the Body in Hawthorne and Melville, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), pp. 4-5.

23. Quoted in Moby-Dick, (eds) Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker, (New York: Norton, 1967), p. 529.

24. Louis O. Mink, "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension," New Literary History, 1 (1969-70), pp. 541-588.

25. Cassirer, p. 37.

26. John T. Irwin touches on the centrality of the Babel myth when he discusses the attempts by the writers of the American Renaissance to make language function graphically as a device restoring a pre-historical unity of man and world: "the Biblical account of the tower of Babel can be read as a parable of the unsuccessful attempt of the phallic linking power of human speech to supplant the cosmic tree as

the center of the world" (American Hieroglyphics, p. 35).

Notably Irwin does not address Ishmael's reliance on the polis-language of cultural knowledge. Ishmael is successful in the creation of, and belief in the surrogate linking.

27. See Mardi, p. 357, and White-Jacket, p. 76. Both of these are interludes in which the narrator experiences what Melville called the "all feeling", a Goethean notion of the self's dissolution into oceanic wholeness (see Melville's letter to Hawthorne, 17 June 1851, Letters, pp. 130-131).

28. In purely formal, aesthetic terms the bulk of Ishmael's knowledge is an issue of Melville's categories of "sources". For an examination of the symbolic strata of Melville's references in Moby-Dick, see Walter Weber, "Some Characteristic Symbols in Herman Melville's Works," English Studies, 30 (1949), 217-224.

29. Edgar A. Dryden, for example, treats Ishmael's narrative as a self-enclosed form referring only to itself. "Even at moments of highest inspiration, when he is apparently overwhelmed with the wonders of the whaling world, Ishmael's primary concern is with the act of writing" (Melville's Thematics of Form, p. 95).

30. Irwin, again referring to the American Renaissance generally, distinguishes between the logical limits of self-

evidence of the linguistic sign and the realm of mysticism that lies beyond them. (American Hieroglyphics, p. 96). But clearly Melville in his creation of both Ishmael and Ahab was not bound to such logical limits, for both characters inhabit their world according to nonlogical terms. Ishmael's world of facts is not an empirical world of measurement and logical observation, but an historical landscape lush with accumulated meanings, some valid and others "less erroneous." And Ahab's denial of this world is not a resort to what Melville would consider mysticism. Instead Ahab inhabits a world of strained belief. To ascribe labels of logical validity to these modes of inhabitation and possession of the world is to misread the novel and to render it a philosophical rather than existential (and therefore experiential) account.

31. David Lowenthal, "Geography, Experience, and Imagination: Towards a Geographical Epistemology", Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 51; 3 (September 1961), 244.

32. King Lear, III.iv.205-107.

33. Melville scored the following passage in his copy of "Rappaccini's Daughter": "Blessed are all simple emotions, be they dark or bright! It is the lurid mixture of the two that produces the illuminating blaze of the infernal regions" (Leyda, I, 380-81). Melville has separated out

those elements of the lurid mixture into the characters of Pip and Fedallah, only to re-link them in the myth of spatial co-extension.

34. Henry Nash Smith, in Democracy and the Novel: Popular Resistance to Classic American Writers, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), argues that Ahab's madness is directed primarily against the "routine correctness of established formulas and decorums" (p. 51). This is in the same vein as Henry A. Murray's thesis that Ahab allows Melville to target the upper middle class culture of his day for criticism ("In Nomine Diaboli", "Moby-Dick": Centenary Essays, [Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1953], pp. 13, 20).

35. Sigmund Freud, "The Unconscious," Collected Papers, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1950), vol 4, p. 100.

36. Paul Ricoeur uses this term to distinguish the true value of symbols from an overly mechanical understanding of them as merely technical signs (Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation, trans. Denis Savage, [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970], p. 31). Ishmael manages to retain the existential role of these symbols through his integration into the fabric of his cultural knowledge; but Ahab only polarizes the technical (the instrumental) and the existential aspects of the Pegud in his destruction of the quadrant, for example.

37. Martin Heidegger, An Introduction to Metaphysics, (trans) Ralph Manheim, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 165.

38. Heidegger, p. 159.

39. Heidegger, p. 161.

40. The theory that Moby-Dick assumed two distinct forms during its composition has been advanced by numerous critics: George R. Stewart, "The Two Moby-Dicks," American Literature, 25 (January 1954), 417-448; Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael, p. 35; Howard P. Vincent, The Trying-Out of "Moby-Dick", p. 45; Leon Howard, Herman Melville: A Biography, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), pp. 150-179. James Barbour discusses the evidence for the theory and concludes that Melville wrote Moby-Dick in three phases: 1) a whaling novel begun in February 1850 and nearly finished by August of that year; 2) the cetological chapters written between August 1850 and early 1851; and 3) a final component written under the influence of Shakespeare and Hawthorne from early 1851 to the fall of 1851 when the novel was published ("The Composition of Moby-Dick," American Literature, 47 [1947], 343-360).

41. Goethe, "Shakespeare ad Infinitum," Goethe's Literary Essays, ed. J.E. Spingarn, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1967), pp. 181-82.

Chapter 8

"PRIMITIVE ELEMENTALIZING" IN PIERRE: THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE SELF AND CULTURE

Whenever [love] succeeds in realizing itself it breaks up a marriage and transforms it into what society does not want it to be: a revelation of two solitary beings who create their own world, a world that rejects society's lies, abolishes time and work, and declares itself to be self-sufficient. It hardly seems strange, then, that society should punish love and its testimony--poetry--with equal malevolence, condemning them to the confused, clandestine world of the forbidden, the absurd, the abnormal. Now is it strange that both love and poetry explode in strange, pure forms: a scandal, a crime, a poem.

-Octavio Paz, The Labyrinth of Solitude. [1]

The sinking of ~~the~~ Pequod could only constitute an impasse for Melville. On the one hand, the wreck of this magnificent ship of culture was the consequence of moral reckoning; the result of Ahab's descent into the underworld of Western culture and its ethics. When the Pequod went down, all things--man, world, culture, nature, went with it.

Pierre takes this ending--catastrophic, ambiguous, enigmatic--as its beginning. The Pequod was an archeological site of Melville's culture. It was a place where Ishmael, as a cultural self, could know the world

through connaturality, in an intimacy that brought together the known things of that culture and the "nameless things" of the natural order extending beyond it. The aboriginal first things of man and nature were phenomenally present on and around the Pequod.^o In Pierre, this aboriginal connaturality becomes morally untenable in a new cultural site of Ambiguity. The place where Pierre Glendinning commences his archeological search is a disrupted, dishevelled, "wilderness of tiles, slate, shingles, and tin." [2] Some years later, Melville would come upon a very similar landscape of monumental, broken history located not in America, but in Judaea:

Whitish mildew pervading whole tracts of landscape--bleached--leprosy-- encrustation of curses--old cheese--bones of rocks--crunched, knawed & mumbled--mere refuse & rubbish of creation--like that laying outside of Jaffa Gate--all Judea seems to have been accumulations of this rubbish. [3]

Pierre Glendinning's world of Ambiguity, strewn with its own kind of debris, its bricolage of belief, value, and cultural convention anticipates the condition of this, sacred landscape as Melville saw it.

Ambiguity, in this context, has a special meaning. It is not a condition of merely clouded perception into which man falls as a result of some lapse in his thinking or his actions. It is, rather, the foundation of being human, of being a subject whose existence "asserts itself as an absolute which must seek its justification within itself,

even though it may be lost by preserving itself." [4] It is the "absolute condition of present things" as they strike the "sovereign" self. For Pierre Glendinning the absolute condition of ambiguity is dispersed into a multitude of fragments, "ambiguities" in the form of "undefined half-suggestions, which now and then people the soul's atmosphere, as thickly as in a soft, steady snow-storm, the snow-flakes people the air" (84). Pierre's world, like Ishmael's Pacific is crowded, dense with the reified, iconic fragments of the absolute.

Pierre, the text, is Melville's new configuration of man, culture, and cosmos. Yet for all its novelty of form and its controversial material on incest and religious ethics, Pierre is as much an echo of Mardi as a charting of new territory. In fact, Melville's dark and distorted romance recalls Mardi precisely because it assumes a new direction. In 1852 Melville found himself cramped by his artistic career, and desperate to break free of the reputation of being a muddled, idiosyncratic, and unpopular writer. As he had done in 1847, he wrote to his British publisher, now Richard Bentley, promising again to provide his audience with a "regular romance". [5] For a second time, he announced his complicity with the demands of a conventional genre, in the hope that he might meet the taste and the expectations of a wider, more receptive readership.

Mardi and Pierre, for similar reasons, did not succeed in this. In Mardi an imagination of allegory intervenes into a Pacific, Polynesian world of facts. The factual, within the romance of the Mardian landscape, becomes overdetermined. Pierre begins as a consciously literalized allegory of love in which the conventions of society and those of the romance (as literary form) suggest and complement one another. Although there is a context of patient irony in the way Melville presents this romance, there is still in the activity of allegory an anxiety of placement and displacement, a fascination with the artifice of convention behind the novel. In Mardi, Melville transformed the geographical displacement inherent in his early travel narratives into an historical displacement by means of that overdetermining imagination. Once Melville began to penetrate his factual materials (i.e., the "real" Polynesian landscape), he raised questions concerning the historical character of all knowledge and its interpretation.

When he wrote Mardi, Melville broke open the horizons of the Polynesian world with the intrusion into it of Western metaphysics and a Western sense of history. Pierre bursts horizons in like fashion. In this troubled fiction we move from the kind of separation that Ishmael and Ahab experience in Moby-Dick --an historical displacement from origins--to a larger sense of displacement (that of man from the God who guarantees Creation and underwrites Civilization). Indeed

the historical displacement Melville wrote about in White-Jacket and Moby-Dick is redefined in cosmological terms in Pierre, in a manoeuvre exactly parallel to that by which Melville redefined the geographical displacement in Typee and Omoo into the historical displacement depicted in Mardi. In this respect, both Mardi and Pierre burst the limits of the known world with a kind of formal and structural violence.

In fact, another pertinent resemblance between Mardi and Pierre arises from this violence, with the recurrent observation by most critics of the formal instability of these books. F.O. Matthiessen noted that what T.S. Eliot said of Hamlet-- that it is full of "intractable stuff"[6]-- could easily and aptly apply to Pierre. Modern opinions have not deviated far from this early impression of Melville's version of Hamlet. What has changed over time and from one critical discussion to the next is the explanation for the deadness, the seeming inertia of Melville's prose. The fact that this inertia has been accepted as a given has contributed to Pierre's status as an important text of formalist and poststructuralist criticism. In this context the formal weakness of the book becomes a deconstructive, existentialist, or phenomenological indication of its power as an authentic fiction.

Hershel Parker has argued that Melville gave in to his desires to attack his reviewers and was "diverted from the exploration of Pierre's psyche into a psychological analysis of his own literary career".[7] Akin to this line of argument is Michael Rogin's contention that the self-referential characteristics of Pierre bring the narrator to a halt and signal Melville's growing and irreversible artistic frailty.[8] This kind of account credits Melville with an awareness of how language destabilizes, decenters the whole discourse of man by undermining the status of such metaphysical terms as God, self, Being, truth, and reality.[9] In the later works of Melville, says John Irwin, "there is a growing sense that the privileging of the 'self', the belief in its stable, independent existence, its godlikeness (God being the name for the personified absoluteness of the self), is the absolute illusion, and that the clearest indication of the self's nonpersistence after death is its nonpersistence in life, its radical inconsistency." [10]

There is, I think, a reconstructive impulse at the core of this formal violence of language. But it is not confined to Pierre. The equivocations of language and of the real are also present in Mardi. In both novels, fragmentation is the formal equivalent of the discovery a wider zone of man's cultural space. Mardi shows this cultural space to be historically, as well as geographically, blocked off. The

weight of historical data in the Tahitian world prompts Melville to expand his notion of culture to include in Omoo a consideration of the historical dimension of a particular group's collective experience. As we have already seen, Melville discovered in Mardi the historicity of man's interpretation and delineation of that space. Pierre, perhaps more than Mardi, is an imperious expansion of Melville's notion of culture. It, too, is an "acculturation" of new regions of human experience into an already hybridized and blurred conception of human domain. After Moby-Dick, Melville once again discovered that his definition of cultural man had expanded beyond its merely historical boundaries. As with Mardi, Pierre performs a necessary yet perilous reconstruction.

It is true that in Pierre Glendinning, Melville dramatizes--as he had done previously in the character of Ahab--what might be termed a crisis in the referentiality of language and things alike, of signs:

far as any geologist has yet gone down into the world, it is found to consist of nothing but surface stratified on surface. To its axis, the world being nothing but superinduced superfices. By vast pains we mine into the pyramid; by horrible gropings we come to the central room; with joy we espy the sarcophagus; but we lift the lid-- and no body is there!--appallingly vacant as vast is the soul of a man (285).

For modern terms, for a vocabulary which highlights the role of language defining the very texture of human existence, we might look to Michel Foucault:

We know that discourse has the power to arrest the flight of an arrow in a recess of time, in the space proper to it. It is quite likely, as Home has said, that the gods send disasters to men so that they can tell of them, and that in this possibility speech finds its infinite resourcefulness; it is quite likely that the approach of death--its sovereign (sic) gesture, its prominence within human memory--hollows out in the present and in existence the void toward which and from which we speak. [11]

But, for Melville, the presence of the void does not mean that the notion of the empty word is a certainty. For this to be the case, the universe must be seen as a divided territory of spirit and matter, infinity and the finite. We must be confident in assuming that the universe, as Melville regards it, can be so easily divided, as it is for Plotinus and Plinlimmon, into chronometrical and horological zones. Yet the greater bulk of evidence in Pierre confirms that Melville does not deny the existence of the Outside outright as much as he skilfully undermines its remoteness, its quality of being "out there". The ultimate horror in the novel is not that God, truth, and the invisible realm do not exist, but that Pierre himself discovers them within the matrix of experience that Melville's notion of culture is now forced to embrace. The tomb may indeed be empty. And yet though the corpse has been removed, it has not ceased to exist. It has merely vanished. On this axis of implied possibility revolves the whole world of Pierre Glendinning.

Melville's doubts about the potency of language arise out of his realization that words, charged with the mandate for

referring to transcendental realities, can point to them without actually identifying them, without making them present. Like paintings hanging on a wall, these realities are "grandly outlined, but miserably filled" (350) by a language forced to its limits, and successful in delimiting the structure of the world but little of its moral substance. "As soon as you say Me, a God, a Nature, so soon you jump off from your stool and hang from the beam," Melville once told Hawthorne. "Take God out of the dictionary, and you should have him in the street." [12] Melville, by the same token, knows that language is all he has, and that culture is the site of language from which there can be no romantic departure. While the language of good society and decorum threatens to blot out a God, a Nature, and a self, an alternate language, one with greater integrity, retains the possibility of disclosing those very entities in some reformed, reconstructed site of culture. The awareness that language can become worn and ineffective in speaking certain truths prescribes an agenda for Melville's novel. William Hamilton's reflections on Melville's curious statement are instructive in this regard: "God is really a lexicographical problem now. Does the word, in its Christian usage, really work? In some areas, in some cultures, the answer is 'yes.' Its theological use might be labeled 'archaic,' suggesting that it once had a proper usage, but no longer." [13]

For Melville, it is not just "God," but all metaphysical, moral, cultural, and social tags that have become archaic. As he searches amid the rubbish of this worn language, Pierre Glendinning hopes to come upon a clearing, a primordial--as opposed to archaic--region of absolute existence, named and located by the utterance of a "magismanic word" (147). It is only by means of language that archaic words may be cleared away. Melville's text thus reads like a struggle of language against itself.

Melville comes to know this paradoxical condition of language and of the cultural site of America he inhabits not by means of lengthy philosophical speculation, but by default. As Hawthorne was to note later in the decade, Melville was incapable of deriving comfort from assertions of either belief or unbelief. [14] Paralyzed between the two poles, he could only open up a volatile internal cultural space of Ambiguities, in which he, like Kierkegaard, could express a desire to be and not to be at once. Melville becomes involved in the imaginative reformation of history and human thought processes within the domain of a language reanimated, literally re-spirited. On the level of good society, Pierre is Hamlet, aware that "The time is out of joint" (168). For Melville admits into the modernity of American democratic society an Elizabethan cosmology capable of suffering the tangible effects of moral transgression:

Nor now, though profoundly sensible that his whole previous moral being was overturned, and

that for him the fair structure of the world must, in some then unknown way, be entirely rebuilt again from the lower-most corner stone up; nor now did Pierre torment himself with the thought of that last desolation; and how the desolate place was to be made flourishing again. He seemed to feel that in his deepest soul, lurked an indefinite but potential faith, which could rule in the interregnum of all hereditary beliefs, and circumstantial persuasions; not wholly, he felt, was his soul in anarchy. The indefinite regent had assumed the scepter as its right; and Pierre was not entirely given up to his grief's utter pillage and sack (87).

It is a reconstruction that Melville must conduct within the widening horizons of Pierre Glendinning's soul, within a storm of swirling Ambiguities on the nakedest possible plain. Ambiguity, as absolute existence, appears to Pierre in the desolation and the bricolage of an archaic language that articulates his American social and moral conventions.

2.

Pierre's reconstruction begins with the desolation of those mores that civilization has corrupted. The innocent Pierre Glendinning portrayed at the novel's beginning is animated by an intense cultural awareness of self and place. At the core of his personality and his identity exists an Edenic yet artificial moral sensibility manifest in his devotion to his father:

There has long stood a shrine in the fresh-foliaged heart of Pierre, up to which he had ascended by many tableted steps of remembrance; and around which he annually had hung fresh wreaths of sweet and holy affection. Made one green bower of at last, by such successive votive offerings of his being; this shrine seemed, and was indeed, a place for the

celebration of a chastened joy, rather than for any melancholy melancholy rites. But though less mantled, and tangled with garlands, this shrine was of marble--a niched pillar, deemed solid and eternal, and from whose top radiated all those innumerable sculptured scrolls and branches which supported the entire one-pillared temple of his moral life; as in some beautiful gothic oratories, one central pillar, trunk-like, upholds the roof. In this shrine, in this niche of this pillar, stood the perfect marble form of his departed father; without blemish, unclouded, snow-white and serene; Pierre's fond personification of perfect human goodness and virtue. Before this shrine, Pierre poured out of the fullness all of young life's most reverential thoughts and beliefs. Not to God had Pierre ever gone in his heart, unless by ascending the steps of that shrine, and so making it the vestibule of his abstractest religion (58).

The metaphor of the soul as a shrine is clumsy and leaden. With it Melville situates at the outset of Pierre's quest, America's optimism and its monumental legacy in the emotional and psychological interior of his protagonist. This curious effusion of overburdened language communicates something of the baroque clustering of contrary attributes in the civilization of the New Republic. The uneasy co-existence of the Edenic foliage and the weighty solidity of great architecture, built to triumphant classical proportions, has the effect of reifying the American social experiment at the same time as pointing to its structural inconsistencies. In the centre of this conceptualization, Melville places the statuesque presence of Pierre's moral core in the form of his devotion to his father. In this interior "temple" of Pierre's soul we find a culture already overburdened to the point of crumbling.

The specific event which heralds the inevitable downfall of this monumental propriety of American innocence is Pierre's discovery that his father has left behind an illegitimate half-sister whom he feels obliged to support in observance of the injunction of Christian charity. The moral pressure of two subliminally connected events drive Pierre further into spiritual speculation. The first is the predictable reaction of good society, represented chiefly by his mother, to Pierre's decision to abandon the Glendinning fortune and heritage to care for Isabel. The second and not so predictable event is Pierre's romantic love for his half-sister. Neither of these crucial turns in the plot of Melville's romance convincingly justifies the motivation and the extent of Pierre's despair. It would seem, ironically, that Melville carried from his close reading of Hamlet its lack of an objective correlative. At first glance his defiance of the social order promises to function as a romantic victory over society. But for this to have been the case--and in Pierre it is not--Melville would have needed to limit the dramatic conflict between the individual and his society to a social arena, and more specifically to the town and country of a visible and recognizable America. In the final analysis, it is clear that Melville uses this rather incredible transgression for some ulterior purpose.

The problem and the brilliance of Pierre, lie in Melville's new vision of culture which exceeds the bounds of

both society and colonized American nature. Melville refuses to remain in the visible world of moral bond and kinship rules. Those structures are the social counterparts to language in their capacity to name, fix, and organize. They become for Pierre talismanic: he uses these very components of social order as the overtures to infinity. In this respect, the rules of this absolute culture overextend the manifestations in the "superinduced superfices" (285) of society and nature respectively. [15] The incest taboo, after all, extends human action beyond the natural and the social categories into the jurisdiction of the infinite, the deified. Fred See has examined the relationship between the breakdown of the novel's form and the violation of the incest taboo, grounding his argument in Levi-Strauss' structural interrelation of language, myth, and kinship. Destroying the fundamental kinship bonds in the first half of his novel, Melville, according to See, uses the rest of Pierre as "an attempt to supplement or interpret [by means of metaphor, chiefly] these problematic relationships, to regain what has been lost by the violation of what has been given". [16] But the question arises whether Melville would concur that language is a desperate substitution.

It seems more likely that Pierre is Melville's appeal to a kind of renovated primitivism. The unlawful and unnatural character of an act of incest is immediately placed in the larger context of an offence registered in a higher

language. It is not merely lost in the arbitrary substitution of language for moral order. What fascinates Melville is that this offence is manifold. The incest taboo brings into stark visibility numerous "incarnations" of authority, and of sovereignty in human language. Pierre Glendinning sees what Tommo in Typee could not penetrate; whereas the latter remained impervious to the cultural superstructure of offence rooted in Typee ritual and customs, Pierre Glendinning catches a fleeting glimpse of the same superstructure of cosmological offence in the very fabric of his referentiality, in his language. The offence underpins his society and its mores: social transgression commits natural transgression; natural transgression heralds the primordial violence which creates finite man out of infinitude.

The early world of Pierre's teens, prior to his discovery of Isabel, is remarkably free of such overlaps of sovereignty. It is a clearly blocked-out cultural space expressing all the virginity of the American realm. He moves initially in the pristine "verdant trance" of Nature (3): "It had been his choice fate to have been born and nurtured in the country, surrounded by scenery whose uncommon loveliness was the perfect mould of of a delicate poetic mind" (5). The young Pierre needed to look no further than this natural landscape to see the monuments of the American heritage of the Glendinning lineage. The

ironical import of this natural splendour is not lost on Melville:

Herein by apt analogy we behold the marked anomalousness of America; whose character abroad, we need not be surprised, is misconceived, when we consider how strangely she contradicts all prior notions of human things; and how wonderfully to her, Death becomes transmuted into Life. So that political institutions, which in other lands seem above all things intensely artificial, with America seem to possess the divine virtue of a natural law; for the most mighty of nature's laws is this, that out of Death she brings Life. (9).

For a brief period at least, America allows Pierre to savour the idea of a "natural" culture in all its hermetic isolation. Melville, for a time, mutes the voice of the gods in the abeyance of the cosmological superstructure of human existence. For a short time, Pierre will thrive in his assumption that, under natural law, America has triumphed over its geographical and historical displacement from its European antecedents. Saddle Meadows is a strange hybrid of Edenic hortus conclusus and rigid aristocracy which harbors in its midst a wilderness democrat "perhaps a little too Radical" (13). This landscape, to use Harold Bloom's phrase, attests to the "hyperbolical trope of self-begetting . . . the starting point of the last Western Sublime, the great sunset of selfhood in the Evening Land." [17]

If the Saddle Meadows version of the world to which we are introduced is that of the American consciousness, it is

also a retrospective glance on Melville's earlier studies in epistemological abeyance. As we have seen before, Melville has, through his evolving career as a novelist, interiorized that national consciousness of America's multiple, constitutive displacements. The emphasis in these opening chapters on the paradoxical naturalness of American civilization recalls the description of the Marquesan world in Typee. It is as though Pierre were the result of the transplantation of the whole genealogy of America into the peaceable kingdom of that Polynesian paradise deceptively present to Tommo's consciousness. As with Tommo, Pierre has only a set of cultural assumptions (of which he is similarly unconscious) to rely upon in the absence of knowledge and true self-knowledge. What Pierre does not realize in his state of innocence is that the world of Nature and natural law he perceives is actually the product of a culturally derived hermeticism. It shields him from the threatening potential of certain "transatlantic" realities. The sudden arrival of Isabel, with all her shadowy recollections of the Europe of her origins, will make visible America's geographical displacement. (Tommo of course was spared of such reminders by the early disappearance of his friend Toby.) The knowledge Isabel will bring concerning the moral transgression of his father will alter the historical displacement of Saddle Meadows, transforming the mythological moral purity of the Glendinning lineage into a

disappointingly human past of broken vows. In this latter regard, Saddle Meadows, prior to Pierre's getting of the wisdom of a true history, recalls the historically rooted denial of history that Melville previously captured in the image of the Neversink in White-Jacket.

An ominous portrait of the "domesticness of [human] love" (192) materializes out of this hermetic surrogate genealogy. It is hard to imagine the Pierre of the novel's conclusion ever having resided comfortably in that society. Yet the naive early Pierre is an heir to all that it represents, including the moral dualism which prompts the very hermeticism from which he will later escape. The Reverend Falsgrave exemplifies the self-enclosure of a society locked into the domains of its own righteousness. The social controversy of Delly Ulver, who has borne an illegitimate child, requires the preacher to make "territorial" circumscriptions to protect the flock from the contagion of the reprobate:

"The sins of the father shall be visited upon the children to the third generation," said Mr. Falsgrave, with some slight reluctance in his tones. "But Madam, that does not mean, that the community is in any way to take the infamy of the children into their own voluntary hands, as the conscious delegated stewards of God's inscrutable dispensations" (100).

The dualism of the moral "inside" of the community and the "outside" of the reprobate is merely an extension of the essential dualism of America and its origins; both bespeak

the moral superiority of enchanted ground over the surrounding world.

Pierre, distrustful of the urbanity of this rationalism/rationalization, crosses those boundaries in his knowledge of Isabel's past, and in his decision to assume responsibility for both Isabel and Delly, who have been effectively reduced to outcasts, relegated to the moral wilderness of good society. Among other things, his care for the women integrates him in the moral continuity of history which has become fossilized in his civilization's platitudes and its pretenses of decorum. His strict adherence to Christian teaching creates a monistic moral universe which has no outside. Pierre's opting for social deviation, in effect, throws into high relief the iconic emptiness of the American civilization, as Melville chooses to portray it here. Indeed, Pierre notices a desperate paucity beneath the wealth of this metaphysical regime and in its moral protectionism: he soon becomes aware of a certain "povertiresque in the social landscape" (276).

America's ethical covenant with its institutionalized and aphorized Christianity occupies Pierre's psyche in a troubling and cancerous way. Once he chooses to assist Isabel, in the observance of the conventional Christianity of his upbringing, he is made vulnerable to the inflexible social system which imposes its demands on him. Kinship

becomes a manifold constraint: America is his mother both figuratively and literally. And Pierre, had he continued in his innocent acceptance of the demands of his genealogy, would have fathered offspring for the moral American future. But, as well, Pierre has been fathered by a man who has transgressed the boundaries of that good society on which all virtue rests. The product of that transgression has descended upon him in the person of Isabel. Her presence in his life forces a reckoning. Out of this division of loyalties, emerges Melville's critique of social knowledge as well as the task for its revision. From out of the fracture, Pierre emerges, like Enceladus from rock, to question the structures of kinship and marriage which commute that knowledge into practice. Kinship, in Pierre, is the morphology of order enframed in social law, yet clearly broken free of its anchoring principle. Its violation in the act of incest constitutes "a cataclysm, a sort of epistemological apocalypse." [18] Incest, then, becomes in Melville's romance the means by which the moral ground of society is made visible once again. As a fragment of structure, broken free from the rest of the society, the incest taboo becomes the "talismanic word". Pierre clings to the possibility that some reconstruction of the social order can be engineered in the ruins of the old one. Charlie Millthorpe in his definition of marriage, for example, while correctly revealing the institution's limits

of security, also points to the alternate mode of existence beyond social form and convention. Millthorpe says of marriage that it "settles, centralizes, and confines a man," and that

it makes the world definite to him; it removes his morbid subjectiveness and makes all things objective. . . . By marriage, I might contribute to the population of men, but not to the census of mind. The great men are all bachelors. Their family is the universe (281).

This objectification recalls, at least on a superficial level, Ishmael's sustained reliance on the network of facts and anecdotes comprising his cetological culture. But closer examination shows the kinship system to be less applicable and sustaining to Pierre than the network of words is to Ishmael. For one thing, Ishmael's cetology never resists his attempts to inhabit it. But the kinship structure fragments around Pierre in such a way as to prohibit his meaningful participation in it. A correlative perhaps to Melville's own ability to participate in the society of readers who reject him, Pierre Glendinning is cast out of the social order by virtue of his possession of anti-social knowledge concerning his father's transgression of the social code, and by his own obligation to support the elder Glendinning's illegitimate offspring.

Under these conditions, knowledge ceases to exist in its reified, socially inert structures and codes of civilized behaviour. It is as though the Pequod were to have sunk in

the harbour under the weight of all its trophies. In its absence, Pierre is thrown back onto the knowledge of his own intuition: he is forced into a contemplation of the *suigeneris* origins of his own morality. He now floats into an "ether of visions", as the world of physical objects has "now slidingly displaced itself from around him" (85).

It is a dubious liberation, though. Couched in the language of the nineteenth-century American romance, these events appear to Pierre as "lineaments of an added supernaturalness" (85). This is to say that they are recognizable as neither natural nor social events. What is absolute defies description in the language of romance or in any other language. In this absoluteness things become present as they have never been before.

Under these conditions Pierre Glendinning, through the course of an inarticulate spiritual odyssey, dares to reconstruct a Nature, a God, a self proximate (though invisible) by divesting each of the metaphysical trappings Western history has bestowed to it. The contemplation of these entities, emptied of metaphysical substance, prompts the opening up of a strange interior region in Melville's novel, a new terra incognita in the now settled American landscape. This frontier of consciousness assumes the indefinite form and the limitless expanse of the "soul." The opening of this frontier promises a joint revelation and

concealment of new entities to replace the Nature, God and self of the old order, but which lie, nonetheless, at the origins of these eroded "ideas". In essence, Pierre seeks to encounter them in their pristine forms in the "Primeval Gloom" (302). This interior region of the soul visits the site, actually becomes in Pierre Glendinning's imagination, the site of man's historical consciousness. Far from escaping history, civilization, or anything else, Pierre finds himself presiding over the creation of the human world of transgression and offence against the gods. In this site, however, the crystallized "self" of Western civilization and its metaphysics has yet to define itself:

so strange and complicate is the human soul; so much is confusedly evolved from out itself, and such vast and varied accessions come to it from abroad, and so impossible is it to distinguish between these two, that the wisest man were rash, positively to assign the precise and incipient origination of his final thoughts and acts (176).

Pierre's contemplations of the soul, or more precisely, of the orientation of his identity within its vastness are a refinement of both Tommo's musings about his geographical displacement and Ahab's soliloquies on his historical displacement. In each situation the individual has confronted his own ambiguous relation to knowledge about his immediate surroundings. Tommo's deprivation and Ahab's denial of a body of knowledge comprising the culture each inhabits--Tommo the Marquesan culture, Ahab the American--

are events of negation prototypical of Pierre's loss of social knowledge. The result is that the "paternal gods themselves . . . now desert Pierre; the toddler [is] is now entirely alone" (296). In the ensuing confusion, each is delivered into what we might term the expediency of "suigenesis."

The recurring crisis for the typical Melville character would seem to be the sudden flashing into presence of a self, of a cognitive centre, which knows its distinction from the space it inhabits only in its assertion of its finitude (its displacement from some Other), and in its declarations of independence, of sovereignty over itself. In the case of Tommo (as with other version of him such as Lem Hardy in *Omoo*, and Taji in *Mardi*), this focus of awareness is affirmed in the dark centres of Pacific islands. In the case of Ahab (as with the other versions of him such as White-Jacket and even Ishmael), the focus of cognition is achieved in the special relationship each has with the history of civilization. The constant in both these paradigms is a trauma of displacement, geographical or historical, in the midst of which orientation, possession, and the questionings of domesticity and of the familiar now become urgent matters first of self-recognition, and then of survival.

The geographical displacement of Tommo in the Marquesas, and the historical displacement of Ahab and Ishmael from the site of human origins evolve one stage further in Melville's portrait of Pierre into the dislocation of man from the mind of God, from the infinite. The "Nature" of the tropical island, the artifice of civilization, and now the finitude of the soul--these are the concentric zones of the displaced self.

3.

The dilemma of the soul of Pierre Glendinning is sparked by a moral conflict between the powers of the self, suspended in its nature and in its civilization, and the true powers of the divine, that universal first cause of all ethics. Pierre's desire for an affirmation of right action and self-possession in the midst of this quandary bears a strong resemblance to Kierkegaard's dialectical notion of selfhood:

The self is the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude which relates itself to itself, whose task is to become a self, a task which can be performed only by means of a relationship to God. But to become oneself is to become concrete. But to become concrete means neither to become finite nor infinite, for that which is to become concrete is a synthesis. Accordingly, the development consists of moving away from oneself infinitely by the process of infinitizing oneself, and in returning to oneself infinitely by the process of finitizing. If on the contrary the self does not become itself, it is in despair, whether it knows it or not. [19]

Certainly Pierre does know it, having fallen into despair himself as a result of his conscious aspiration to infinitude. The apparent inapplicability of the Christian doctrine of charity that he has experienced finds metaphysical expression in the pamphlet written by Plotinus Plinlimmon. The disparity between a divine law and the flawed human character teaches, or so Plinlimmon argues, that "in things terrestrial (horological) a man must not be governed by ideas celestial (chronometrical); that certain minor self-renunciations in this life his own mere instinct for his every-day general well-being will teach him to make, but he must by no means make a complete unconditional sacrifice of himself in behalf of any other being, or any cause, or any conceit" (214).

Plinlimmon founds this discrepancy between horological human behaviour and divine chronometrical injunction in the principle that God and man are ontologically different, that Christ, for example, was a chronometer, a universal, and man is merely a horologue, not a particular in some way related to the universal, but something fully distinct (214). Yet radical idealism of this sort is only an ironic restatement of the logic of moral separatism espoused by Reverend Falsgrave. [20]

Even Pierre utters frequent statements which counter this assertion, and which affirm in Kierkegaardian terms the

radical and dialectical synthesis of finitude and infinitude constituting man, irrespective of his choices to consciously look earthward or heavenward for visible, unequivocal affirmation of his identity: "He saw that human life doth truly come from that, which all men are agreed to call by the name of God; and that it partakes of the unravelable inscrutableness of God" (141). In short, Ambiguity is this ontological denial of difference and moral separatism [21]: either/or becomes an impossibility in the presence of the dialectical nature of the "absolute condition" of the I AM. It is in Delly Ulver, and not himself, that Pierre comes to see-- only enigmatically, that is, from his condition of displacement-- the face of God:

Now, that vague, fearful feeling stole into him, that, rail as all atheists will, there is a mysterious, inscrutable divineness in the world--a God--a Being positively everywhere;-- nay He is now in this room; the air did part when I here sat down. I displaced the spirit then condensed it a little off this spot. He looked around him; he felt overjoyed at the sight of the humanness of Delly (317).

These moral concerns come to a focus in Melville's interest in language, and, more specifically, in Pierre's career as a writer. It is in language that Melville undertakes the transformation of the ambiguity of the sources and nature of the human soul into something recognizably cultural, and visible to man. Writing materializes, in Pierre, the substance of the soul, the visible tracings of its ambiguities in the cultural world.

It assumes the burden of the soul's dialectical constitution, and of its implicit denial of its binary, schizophrenic partition into horologue and chronometer. [22] Language for Pierre the young writer, living in his young America, serves as the structure of his reflections upon the absurdity of man's concreteness and infinitude. By definition, language performs the mutual implication of the individual author's imagination and the infinite nature of the muse:

The world is forever babbling of originality; but there never as yet was an original man, in the sense intended by the world; ... the only original author being God ... For though the naked soul of man doth assuredly contain one latent element of intellectual productiveness; yet never was there a child born solely of one parent; and the visible world of experience being that procreative thing which impregnates the muse (259).

While this may be true, Melville also notes that Pierre may have relied too heavily on the "unmalleable element of book-knowledge [which] would not congenially weld with the wide fluidness and ethereal airiness of creative thought" (283). For Melville has also warned against those novels which have made "false, inverted attempts at systematizing eternally unsystematizable elements" (141).

Not only does this assessment of literature articulate more clearly the demands that Pierre will later place upon himself in the writing of his own book, it also says a great deal about Melville's own development as a writer, and the

point to which he has arrived in 1851. We have seen that the crisis of the self's orientation within the realm of cultural knowledge has, throughout Melville's career, been paralleled with the changing formal relationship in his fiction between image (a function of the imagination) and those qualities of factual documentation (a function of knowledge in its cultural, intersubjective exteriority). Like Pierre, Melville by this time has apparently rejected the network of knowledge, the "facts", in his attempt to ground the relation of man and God in an event prior, and in some ambiguous sense, distinct from that tangible and veiling accumulation of knowledge. In this one respect, at least, Pierre is an "urban version of Ahab"; both are heroes in tragedies of aspiration. [23] But in the larger context of Melville's widened vision of culture, Pierre differs in being made aware of a presence beyond the historically ordained materialism, the flesh of the world. Pierre looks to language as the means of his reduction to the origins of the relationship between man and God; his is an attempt to look into history, back to the time before history. He will attempt to bridge the gap between Creation and the re-creation inherent in the knowledge of civilization that Ishmael found he could live with quite comfortably. This requires a language of restored efficacy, of kinship and myth.

It is only fitting, then, that Pierre should journey to the city (not away from it, the movement in American romance generally), to a "combined babel of persons and voices" (240) in order to accomplish his task of writing. Only there does Pierre learn to write in two languages, the first the language of the social world of the visible city, the second, the ur-tracings out of which civilization will rise:

that which now absorbs the time and the life of Pierre, is not the book [per se], but the primitive elementalizing of the strange stuff, which in the act of attempting that book, has upheaved and upgushed in his soul. Two books are being writ; of which the world shall see only one, and that the bungled one. The larger book, and the infinitely better, is for Pierre's own private shelf. That is, whose unfathomable ~~carvings~~ drink his blood; the other only demands his ink. But the circumstances have so decreed, that the one can not be composed on the paper, but only as the other is writ down in his soul (304).

It is no coincidence that, for Pierre, strolling along the street on which the Church of the Apostles stands is "like walking through an avenue of sphinxes" (269). The vision of that second book opens Pierre to the distorted lost world of procreative myth, literally to the bedrock of culture. The image of the buried Titan Encaledus (345) triggers a chain reaction of images throughout the novel. It recalls the Memnon rock of Pierre's country life, onto which the young hero had previously projected a significantly, the codified signature of Solomon the Wise.

(133). Only in the cathartic vision of Enceladus does Pierre's name for the great rock, the Terror Stone, assume full meaning. And only later will the rockhard solidity of this natural monument spark against the "meteoric stone" of Christ, drawing Pierre into the paradoxical union of infinitude and finitude.

This somewhat subterranean constellation of meanings in Pierre renders all language an instrument in Melville's archeology of the mores structuring Western civilization. Under the foundations of the polis are the ruins (and the runes) of man's first covenant with the gods. Buried in rock, literally and symbolically, are both the "elementalizations" of Greek myth and the tracings of Judeo-Christian morality. Melville's protagonist thus encounters the "cunning alphabet" (342) of human culture, not of Emersonian Nature. It is an unreadable script for which he has no Rosetta Stone. No fantasy of a wandering imagination, Pierre's return to this site of origins is the inevitable outcome of his transgression of the covenant in the act of incest. The transgression against the social structure of civilization is a trite rebellion compared to the cosmological debt his love for Isabel has failed to pay. For, as the Marquesans of Typee knew well, the debt of man to god is deferred only in the observance of taboo. The violation of taboo is an offence which in turn violates the relationship between mortals and deity. In Pierre the self

crosses "the frontiers into Eternity," as he suggested to Hawthorne, "with nothing but a carpet bag," free of the "baggage" of an archaic civilization [24] But at this point of contact, Pierre is no Ahab; he is not independent of the powers of the heaven or hell. He is a self, divested of civilization's metaphysics, in search of a reconstituted world. His nakedness is also that of his (and Melville's) civilized consciousness. From Kierkegaard:

Despairing narrowness consists in the lack of primitiveness, or of the fact that one has deprived oneself of one's primitiveness; it consists of having emasculated oneself, in a spiritual sense. For every man is primitively planned to be a self, appointed to become oneself. [25]

* * *

Melville had come a long way from Typee to join Kierkegaard. His declaration of the "sovereign nature" of the self underwent several revisions, from standing firm among the Powers of Western Empire in Polynesia to traversing the frontiers into eternity. The process was a gradual one and it was internally consistent. Melville's Polynesian novels situated the self in a cultural surround which demanded a kind of self-sovereignty. In Omoo that sense of sovereignty began to erode; the process of acculturation in Tahiti showed Melville that selfhood could be radically altered by the presence of cultural bricolage. Out of those fragments, new selves could be constructed in hybrid forms.

Tzvetan Todorov begins his study of the contact between Spanish conquistador and Central American Indians with these words:

We can discover the 'other' in ourselves, realize we are not a homogeneous substance, radically alien to whatever is not us: as Rimbaud said, Je est un autre. But others are also "I"s: subjects just as I am alone, whom only my point of view--according to which all of them are out there and I alone in here --separates and authentically distinguishes from myself. [26]

Todorov shows that this dichotomy of self-reference gets highlighted in the contact between empires of culturally divergent origins. The same co-existence of substance and fragmentation informs Melville's fiction, too. He moved among empires--Polynesian, European, American--with the ideal of an sovereign self. The homogeneous substance of the cultural self, for him, could be shattered into the fragments of separate Isolato egos. Melville turned to poetic language to see the full consequences of these echoes of Babel.

In these chapters I have argued that the fragmented bricolage became for Melville an operative reality in both the subject and the formal shape his fiction took from this point onwards in his career. When Melville's attention shifted from the Polynesian world to America he imported this central notion of human contingency amid bricolage. In Mardi the transition is clear in the Polynesianized, allegorized view of the Western world Taji provides us. In

his middle period, when he wrote Redburn, White-Jacket, and Moby-Dick, Melville depicts a self whose boundaries extend outward into the midst of the bricolage of the American culture. This was no literary conceit. Melville exposed in these novels the shifting ground on which the foundations of American society, with its utopian, egalitarian, and romantic ambitions, are laid. What interested Melville was the way the self could coalesce amidst the plurality and the paradoxes inherent in the American definition of the sovereign individual. But it is in Pierre that the notion of sovereignty assumes the proportions of tragedy and existential crisis.

One reason why the evolution of this notion of sovereignty was so gradual is that Melville never approached the problem of the self in its cultural setting in a systematic way. For him, the constant throughout his writing was the dislocation of the individual. Again, this was no literary device. Melville was guided into the writing profession by a desire to recount an episode of geographical dislocation which derived from his own experiences in the South Seas. More important than those events themselves was the language they provided Melville. For in time, geographical displacement recounted from personal experience became a human, cultural displacement in history. This kind of dislocation prompted Melville's consideration first of American civil origins, as in White-

Jacket. This consideration widened with Melville's later examination in Moby-Dick of the primordial origins of man himself. Dislocation in history, the loss of origins, was for Melville a re-location in language itself. For if man's mythic wholeness was lost in the event of Babel, then it is only in the study of the bricolage of language that its traces are to be found. But if that is the case, then language is not dead; it remains sacred, paradoxically the "rubbish of Creation."

Notes to CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Octavio Paz, The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico, (trans) Lysander Kemp, (New York: Grove Press, 1961), pp. 199-200.

2. Pierre or, The Ambiguities, (eds) Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle, (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1971), p. 271. All references are from this edition. Page numbers are cited in parentheses in the text.

3. Journal Up the Straits, October 11, 1856--May 5, 1857, (ed) Raymond Weaver, (New York: The Colophon Press, 1935), p. 75.

4. Simone de Beauvoir, The Ethics of Ambiguity, (trans) Bernard Frechtman, (New York: The Citadel Press, 1968), p. 13.

5. Letter to Richard Bentley, 16 April 1852, Letters, p. 150.

6. F.O. Matthiessen, p. 481.

7. Hershel Parker in "Why Pierre Went Wrong," Studies in the Novel, 8 (Spring 1976), 19. Parker argues convincingly that Melville altered the course of his novel's plot as a result of seeing the harsh reviews of Moby-Dick during a short trip he took to New York City while he was writing Pierre.

8. Michael Rogin, Subversive Genealogy: The Politics and Art of Herman Melville, (New York: Knopf, 1983), p. 179. Charles Feidelson, Jr. expresses this problem of self-referentiality in terms of Melville's transformations of the outside world into one of fiction, and of Pierre's personality into a set of mere projections which render him virtually non-existent. (Symbolism and American Literature, p. 197). In both instances, Melville is viewed to be enclosing his project in a consuming formal structure.

9. John Carlos Rowe, Through the Custom-House: Nineteenth-Century American Fiction and Modern Theory, (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 7, 15-16. Rowe sees this as a function of the age, and not merely a characteristic of Melville alone.

10. John Irwin, American Hieroglyphics, p. 320.

11. Michel Foucault, Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews, (ed) Donald F. Bouchard, (trans) Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 53.

12. Letter to Hawthorne, 16? April? 1851, Letters, p. 125. Letters, p. 125.

13. William Hamilton, On Taking God Out of the Dictionary, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), p. 1.

14. Nathaniel Hawthorne, English Notebooks, (ed) Randall Stewart, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962). p. 433.

15. That Melville steps beyond these rules and structures does not suggest that Pierre Glendinning steps outside the bounds of culture and into a realm of nature. The incest taboo, it is true, involves both nature and culture. Levi-Strauss comments on the "ambiguity" inherent in the dual center of the prohibition:

The prohibition of incest is in origin neither purely cultural nor purely natural, not is it a composite mixture of elements from both nature and culture. It is the fundamental step because of which, by which, the transition from nature to culture is accomplished. In one sense, it belongs to nature, for it is a general condition of culture. Consequently, we should not be surprised that its formal characteristic, universality, has been taken from nature. However, in another sense, it is already culture, exercising and imposing its rule on phenomena which initially are not subject to it (Claude Levi-Strauss, The Elementary Structures of Kinship, [Boston: Beacon Press, 1969] p. 24).

For Melville, the dissolution of these structures provides access to an "absolute condition" (of culture, in which the human self now addresses the powers of heaven, hell, and earth as a sovereign entity.

16. Cf. Fred G. See, "The Kinship of Metaphor: Incest and Language in Melville's Pierre," Structuralist Review, 1 (Winter 1979), 59.

17. Harold Bloom, Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 244.

18. Fred See, 62. Of course, Melville, unlike See, would regard this apocalypse in the mythical and reconstructive sense of revelation. Our modernity, it would seem, demands that we emphasize the destructive aspect alone.

19. Soren Kierkegaard, "The Sickness Unto Death", Fear and Trembling/The Sickness Unto Death, (trans) Walter Lowrie, (New York: Doubleday-Anchor, 1954), pp. 162-163.

20. Brian Higgins discusses the pamphlet of Plotinus Plinlimmon, noting that critics have failed to see Melville's discussion of chronometricals and horologicals as a satire on a philosophical view that Melville does not endorse seriously. See "Plinlimmon and the Pamphlet Again", Studies in the Novel, 4 (Spring 1972), 27-38.

21. Critics have tended to regard the breakdown of the form of Pierre as the consequence of the unresolved tension in Melville's mind between spirit and matter. Michael Rogin argues that this is manifest in the duality of fiction and the outside world, which he sees as part of a trend in nineteenth-century artistic expression generally. In Europe, Rogin contends, this duality led to a retreat by artists to pure aestheticism, while in Melville it produced not the refuge in aestheticism, but artistic frailty (p. 159). Melville's inability to bring flesh and spirit together causes the deterioration of Pierre as coherent fiction (p. 178). Richard Brodhead, in Hawthorne, Melville,

and the Novel, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), suggests that like Hawthorne Melville saw the spiritual and the practical realms hopelessly split apart from one another, a schism which recurs as social history in the image of the Church of the Apostles (p. 182). But the point is that Melville undercuts, subverts the "socialness" of human history through the integrity of Pierre's own writing.

22. James Duban regards the two chapters dealing with Pierre's writing (Bks 17 and 18) as an expose of the incestuous relationship in subjective transcendentalism between the mind and its own desires and aspirations. Writing ~~on~~ this context is an illusory bridge between the horological and chronometrical planes of existence, (Melville's Major Fictions p. 182). This view, it seems to me, underestimates the faith Melville still maintains in Pierre's ability to write in an idiom of "primitive elementalizing."

23. Brodhead, Hawthorne, Melville, and the Novel, p. 116.

24. Letter to Hawthorne, Letters, p. 125.

25. Kierkegaard, p. 166.

26. Tzvetan Todorov, The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other, (trans) Richard Howard, (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), p. 3.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adler, Joyce Sparer. War in Melville's Imagination. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.
- Aldrich, Charles Roberts. The Primitive Mind and Modern Civilization. New York: Ams Press, 1969. Rpt. from 1931.
- Anderson, Charles Roberts. Melville in the South Seas. New York: Dover Publications, 1966.
- Arnheim, Rudolf. Toward a Psychology of Art. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966.
- Anderson, Quentin. The Imperial Self: An Essay in American Literary and Cultural History. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971.
- Auden, W.H. The Enchafed Flood, or the Romantic Iconography of the Sea. New York: Random House, 1950.
- Babcock, Barbara A. ed. The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978.
- Babin, James L. "Melville and the Deformation of Being: From Typee to Leviathan." Southern Review 7: 1 (Winter 1971), 89-114.
- Bachelard, Gaston. The Poetics of Space. trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.
- Baird, James. Ishmael: A Study of the Symbolic Mode in Primitivism. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956.
- Barbour, James. "The Composition of Moby-Dick." American Literature, 47 (1975), 343-360.
- Barfield, Owen. Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965.
- Baritz, Loren. City on a Hill: A History of Ideas and Myths in America. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964.
- Barnett, Louise. "Melville and the Universal Paradigm of White Domination." The Ignoble Savage: American Literary Racism, 1790-1890. Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 1975.

Bataille, Georges. "The Enigma of Incest." The Perverse Imagination: Sexuality and Literary Culture. ed. Irving Buchen. New York: New York University Press, 1970.

Beale, Thomas. The Natural History of the Sperm Whale. London: Jan van Voorst, 1839.

Beck, L. J. The Metaphysics of Descartes: A Study of the "Meditations". London: Oxford/Clarendon Press, 1965.

Benedict, Ruth. Patterns of Culture. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934.

Berger, Peter L. and Luckman, Thomas. The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge. New York: Anchor Books, 1967.

Bertholf, Robert. "On Olson, His Melville." An Olson-Melville Sourcebook (Vol. 1): The New Found Land (or North America. Io, 22, 5-36.

Bloom, Harold. A Map of Misreading. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

----- Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.

Blouet, Brian W. and Lawson, Merlin P. eds. Images of the Plains: The Role of Human Nature in Settlement. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975.

Bluestein, Gene. "The Brotherhood of Sinners: Literary Calvinism". New England Quarterly. 50: 2 (June 1977), 195-213.

Bowen, Merlin. The Long Encounter: Self and Experience in the Writings of Herman Melville. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960.

Brodhead, Richard H. Hawthorne, Melville, and the Novel. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976.

Browne, Ray. Melville's Drive to Humanism. Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1977.

Browne, J. Ross. Etchings of a Whaling Cruise. ed. John Seelye. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968.

Burke, Kenneth. The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961.

- Burnham, Jack. The Structure of Art. New York: Braziller, 1973.
- Cameron, Sharon. the Corporeal Self: Allegories of the Body in Melville and Hawthorne. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.
- Camp, George Sidney. Democracy. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1841.
- Carr, David. Phenomenology and the Problem of History. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974.
- Cassirer, Ernst. Language and Myth. trans. Suzanne Langer. New York: Dover Publications, 1946.
- Charbonnier, G. Conversations with Claude Levi-Strauss. trans. John and Doreen Weightman. London: Cape, 1969.
- Charvat, William. The Origins of American Critical Thought, 1810-1835. New York: Russell and Russell, 1968.
- Clifford, Gay. The Transformations of Allegory. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977.
- Coleman, Frank. Hobbes and America: Exploring the Constitutional Foundations. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1975.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. Biographia Literaria. ed. J. Shawcross. London: Oxford University Press, 1954. 2 vols.
- The Statesman's Manual. The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. vol. 6. ed. R.J. White. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cowan, Bainard. Exiled Waters: "Moby-Dick" and the Crisis of Allegory. Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982.
- Davis, Merrell R. Melville's "Mardi": A Chartless Voyage. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952.
- de Beauvoir, Simone. The Ethics of Ambiguity. trans. Bernard Frechtman. New York: The Citadel Press, 1968.
- De Man, Paul. Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979.
- Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

D'Entreves, A.P. Natural Law: An Introduction to Legal Philosophy. London: Hutchinson University Library, 1951.

Descartes, Rene. Discourse on Method and the Meditations. trans. F.E. Sutcliffe. Markham: Penguin Books, 1968.

Dimok, Wai-Chee S. "White-Jacket: Authors and Audiences". Nineteenth-Century Fiction 36: 3 (December 1981), 296-317.

Douglas, Mary. Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975.

Dryden, Edgar A. Malville's Thematics of Form: The Great Art of Telling the Truth. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968.

Duban, James. Melville's Major Fiction: Politics, Theology, and Imagination. Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1983.

Durkheim, Emile. The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. trans. Joseph Ward Swain. New York: The Free Press, 1965.

Ellis, William. Polynesian Researches, during a Residence of Nearly Eight Years in the Society and Sandwich Islands. London: Fisher, Son, and Jackson, 1831-32. 4 vols.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. Theories of Primitive Religion. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.

Feidelson, Charles. Symbolism and American Literature. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

Finkelstein, Dorothee Metlitsky. Melville's Orienda. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961.

Firth, Raymond William. Rank and Religion in Tikopia: A Study in Polynesian Paganism and Conversion to Christianity. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970.

Fletcher, Angus. Allegory: The Theory of the Symbolic Mode. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964.

Fletcher, Richard M. "Melville's Use of Marquesan." American Speech, 39 (May 1964), 135-38.

Foner, Philip S. ed. The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine. New York: The Citadel Press, 1945. 2 vols.

- Foucault, Michel. Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews. ed. Donald F. Bouchard. trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.
- Frankfurt, Harry G. Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970.
- Franklin, Bruce H. The Wake of the Gods: Melville's Mythology. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963.
- Freud, Sigmund. Civilization and Its Discontents. trans. J. Riviere. ed. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1969.
- Collected Papers. London: The Hogarth Press, 1950. Vol. 4.
- Moses and Monotheism. trans. Katherine Jones. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.
- Frankfort, H. and H. A. et al. The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1940.
- Gabriel, Ralph Henry. The Course of American Democratic Thought. New York: Ronald Press, 1956.
- Geertz, Clifford. "Art as Cultural System". Modern Language Notes. 91 (1976), 1473-1499.
- Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology. New York: Basic Books, 1983.
- Gellner, Ernest. Legitimation of Belief. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974.
- Giltrow, Janet. "Speaking Out: Travel and Structure in Herman Melville's Early Narratives". American Literature. 52: 1 (March 1980), 18-32.
- Goldman, Irving. Ancient Polynesian Society. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Gombrich, E.H. Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Art. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960.
- Greene, Marjorie. The Knower and the Known. London: Faber and Faber, 1966.

Gross, S.L. and Hardy, J.H. eds. Images of the Negro in American Literature. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

Grossinger, Richard. ed. An Olson-Melville Sourcebook. Vol I: The New Found Land. Id. 22 (1973).

Gura, Philip. "Language and Meaning: An American Tradition". American Literature. 53: 1 (March 1981), 1-21.

----- The Wisdom of Words: Language, Theology, and Literature in the New England Renaissance. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1981.

Gurvitch, Georges. The Social Frameworks of Knowledge. trans. Margaret A. Thompson and Kenneth A. Thompson. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971.

Gusdorf, Georges. Speaking (La Parole). trans. Paul T. Brockelman. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965.

Halliburton, David. Poetic Thinking: An Approach to Heidegger. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Hallowell, A. Irving. Culture and Experience. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1945.

Hamilton, William. On Taking God Out of the Dictionary. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977.

Hamnett, Ian. "Ambiguity, Classification, and Change: The Function of Riddles." Man. 2 (1967): 3, 379-392.

Handy, E.S. Craghill. Native Culture in the Marquesas. Honolulu: The Museum, 1923.

Hartz, Louis. The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1964.

----- The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1955.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. English Notebooks. ed. Randall Stewart. New York: Russell and Russell, 1962.

Hayes, E. Nelson and Tanya. eds. Claude Levi-Strauss: The Anthropologist as Hero. Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1970.

Heidegger, Martin. Basic Writings. ed. David Farrell Krell. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

----- Being and Time. trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper and Row, 1960.

----- An Introduction to Metaphysics. trans. Ralph Manheim. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959.

Herbert, T. Walter, Jr. Marquesan Encounters: Melville and the Meaning of Civilization. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Herskovitz, Melville J. Acculturation: The Study of Cultural Contact. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1958.

Henderson, Harry B. Versions of the Past. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Hetherington, Hugh W. Melville's Reviewers, British and American, 1846-1891. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961.

Higgins, Brian and Parker, Hershel. eds. Critical Essays on Herman Melville's "Pierre or, The Ambiguities". Boston: G.K. Hall and Company, 1983.

Highland, Genevieve A. et al. ed. Polynesian Culture History. Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1967.

Hillway, Tyrus. Herman Melville. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979.

Hillway, Tyrus, and Mansfield, Luther. eds. Moby-Dick Centenary Essays. Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1953.

Hobbes, Thomas. Leviathan, or The Matter Forme, and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil. ed. Michael Oakeshott. New York: Collier Books, 1962.

Hocart, A.M. Kings and Councillors: An Essay in the Comparative Anatomy of Human Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Howard, Leon. Herman Melville: A Biography. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

Irwin, John T. American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980.

Jonas, Hans. "Change and Permanence: On the Possibility of Understanding History". Social Research 38: 3 (Autumn 1978), 498-528.

Jones, W.A. "Criticism in American". Democratic Review 15 (September 1844).

----- "Democracy and Literature". Democratic Review 11 (August 1842), 196-200.

Joswick, Thomas F. "Typee: The Quest for Origin". Criticism 17 (Fall 1975), 335-354.

Karcher, Carolyn L. Shadow Over the Promised Land: Slavery, Race, and Violence in Melville's America. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980.

Kaul, A.N. The American Vision: Actual and Ideal Society in Nineteenth-Century Fiction. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964.

Kemper, Steven. "Omoo: Germinal Melville". Studies in the Novel 10: 4 (Winter 1978), 420-431.

Kierkegaard, Soren. Fear and Trembling/The Sickness Unto Death. ed. Walter Lowrie. New York: Doubleday-Anchor, 1954.

Knight, Grant C. The Critical Period in American Literature. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951.

Kotzebue, Otto von. A New Voyage Round the World, in the Years 1823, 24, 25, and 26. New York: Da Capo, 1967.

Lawrence, D.H. Studies in Classic American Literature. New York: The Viking Press, 1964.

Leach, Edmund. ed. The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism. London: Tavistock Publications, 1967.

Lebowitz, Alan. Progress into Silence: A Study of Melville's Heroes. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1970.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. The Elementary Structures of Kinship. ed. Rodney Needham. trans. James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer, and Rodney Needham. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

----- Myth and Meaning: Five Talks for Radio. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978.

----- Race and History. Paris: UNESCO, 1952.

- The Savage Mind. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Structural Anthropology. trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf. New York: Basic Books, 1978.
- Levy, David. Realism: An Essay in Interpretation and Social Reality. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1981.
- Lewis, Ioan. ed. Symbols and Sentiments: Cross-Cultural Studies in Symbolism. New York: Academic Press, 1977.
- Lewis, R.W.B. The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955.
- Leyda, Jay. The Melville Log: A Documentary Life of Herman Melville, 1819-1891. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1951. 2 Vols.
- Linton, Ralph. Archeology in the Marquesas Islands. New York: The Kraus Reprint Co., 1971.
- Lowenthal, David and Bowden, Martin J. eds. Geographies of the Mind: Essays in Historical Geography. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Lowenthal, David. "Geography, Experience, and Imagination: Towards a Geographical Epistemology". Annals of the Association of American Geographers. 51: 3 (September 1961), 241-260.
- Macksey, Richard and Donato, Eugenio. eds. The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man: The Structuralist Controversy. Baltimore and London: the Johns Hopkins Press, 1970.
- Macy, Obed. The History of Nantucket, etc. Boston: Hilliard, Gray, and Company, 1835.
- Mannoni, O. Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization. trans. Pamela Powesland. New York: Praeger, 1956.
- Maritain, Jacques. The Range of Reason. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942.
- Marovitz, Sanford. "Melville's Problematic 'Being'". ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance. 28 (1982): 11-23.

Matthiessen, F.O. American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. Signs. trans. Richard C. McCleary. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

Miller, Edwin Haviland. Melville. New York: George Braziller, 1975.

Miller, Perry. Nature's Nation. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1967.

----- The Raven and the Whale: The War of Worlds and Wits in the Era of Poe and Melville. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1965.

Moore, Sally F. and Myerhoff, Barbara G. eds. Secular Ritual. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, Assen, 1977.

Mumford, Lewis. Art and Technics. New York: Columbia University Press, 1952.

----- Herman Melville. New York: The Literary Guild of America, 1929.

Nye, Russel Blaine. Society and Culture in America, 1830-1860. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.

Olson, Charles. Call Me Ishmael: A Study of Melville. New York: City Lights Books, 1947.

Parker, Hershel. "Why Pierre Went Wrong". Studies in the Novel. 8 (Spring 1976), 7-23.

Paz, Octavio. The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico. trans. Lysander Kemp. New York: Grove Press, 1961.

Peacock, James L. Consciousness and Change: Symbolic Anthropology in Evolutionary Perspective. Oxford: Blackwell, 1975.

Porter, Capt. David. Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean in the U.S. Frigate "Essex" in the Years 1812, 1813, and 1814.

Pritchard, John Paul. Literary Wise Men of Gotham: Criticism in New York, 1815-1860. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963.

Pullin, Faith. ed. New Perspectives on Melville. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1978.

- Redfield, Robert. The Primitive World and its Transformations. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1953.
- Reynolds, Larry J. "Antidemocratic Emphasis in White-Jacket". American Literature. 48: 1 (March 1976), 13-28.
- Ricoeur, Paul. Freud and Philosophy. trans. Denis Savage. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970.
- Richardson, Robert D. Myth and Literature in the American Renaissance. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978.
- Roche, Maurice. Phenomenology, Language, and the Social Sciences. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973.
- Rogin, Michael Paul. Subversive Genealogy: The Politics and Art of Herman Melville. New York: Knopf, 1983.
- Rosenthal, Bernard. City of Nature: Journeys to Nature in the Age of American Romanticism. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1980.
- Rowe, John Carlos. Through the Custom-House: Nineteenth-Century American Fiction and Modern Theory. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.
- Russell, Michael. Polynesia, or an Historical Account of the Principle Islands in the South Sea. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1843.
- Schrecker, Paul. Work and History: An Essay in the Structure of Civilization. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948.
- Scorza, Thomas. "Tragedy in the State of Nature". Interpretation. 8: 1 (January 1979), 103-120.
- Sealts, Merton M., Jr. Melville as Lecturer. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957.
- Melville's Reading: A Checklist of Books Owned and Borrowed. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966.
- Sedgwick, William Ellery. Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1944.
- See, Fred G. "The Kinship of Metaphor: Incest and Language in Melville's Pierre". Structuralist Review. 1 (Winter 1979), 55-89.

Siikala, Jukka. Cult and Conflict in Tropical Polynesia: A Study of Traditional Religion, Christianity, and Nativistic Movements. FF Communications No. 233. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1982.

Sherrill, Rowland. the Prophetic Melville: Experience, Transcendence, and Tragedy. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979.

Simpson, David. Fetishism and Imagination: Dickens, Melville, Conrad. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.

Singleton, Charles. ed. Interpretation: Theory and Practice. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969.

Skorupski, John. Symbol and Theory: A Philosophical Study of Theories of Religion in Social Anthropology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Smith, B. European Vision in the South Pacific (1768-1850): A Study in the History of Art and Ideas. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Smith, Henry Nash. Democracy and the Novel: Popular Resistance to Classic American Writers. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Stern, Milton R. ed. Critical Essays on Melville's "Typee". Boston: G.K. Hall and Company, 1982.

----- The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968.

Stewart, Charles Samuel. A Visit to the South Seas in the U.S. Ship Vincennes. New York: John P. Haven, 1831. 2 vols.

Stocking, G. Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology. New York: Free Press, 1968.

Strauss, W. Patrick. Americans in Polynesia, 1783-1842. Lansing: The Michigan State University Press, 1963.

Street, Brian V. The Savage in Literature: Representations of "Primitive" Society in English Fiction, 1858-1920. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975.

Streeter, Robert E. "Association Psychology and Literary Nationalism in the North American Review, 1815-1825". American Literature. 17 (March 1945-January 1946), 242-254.

Suggs, Robert C. The Island Civilizations of Polynesia. New York: Mentor-New American Library, 1960.

Sundquist, Eric J. Home as Found: Authority and Genealogy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.

Sussman, Henry. The Hegelian Aftermath: Readings in Hegel, Kierkegaard, Freud, Proust, and James. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.

Taylor, Henry. Notes from Life, in Seven Essays. Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1853.

Thompson, Lawrence. Melville's Quarrel with God. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952.

Tobin, Patricia. Time and the Novel: The Genealogical Imperative. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Todorov, Tzvetan. The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other. trans. Richard Howard. New York: Harper and Row, 1984.

Turner, Victor. Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974.

Ujhazy, Maria. "Herman Melville: From Bowdlerization to Structuralism". Zeitschrift fur Anglistik und Amerikanistik (East Berlin). 24: 265-269.

Vincent, Howard P. The Tailoring of Melville's "White-Jacket". Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970.

----- The Trying-Out of "Moby-Dick". Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1980.

Voegelin, Eric. Order and History. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958.

Warren, Austin. The New England Conscience. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1966.

Watters, R.E. "Melville's 'Isolatoes'". PMLA. 60: 4 (December 1945), 1138-1148.

----- "Melville's 'Sociality'". American Literature. 17: 1 (March 1945), 33-49.

Weaver, Raymond. Herman Melville: Mariner and Mystic. New York: George H. Doran, 1921.

Weber, Walter. "Some Characteristic Symbols in Herman Melville's Works". English Studies. 30 (1949), 217-224.

Wells, Henry W. "An Unobtrusive Democrat: Herman Melville". South Atlantic Quarterly. 43 (1944),

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Culture and Value. ed. G.N. von Wright. trans. Peter Winch. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980.

----- Philosophical Investigations. trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968.

Wolf, Jack C. "The Two-Facred Whale: Naming as Indirection in Moby-Dick". Literary Onomastics Studies. 7: 111-126.

Worsley, Peter. The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of "Cargo" Cults in Melanesia. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

Wright, John Kirtland. "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography". Annals of the Association of American Geographers. 37: 1 (March 1947), 1-15.

Yu, Beongcheon. "Ishmael's Equal Eye: The Source of Balance in Moby-Dick". English Literary History. 32 (1965), 110-125.

Ziff, Larzer. Literary Democracy: The Declaration of Cultural Independence in America. London: Penguin Books, 1981.

Zoellner, Robert. The Salt-Sea Mastodon: A Reading of "Moby-Dick". Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.