MELVILLE'S EARLY NOVELS:
A STUDY OF ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

A THESIS

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PREFACE

The discovery of an author is always exciting. My first encounter with Melville took place some years ago with a reading of Moby Dick. The impression I had at the time was that the book is, as its reputation had told me, "great;" yet I did not comprehend the reasons for that reputation. As a part of my work at Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, Kansas, I was reintroduced to Melville and found in him, as he would have said, a man who dived. I became absorbed in his methods and his thought and determined to learn more of him.

Dr. Green D. Wyrick, who showed me the depth in Melville, posed an interesting question to me: How was an "untutored sailor" able to write that book, whose final truth yet eludes scholars? This study has its origin in that problem.

Since Melville's punctuation and spelling is at considerable variance with current standard practice, it was deemed advisable not to make acknowledgement of his too often incorrect procedure. The reader is assured that quotations from Melville's writings have been accurately reproduced.

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Wyrick for his suggestion and his enlightening guidance, and to Dr. Charles E. Walton, whose efforts in my behalf have been more than those of a second reader.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is a time-worn anecdote concerning Shakespeare in which the great dramatist is discovered quaffing mead with a group of his fellows in a London tavern. The conversation becomes rather dull, and rather than endure more of it, he drains his cup, yawns, casts a bit of change on the counter, and says, "Well, I guess I'll go home and write Hamlet."

The point is obvious: great works are not achieved in a night, nor in so prosaic a manner. Similarly, skills are not perfected in a day, nor without a good deal of strain. Since Moby Dick is considered a great work and Melville, a skilled author, the process by which the work and the author developed must be one of considerable complexity. The purpose of this project is to review those works written by Melville prior to Moby Dick in an effort to unravel that complexity and discover the means by which Melville taught himself his art.

The early works (i.e., Typee, Omoo, Mardi, Redburn, and White Jacket) will be considered in chronological order and examined with regard to the various elements generally considered to be important to the formation of a work of fiction. Biographical data, sources, themes, form, character, symbol, and style will all be touched upon. Comments

on each of these elements will, of course, be restricted. For example, only biographical data sufficient to establish Melville's circumstances at the time of writing for each work will be presented. In addition, since Melville's methods of treating elements established in one work are necessarily available to him in a succeeding book of his, the emphasis of this present study will be placed upon significant alterations in Melville's methods, thereby obviating the necessity of discussing all elements in all books. The result of such a progression should be an accurate picture of Melville the author prior to the commencement of his work on Moby Dick.

In order fully to comprehend a discussion of specific elements in specific works, it is necessary for one to be familiar with particular overall considerations. The following discussion is presented in an attempt to provide such a background.

Melville was discharged from USS United States on October 14, 1844.[1] Within a little more than a year he had made his literary reputation with a book called Typee.[2] The popular success of Typee was due to the fact that it

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[1]Jay Leyda, The Melville Log, I, 186.

[2]F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman, p. 371.

was the first notable romance of the South Seas; that is, it was the first book of South Sea travel to treat of its subject in story form as opposed to the strictly pedantic or reportorial form hitherto utilized by travelers.[3] Since it was his first serious effort at literature (his only previous works being two "Fragments from a Writing-Desk" published at the age of nineteen), Typee is the starting point in an attempt to trace Melville's artistic development.

The book was written four years after the occurance of the events on which it is based.[4] In the interval, Melville had lived a good many experiences which had led him to make several observations about life. Any impression he had noted about the natural goodness of man had been tempered by his observations of the degrading influence of Western civilization upon South Sea society, the dictatorial atmosphere of a man-of-war, and the contrast between his own family's condition and the well-to-do atmosphere of their residence in Albany, New York.[5]

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[3]Carl Van Doren, The American Novel, p. 70.

[4]William E. Sedgwick, Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind, p. 25.

His discharge from the U. S. Navy, then, found him "well emancipated from the servitude of youth to illusion."[6]

The observations which he had made he needed to think about, and it was through the process of putting them on paper in his straightforward relation of incidents in Typee and Omoo that Melville began to involve himself seriously in metaphysical speculation, thus preparing the way for Mardi and the books that followed.[7] Nevertheless, one should not ignore the materistic Typee and Omoo in an examination of Melville's philosophical development. It is virtually impossible for an author to set words to paper without giving some direction to his work, for as Friedman says, ". . . the very act of writing is a process of abstraction, selection, omission, and arrangement."[8] In Typee, therefore, one finds the beginning of a complete cycle of books expressing Melville's developmental thought.[9]

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[5]Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 375.

[6]William H. Gilman, Melville's Early Life and Redburn, p. 160.

[7]H. P. Marshall, "Herman Melville," London Mercury, XI (November, 1924), 59.

[8]Norman Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," PMLA, LXX (December, 1955), 1179.

[9]Ronald Mason, The Spirit above the Dust, p. 37.

Richard Chase notes that the symbols and emotional undercurrents in Typee ". . . are the matrix out of which more philosophical utterances emerge in later books."[10]

A large part of Melville's art is contained in his personal search for the ideal.[11] That real life search is exemplified by the protagonists of his books, who are themselves searchers. The pattern of the quest is repeated in all of the early books. Melville searched for the ideal in the primitive world (Typee), the vagabond world (Omoo), and the world of the mind (Mardi). Having failed to find the ideal in any of these worlds, he then examined the beginnings of his personal quest when youth and innocence encounter reality and experience (Redburn), and then turns to that point in his life wherein he had lost all youthful innocence in the world of the organized society (White Jacket).

The searcher is always an "isolatoe." As defined by Watters and employed by Melville, an isolatoe is one who, ". . . because of birth or achievement of action or character . . . is set apart from normal human relationships."[12] Generally, the estrangement is caused by the

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[10]Richard Chase (ed.), Melville: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 8.

[11]Mason, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

[12]R. E. Watters, "Melville's 'Isolatoes,'" PMLA, LX (December, 1945), 1138.

isolatoe's greater familiarity with literature, a more sophisticated vocabulary, and/or a stronger moral sense, as is the case with Tommo (Typee), Typee (Omoo), and Taji (Mardi). Although the same factors appear to a certain degree in the latter two characters, Redburn is set apart principally by his naivete, his odd clothes, and his lack of familiarity with the sea, while White Jacket is isolated by his outlandish coat.

It is probable that Melville himself experienced a certain amount of isolation during his sailor years by virtue of his being the son of a once well-to-do family and his having had, for a good many years, the education of a gentleman's son.[13] Perhaps it was his own experiences, then, that caused him to see tragedy in the isolated man. At least, his treatment of isolatoes is indicative of his belief that happiness is only possible in a sharing of experiences.[14] To illustrate this belief, Melville provides each of his protagonists with a fellow traveler. D. H. Lawrence notes that ". . . to the end he pined for . . . perfect mutual understanding, the perfect friend."[15]

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[13]Leyda, op. cit., p. 2.

[14]Watters, op. cit., p. 1148.

[15]D. H. Lawrence, "Herman Melville's Typee and Omoo" in Melville: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 20.

The importance of the fellow traveler grows in each succeeding book to the epitome of the "Calamus" relationship of Queequeg and Ishmael, a major part of the theme of Moby Dick.[16] Toby is the first of a long line of friends whom Melville encounters in his early works, each of whom, with the exception of Mardi's Jarl (who worships the man called Taji), will be the protagonist's equal in discussions of literature. Richard Tobias Green (Toby), for example, became a small-town editor.[17] Dr. Long Ghost in Omoo, Harry Bolton in Redburn, and Jack Chase in White Jacket complete the list of pre-Moby Dick comrades.

In order to emphasize the search for a friend, Melville has his isolatoe note the actions of other contemporaries, actions which are not in keeping with his feelings, particularly with respect to morals.[18] Driven by such outrages and/or ill treatment into the companionship of the one compatible soul whom each protagonist finds, each will also, by his own actions, cause the relationship to be severed, thereby becoming, once again, the complete isolatoe and, in the end, nearly always literally at sea.

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[16]James E. Miller, Jr., "Melville's Quest in Life and Art," SAQ, LVIII (Fall, 1959), 595.

[17]Clarence Gohdes, "Melville's Friend 'Toby,'" MLN LIX (January, 1944), 53.

[18]Miller, op, cit., p. 601.

A repeating plot pattern may now be discussed. Although one may observe only traces of the pattern in Redburn and White Jacket, he will note that the pattern in its entireity is adhered to in Typee, Omoo, and Mardi. The story begins on board a ship at sea where the protagonist is unhappy with his lot because of his isolation and treatment (Typee, Omoo, Mardi, White Jacket--Redburn begins ashore, but the protagonist suffers the same fate once the ship is underway). There is only one kindred spirit amongst the crew (Toby, Long Ghost, Jarl, Jack Chase--Redburn meets his companion while ashore). Thoughts of a better life, the avoidance of future hardship at sea, or some more tangible lure cause him to leave the ship, in an air of some illegality (Tommo--desertion; Typee--under arrest for mutinous action; Taji--desertion; Redburn--desertion). The quest now carried on ashore contains the adventures which make up the major portions of the book (Typee, Omoo, Mardi--Redburn's adventures in London are only an episode but, all together, episodes ashore occupy 149 of 301 pages). The isolatoe is always unable to sleep.[19] He displays a death urge.[20] The idea of his

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[19]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 97.

[20]J. J. Boies, "The Whale without Epilogue," MLQ, XXIV (June, 1963), 175.

falling to death is made manifest.[21] Finally, his actions cause the friends to part forever. (Tommo sends Toby for help; Typee leaves Long Ghost ashore in order to return home; Taji leaves Jarl behind in the search for Yillah; Redburn and White Jacket leave their friends when the ship's company is discharged). The book ends with the protagonist at sea. (Tommo escapes Typees; Typee escapes vagabond existence in order to return home; Taji is pursued to the open sea and across it; Redburn boards his ship because of financial difficulties, returns to the ship after the London episode for the same reason, and the book ends with Redburn's learning Bolton's fate while on a later voyage; White Jacket, though there is a forecast of subsequent events ashore, also ends at sea). Thus, it is obvious that Melville does follow a specific pattern in his construction of plots for his early works.

Melville used at least fifteen factual narratives during his career, including Dana's Two Years Before the Mast.[22] His purpose was the overriding consideration in the handling of the sources, for he seems to have treated them in three different manners: (1) extensive use without

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[21]Newton Arvin, Herman Melville, p. 115.

[22]Moyle F. Cederstrom, "American Factual Voyage Narratives, 1815-1860," 199 passim.

alteration; (2) use with considerable alterations to produce a particular mood or impression; and (3) use with deliberation to ". . . throw the readers off the trail."[23] As pertains to the early works, Melville's borrowings are of four types: (1) specific incidents to form chapters; (2) short passages of dialogue or description; (3) names; and (4) one verse of poetry (for Mardi).[24] It is significant to note that, even in Typee, the absorbtion of source material into Melville's style is so thorough that it is often difficult for the scholar to separate fact from fiction.[25]

Typee and Omoo were popular, purely because of the novel treatment and the ethnological value of Melville's resources.[26] It is little wonder that this is the case, for it is only in the light of an understanding of his method and thought, which years of modern scholarship have discovered in his later works, that the traces of that thought and method can be discerned in Melville's first two books.

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[23]Russell Thomas, "Yarn for Melville's Typee," PQ, XV (January, 1936), 27.

[24]Keith Huntress, "Melville's Use of a Source for White-Jacket," AL, XVII (March, 1945), 67.

[25]Willard Thorp, Herman Melville, p. xlviii.

[26]Arthur Hobson Quinn, American Fiction: An Historical and Critical Survey, p. 150.

Melville experimented with form and subject matter.[27] To him, the word became the indicator of a natural fact, while particular natural facts became symbols of a particular philosophical fact.[28] Hence, in Melville, organic form is functional, and a symbol not only represents a thing but *is* that thing and *acts* accordingly.[29] It follows that the character of the vehicle cannot, therefore, be preselected, but must evolve with the individual book.[30] Such a complete combination of style and thought did not lie within the expectations of Melville's age; therefore, his later books were neither understood nor popular.[31] Although *Typee* and *Omoo* were by no means written in such fashion, they are suggestive of various aspects of Melville's art and thought as they eventually were to be developed.

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[27]Allen Hayman, "The Real and the Original: Herman Melville's Theory of Prose Fiction," *MFS*, VIII (Autumn, 1962), 232.

[28]Daniel G. Hoffman, *Form and Fable in American Fiction*, p. 226.

[29]Nathalia Wright, "Form as Function in Melville," *PMLA*, LXVII (June, 1952), 340.

[30]Hayman, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

[31]Milton R. Stern, "Some Techniques of Melville's Perception," *PMLA*, LXXIII (June, 1958), 251.

CHAPTER II

TYPEE AND OMOO

In Typee, the quest-plot structure is used as a vehicle for Melville's backward trek into time to a primitive world in which instinct is the guiding force of life. There, Tommo learns the lesson of cultural relativism because of the infantile, mindless state of the Typees. In the process, he becomes aware of such factors as the brotherhood of man, the inhuman aspects of Western civilization, and the obvious discrepancies between Christian doctrine and Christian militancy. In addition, Melville, the artist, discovers philosophic conflicts which he will use consistently in his later books: i.e., the opposition of mind and body, mind and heart, and lack of communication between people whose characteristics embody each.[32] In this respect, Typee establishes Melville's use of the land to symbolize the area wherein men share sensuous, affectionate, religious, and practical pursuits, while the sea becomes a foe to man, killing him and destroying the things he builds.[33]

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[32]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 31.

[33]Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 32.

Although there are few allusions in Typee, there is one which is destined to appear in the subsequent early works and which is vital to the theme of Typee.[34] One refers to the Eden myth. By his specific references to the Garden and his insistance upon the seclusion of Typee valley, Melville not only increases the tension of the surface action by making proportionally remote the possibility of rescue, but provides for a comparison of Western civilization with a primeval society, a comparison which brings to light several opposing characteristics of the two worlds. As noted by Stern, the characteristics are the following:

Western (Mind)	Polynesia (Body)
1. Heartlessness	1. Heartfulness
2. Conquest	2. Submission, ultimate doom
3. Quest, mobility	3. Seclusion, immobility
4. Consciousness	4. Unconsciousness
5. Sea	5. Land
6. Communication with other worlds	6. Inability to communicate
7. Inability to communicate with Typee	7. Spontaneous, childlike, meaningless chatter amongst themselves
8. Sparse food, little sleep, technology	8. Physical gratification, somnolence, unaided nature
9. Planning, scheming, technological and military foresight	9. Spontaneity of animal spirits, innocence

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[34]Allen Guttmann, "From Typee to Moby-Dick: Melville's Allusive Art," MLQ, XXIV (September, 1963), 238 passim.

10. Attempt to conquer natural environment	10. Integration with natural environment
11. Artificiality, complexity.	11. Naturalness, simplicity.[35]

Since thought is solitary while emotion is social, the overdevelopment of the mind at the expense of the heart produces an insulated individualism to which Melville was opposed.[36] Melville's opposition to such intellectualism is first demonstrated by the display of the beneficial effects of the Typeean qualities of love, companionship, and sympathy, all the products of shared experiences, which, it will be recalled, Melville believed to contain the source of happiness.

Life in Typee is a compendium of such experiences. The Typees treat Tommo with much consideration. They attempt to care for his injured leg and provide him with a personal valet whose duties include carrying him about. He is invited to afternoons of conversation with the elders of the tribe, and their greatest chief becomes his friend. He notes that visitors, always welcome, need only call in order to be fed, and Melville devotes a chapter to a description of a native feast at which ". . . the whole population of

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[35]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 35.

[36]R. E. Watters, "Melville's 'Sociality,'" AL, XVII (March, 1945), 44.

the valley seemed to be gathered."[37] A romance blossoms between Tommo and Fayaway, an ethereal maid whose actions are characterized by innocence. She has no shame, because, in an Eden, she has no guilt:

> As I turned the canoe, Fayaway . . . seemed all at once to be struck with some happy idea. With a wild exclamation of delight, she disengaged from her person the ample robe of tappa . . . and spreading it out like a sail, stood erect with upraised arms in the head of the canoe.[38]

In the Typee atmosphere of sociality, then, Melville formed a higher evaluation of the human character than he had ever before contemplated, and he makes plain the fact that the eventual Western influence can have only a contaminating effect:[39]

> Ill-fated people! I shudder when I think of the change a few years will produce in their paradisaical abode; and probably when the most destructive vices, and the worst attendances on civilization, shall have driven all peace and happiness from the valley, the magnanimous French will proclaim to the world that the Marquesas Islands have been converted to Christianity![40]

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[37]Herman Melville, Typee, p. 176.

[38]Ibid., p. 145.

[39]Tyrus Hillway, "Melville and the Spirit of Science," SAQ, XLVIII (January, 1949), 79.

[40]Herman Melville, Typee, p. 211.

For all his enjoyment of the valley and his pity for the Typee's future condition, Tommo must not only leave the valley, but he must also escape from it. In Tommo's mind, the valley is a gilded death-row in which he awaits death. The execution will come, ostensibly because of the native's cannabalism, yet the Typees make no real intimations of such intentions toward him, and, indeed, only show hostility when he hints that he would like to leave. His senses are enthralled with the beauty and abundance of the valley, and he appreciates the innocent society of the Typees, but his Western mind cannot avoid revulsion at and fear of their apparent ferocity. The conscious will which Tommo brings with him and which is foreign to the Typee world, thus mitigates against his staying and will assist in his escape. The desire to escape is so strong that he even practices deception and violence in order to leave. He records his reactions when Mow-Mow approaches his escaping boat:

> Even at the moment I felt horror at the act I was about to commit; but it was no time for pity or compunction, and with a true aim, and exerting all my strength, I dashed the boat-hook at him. It struck him just below the throat . . . .[41]

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[41] Ibid., p. 272.

Thus, Eden becomes a Hell from which one must escape, and Melville finds in the primitive a symbol which expresses one of his most dominant thoughts: the idea of the insolubility of good and evil.[42]

The fact that it is Tommo's Western mind which prompts him to reject Typee points up a deeper problem. He appears in Typee because of his rejection of Western civilization which he sees in the form of life on a whaler (he has deserted). But the world of innocence to which he flees, as has been shown, is a mindless world, a world of inertia, and a world to which, because of historical reality, he does not and cannot belong. The fact that a person happens to be in one world or the other, primitive or Western, cannot alter the fact that he belongs to one or the other, and the one from which he originates must always exercise a certain amount of influence upon his being.[43] Tommo shows that he recognizes this fact by his expressed fear of cannabalism and his apprehensions at the fate of the Typees which will be the result of their inevitable contact with Western society. Tommo and Melville are definitely the same man, here, for

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[42]Mason, op. cit., p. 26.

[43]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 42.

it was the strict religious teachings that Melville had encountered as a youth which prevented him from reverting to the savage way of life.[44] Typee, therefore, does not offer to the Western world a panacea of going native. To make the point absolutely clear, in Omoo, the man then called Typee will tell of a renegade, Lem Hardy, who failed to recognize the impossibility of such a retrogression and will treat Hardy's tattoos as being worse than the mark of Cain.

The idea that man is the sum of his past recurrs in Melville's early books, particularly in Mardi and Redburn.[45] A corollary of that idea, and another recurring Melvillean expression, is that present society must also have a profound influence upon the individual. (The independent existence of the Typees promotes a permissive government which allows an independent existence.) The individual, then, must recognize and value his debt to all mankind and to his social group. The idea of failure of the present generation to appreciate their ancestors' work as the source of their well being, as presented in the Typees' inability to explain the stone steps of an

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[44]Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 375.

[45]R. W. Watters, "Melville's 'Sociality,'" AL, XVII (March, 1945), 34.

ancient society in Typee valley, is repeated in some of the obtuse Mardian legends.[46]

The contamination by the primitive life which causes Tommo's dilemma and Hardy's fall is by no means unrequited. Even in his most idyllic moments, Tommo is concerned with the contaminating effect of the white man.[47] The result of the influence of one world upon another is always a degrading loss of function and identity, as illustrated by the case of Hardy, the drunken pilot at Nukuhiva, and the "Christianized" Tahitians and Hawaiians. Thus, failure to be aware of the results of contact between the two worlds and to prepare for the impact may have disastrous effects. Much of the charm of the valley is due to its seclusion, but the seclusion amounts to a self-imposed imprisonment, since the Typees will not go into the mountains or out to the sea. The physical self-limitations lead to an inability to comprehend any outside world. To them, nothing exists beyond the limits of their valley, so that in all of Typee, only the character, Marheyo, understands Tommo's desire to return to his own people.[48]

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[46]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 62.

[47]Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 375.

[48]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 46.

An accurate interpretation of Typee is possible primarily because the book clearly shows traces of what was to become Melville's artistic method, a part of which is the treatment of the actual in such a way to cause it to take on added significance.[49] In Typee, Melville originates at least two recurring symbols which grow out of his treatment of the grotesque: the tattoo as the emblem of primitive religion, and the physically incomplete man as he whose actions cannot and will not exemplify body, mind, and heart.[50] As regards tattoos, Chapter XXX contains an episode wherein Tommo is pressed by the natives to adopt their custom. He refuses to allow them to work on his face but offers them his arms. The natives are not satisfied with his concession, however, and insist upon marking his face. Tommo is adamant and, eventually, the natives concede and do not tattoo him at all. Finally, Tommo learns that tattoos are associated with the religion of the natives and that they had intended to convert him. In this case, it is impossible for the reader to avoid the symbolic value in the fact, since Melville specifically relates what that value is. The physically incomplete man, however, is another matter.

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[49]Lorena M. Gray, "Rich Colors and Ominous Shadows," SAQ, XXXVII (January, 1938), 43.

[50]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 107.

The opposition of mind and heart is best shown in the escape episode in which Mow-Mow, the one-eyed chief, and Tommo, whose leg is again ailing, are the principal antagonists. In order to reach the beach, Tommo practices deception, telling Mow-Mow that he believes Toby to be on the shore, pleading to be allowed to meet him. It is a lie ". . . which the one-eyed chief appeared unable to resist."[51] It is Mow-Mow who is most opposed to Tommo's leaving and whom Tommo strikes with the oar. The symbolic theme of the book (that a Western man cannot return to the primitive) is strengthened by Tommo's physical incompleteness. The nature of his leg ailment is mysterious. Neither the Typees nor Tommo seems able to cure it, yet the symptoms disappear of themselves. It is, therefore, significant that Melville emphasizes that the soreness is present on Tommo's entrance to and his escape from the valley. Moreover, on those occasions when the ailment returns, he automatically thinks of escape.

The effects which Melville observed that the missionaries had upon the Polynesians provide one with a further insight into the growth of Melville's symbology. Polynesia had given Melville his first symbol of the combination of good and evil, as previously noted. Melville's

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[51]Herman Melville, Typee, p. 266.

observations which produced Typee proved that the contamination of the societies was mutual. In addition, there is another facet of Melville to be noted, here. He was sensitive to color, line, and the plastic in general.[52] Many of his images are introduced by the use of color.[53] In Melville, Gary observes that sight in color and sound in "the suggestion of audible perceptions rather than the words themselves . . . create the most striking impressions."[54] Since Melville was color conscious, he must certainly have drawn a color parallel in the evaluation of his observations, seeing innocence and purity, otherworldliness or white in the dark man's actions and evil, and earthliness or black in those of the white man. This argument is supported by Melville's notation that "White appears to be the sacred colour among the Marquesans."[55] White, thus sacred to black heathens, must become "black" to white Christians. If not, then all men and all religions must be "white." Typee, therefore, indicates the origin of Melville's dominant color symbol; black and white as the indicators of ambiguity.

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[52]Newton Arvin, "Melville and the Gothic Novel," NEQ, XXII (March, 1949), 40.

[53]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 25.

[54]Gary, op. cit., p. 42.

[55]Herman Melville, Typee, p. 185.

Melville's use of a color as a specific symbol is not confined to the later works, nor is it limited in its reference to the shades of black. Typee originates the color green as a symbol of decay. This color is associated with the vines and brush which cover abandoned temples and the stone steps of the ancient civilization. Time causes tattoos to fade. Therefore, the skins of the oldest Typees, those most covered with tattoos, become a dull green. Thus, green is associated with defunct gods, forgotten societies, and decrepit men.

Like most first novels, Typee is autobiographical, though the facts have been romanticized.[56] The four years separating the events from the book, in addition to affecting Melville's thoughts, had the effect of blurring the events, making them difficult to recall with precision.[57] Moreover, the narration of only those factual incidents actually encountered would not make for a book so entertaining nor thoroughly enlightening as Melville wished. It was necessary, therefore, for Melville to augment his story with incidents and details gleaned from the accounts written by other travelers.[58] Consequently, the book,

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[56]Mason, op. cit., p. 21.

[57]Willard Thorp, Herman Melville, p. xlvii.

[58]Gilman, op. cit., p. 161.

as it finally emerged, was an assimilation of materials taken from various sources.

At this point in his career, Melville's borrowings were restricted largely to factual matters. The Typee narrative itself contains enough suspense and horror to be interesting, but, in order to produce a book which would appeal to a nineteenth-century audience, he had to include material indicative of the type of life led by the Polynesians. Such an introduction to that distant world could only be made by Melville's revelation of details never encountered by him or of incidents forgotten with the passage of time. The success of the book, therefore, is largely based on the fact that Melville effectively combined the exotic setting (the travel narrative) with a suspenseful story (Melville's own true history).[59] Melville was already performing as a conscious artist in the selection and manipulation of his materials--the romanticizing of the facts.

Yet, for all its alterations from fact, Melville repeatedly vouched for the veracity of Typee. Evidently, he did not believe that, among other things, the extension of a four weeks' stay to one of four months' duration made his tale a fiction.[60] A "true" picture, in this instance,

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[59]Tyrus Hillway, Herman Melville, p. 67.

[60]Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 67.

could not be achieved in the presentation of literal fact. Melville's concept of truth would deepen along these lines until, in his later works, he came to believe that realism is both a mode of expression and an assumption about the nature of ultimate reality.[61] The Typee concern with superficial verisimilitude is basic to Melville's later concern with the "truth," with the actuality beneath appearances.

Although it has been noted by various authorities that a steady development in Melville's style is traceable through the early works, the nature of that style at the writing of Typee was largely materialistic.[62] Not yet the experimenter he was to become, Melville was forced to work out his technique in existing forms: the travel narrative, romance, novel, satire, allegory, epic, and tragedy.[63] The vitality he brings to these forms is due, in a large part, to the factual information he includes in his books. It is Marshall's opinion that Typee's value as literature is largely due to Melville's clarity of construction in the

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[61]Tyrus Hillway, "Melville and the Spirit of Science," SAQ, XLVIII (January, 1949), 196.

[62]Tyrus Hillway, Herman Melville, p. 21.

[63]Hayman, op. cit., p. 212.

presentation of such facts.[64] A representative paragraph follows:

> In beauty of form they [Typees] surpassed anything I had ever seen. Not a single instance of natural deformity was observable in all the throng attending the revels. Occasionally I noticed among the men the scars of wounds they had received in battle; and sometimes, though very seldom, the loss of a finger, an eye, or an arm, attributable to the same cause. With these exceptions, every individual appeared free from those blemishes which sometimes mar the effect of an otherwise perfect form. But their physical excellence did not merely consist in an exemption from these evils; nearly every individual of their number might have been taken for a sculptor's model.[65]

The facts contained in this paragraph are clearly presented, although one may feel the urge to correct Melville's punctuation. It should also be noted that the account is not an unbiased one. Melville's opinions concerning the facts he reports often come to the fore, as is evident in the following paragraph (which also shows the extent of Melville's use of truly unconventional punctuation):

> King Mehevi!--A goodly sounding title!--and why should I not bestow it upon the foremost man in the valley of Typee? The republican missionaries of Oahu cause to be gazetted in the Court Journal, published at Honolulu, the most trivial movements of "his gracious majesty" King Kammehammaha III, and "their highnesses the princes of the blood royal." l--And who is his "gracious majesty," and

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[64]Marshall, op. cit., p. 60.

[65]Herman Melville, Typee, p. 194.

> what the quality of this "blood-royal?"--His "gracious majesty" is a fat, lazy, Negro-looking blockhead, with as little character as power. He has lost the noble traits of the barbarian, without acquiring the redeeming graces of a civilized being; and, although a member of the Hawaiian Temperance Society, is a most inveterate dram-drinker.[66]

Melville seems to have had inherent abilities as a writer of description and is able, even in his first work, to evoke a variety of moods.[67] Pavese has noted the quiet tone in the lyric description of some landscapes.[68] The first sight of Typee Valley is such a passage:

> Over all the landscape there reigned the most hushed repose, which I almost feared to break, lest, like the enchanted gardens in the fairy tale, a single syllable might dissolve the spell. For a long time, forgetful alike of my own situation and the vicinity of my still slumbering companion, I remained gazing around me, hardly able to comprehend by what means I had thus suddenly been made a spectator of such a scene.[69]

Melville has not yet reached his poetic style of Mardi, but he does make use of two poetic devices, imagery and alliteration. The effect, here, is one of serenity. Arvin, on the other hand, sees a Gothic influence in Melville's descriptions of other landscapes, such as the ravines of

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[66] Ibid., pp. 203-204.

[67] Sedgwick, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

[68] Cesare Pavese, "The Literary Whaler (1932)," Sewanee Review, LXVIII (Summer, 1960), 415.

[69] Herman Melville, Typee, pp. 51-52.

the island:[70]

> . . . this prospect plunged me into the very depths of despair. Nothing but dark and fearful chasms, separated by sharp-crested and perpendicular ridges as far as the eye could reach . . . . With an insensibility to danger which I cannot call to mind without shuddering, we threw ourselves down the depths of the ravine, startling its savage solitudes with the echoes produced by the falling fragments of rock we every moment dislodged from their places, careless of the insecurity of our footing, and reckless whether the slight roots and twigs we clutched at sustained us for the while, or treacherously yielded to our grasp.[71]

The account of the descent into the ravine is indicative of Melville's ability to describe action. The escape scene, a part of which already has been quoted, displays Melville's skill in creating tense, dramatic action, and is prophetic of some of the well-constructed physical action in Redburn and Moby Dick in its tautness and desperation.[72] For example, word comes that Toby has returned, and Tommo, in his excitement, leaps to his feet, ignoring the pain in his leg, and calls for his assistant. He is dismayed when he is denied permission to proceed to the beach. Constant, frenzied pleading at last secures acquiescence. In the company of fifty natives whose backs provide transportation, he gallops towards the sea. A party

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[70]Newton Arvin, "Melville and the Gothic Novel," NEQ, XXII (March, 1949), 36.

[71]Herman Melville, Typee, p. 55.

[72]Mason, op. cit., p. 29.

of returning natives brings word that Toby has not arrived after all. He is dismayed again. The news means that he will be allowed to go no farther. He beseeches them for permission to continue on the grounds that Toby really has returned and that he must meet his friend. Once again, permission is granted, but now no one will carry him. Desperate, he snatches a spear and hobbles forward while the natives follow, arguing amongst themselves concerning his fate. Finally, Marheyo, his "father," gives Tommo to understand that he will be allowed to leave.

Further in the escape scene, as proof of the excitement which Melville is now capable of generating, Kory-Kory, Marheyo's son and Tommo's valet, again carries Tommo towards the beach. "Oh, glorious sight and sound of ocean!"[73] A boat is in the bay, and he hears his name called by a native whom he had met on another part of the island. He is stopped again. The native attempts to trade for him with the Typees, but without success. Tommo rushes towards his friend, is stopped again, and his friend retreats into the water. As the boat comes in to pick up the native, a violent argument breaks out among the Typees. Taking advantage of the fray, Tommo gives a sign of parting to his three Typee companions and makes his way to the boat. The

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[73]Herman Melville, Typee, p. 268.

boat pulls away from the beach, but is not far from land when the Typees rush to the water and cast spears at the sailors. A strong wind impedes the boat's progress and swimmers come dangerously near. Tommo strikes the nearest with an oar, the last barrier to freedom is gone, and the isolatoe is again at sea.

Humor is one aspect of Melville's art that caused his books to be popular in his own day.[74] In Typee, Melville's humor is often Rabelaisian, as in the description of the nude old women who dance by jumping perpendicularly while keeping their hands at their sides and their faces utterly devoid of humor. At other times, the tone is one of indulgent sarcasm, as in the section concerned with Moa Artua, "the 'crack' god of the island."[75] A tongue-in-cheek technique is often used:

> . . . I regard the Typees as a back-slidden generation. They are sunk in religious sloth, and require a spiritual revival . . . The wood-rot malady is spreading among the idols--the fruit upon their altars is becoming offensive--the temples themselves need re-thatching--the tattooed clergy are altogether too light-hearted and lazy--and their flocks are going astray.[76]

There is also self ridicule in his deportment while dressing for the Feast of the Calabashes. Finally,

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[74]Tyrus Hillway, Herman Melville, p. 25.

[75]Herman Melville, Typee, p. 188.

[76]Ibid., p. 193.

there is the feast itself, in which Melville's conviviality is made manifest, even though he must communicate with the Typees largely by signs.

The good humor, the affair with Fayaway, and the idyllic life are interrupted when Melville is reminded of his circumstances. He is not allowed to stray far from Marheyo's hut, and moments alone are virtually non-existant. There are reminders of cannabalism in which a shock completely changes the mood to one of panic. The frenzy of the escape scene is heightened by Melville's account of the previous discovery of shrunken heads, which all along have hung from the rafters of his "home." Melville's graphic description of one of the heads makes the discovery one of enervating horror:

> . . . The sunken cheeks were rendered yet more ghastly by the rows of glistening teeth which protruded from between the lips, while the sockets of the eyes--filled with oval bits of mother-of-pearl shell, with a black spot in the centre--heightened the hideousness of its aspect.
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> Two of the three were heads of the islanders; but the third, to my horror, was that of a white man.[77]

In summary, Typee, as Melville's first book, establishes several aspects of his art. The intent to impart symbolic overtones does not seem to have been present, since Melville's purpose in the book was to relate some

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[77] Ibid., p. 250.

factual material concerning the South Seas within the framework of a suspenseful story based upon personal experiences. The form of the book, therefore, is that of romanticized factual narrative. As such, a symbolic interpretation of Typee depends largely upon one's knowledge of Melville's later use of symbolism. Nevertheless, in that respect, elements of theme and symbol, as they are eventually to be developed in his art, may be discerned in rudimentary states here. Finally, the writing of the book gave Melville an opportunity to exercise an apparently inherent ability to evoke moods and contrast tones in the presentation of factual matter, scenes, and action.

Omoo

The success of Typee had been forseen by several critics before its issue in England on February 27, 1846.[78] Regardless of some complaints about its "raciness," the attacks on the missionaries, and the expression of some doubts that Melville had actually lived the experience, the book was a success, receiving many critical praises (including private or public indications of favor by Hawthorne, Whitman, and Longfellow), gaining entry for Melville into literary society, and by October 7, 1846, having sold over 1500 copies.[79] Rejoicing in this indication that he could hope for some future financial support from writing, Melville set about composing a sequel. The death of Gansevoort, Melville's brother, had severed the latter's contact with John Murray, his English publisher.[80] He attempted to reestablish this contact by means of a personal letter, July 15, 1846, a document which contains some enlightening information. Pertinent information gleaned from the letter might be listed numerically as follows:

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[78]Leon Howard, Herman Melville, p. 97.

[79]Leyda, op. cit., p. 204 passim.

[80]Lewis Mumford, Herman Melville, p. 81.

(1.) "Toby has come forward and vouches for the truth of his part in the book Typee (Murray was among those who continually asked for proof of the story);
(2.) A sequel (epilogue) telling Toby's story is proposed for a new edition of Typee;
(3.) Melville insists that the book be titled Typee, rather than Narrative of a Four Months' Residence among the Natives of a Valley of the Marquesas Islands, the title of the English edition, because "'Typee is a title naturally suggested by the narrative itself [emphasis Melville's] . . . . Besides, its very strangeness & novelty . . . is founded upon the character of the book . . .'";
(4.) "'I have another work now nearly completed which I am anxious to submit to you . . .'" (the first mention of Omoo);
(5.) The new manuscript will be in a more publishable condition than was Typee's since "'A little experience in this art of book-craft has done wonders.'"[81]

Omoo appeared on January 30, 1847, and it, too, was a success, although it was as notorious as it was famous, for the book severely criticized the French and the missionaries and contained some "improper" sequences.[82] Melville's personal life was demanding and his social and literary horizons were expanded as a result of Typee. Furthermore, he devoted some time to work on the revision of Typee and to the writing of the Toby "sequel;" therefore, the time taken to write Omoo was none too long.[83]

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[81]Merrell R. Davis and William H. Gilman (eds.), The Letters of Herman Melville, pp. 37-41.

[82]Raymond M. Weaver, Herman Melville: Mariner and Mystic, pp. 225-226.

[83]Howard, op. cit., p. 100 passim. The rapidity with which Melville's books were written and published once caused Richard Bentley to write Melville, saying, "I fear your books . . . are produced in too rapid succession for financial success." (Davis, op. cit., p. 149.)

In Omoo, Melville hoped to continue in the Typee manner of presenting his personal observations, but the events related would necessarily be different in nature, since he would have western companions throughout the story. Omoo would begin where Typee ended, but would otherwise be entirely different in character.[84] Technically, Typee and Omoo are much the same, but imaginatively, Omoo is inferior.

In writing Typee, Melville was primarily concerned with the telling of a story, and he deviated from the relation of actual events whenever he felt it was to his advantage to do so. As a result, Typee is more controlled than Omoo.

Omoo is a picaresque narrative, recounting the escapades of a group of rogues. The captain had intended for the ship to remain off shore and to leave Tahiti without touching it. The stopover was made so that he, physically ill, might disembark. Furthermore, many of the crew are so ill that whaling operations are impossible, nothing but foul food remains, and the ship is in need of repair; yet, the first mate is placed in charge and told to resume the search for whale. Demonstrations resulting from this news cause the men to be sent ashore under arrest.

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[84] Ibid., p. 41.

The major portions of the book are comprised of the subsequent adventures of these men. These escapades are often entertaining, but they are little more than a series of jokes and certainly are not carefully related incidents planned in support of a definite, overall action.

The avowed purpose, then, of Omoo (an "omoo" is a wanderer or traveler) is not to tell a story, but to relate incidents seen in the travels. As such, Melville is free to present any scrap of South Sea information he has gleaned, whether or not it happens to have anything to do with his narrative. For example, when the ship comes in sight of a group known as the Coral Islands, a scientific discussion about the formation of coral islands is presented. There is also a discussion about the art of tattooing. The Lem Hardy sequence, although it has a significance later to be noted, has little if anything to do with the slim line of central narrative that exists in Omoo. When he is taken aboard a French ship at Tahiti, a discussion of the construction of French ships ensues. When he is struck by the number of Tahitians who are deformed by Western diseases, the reader is treated to a discussion of native disease, elephantiasis, or "Fa-Fa." ("Speaking of Fa-Fa, reminds me of a poor fellow, a sailor, whom I afterward saw at Roorootoo, a lone island, some two days'

sail from Tahiti . . ."[85] And Melville continues with that sailor's history.

Nevertheless, when Omoo is read in connection with Typee, some thought, if no more than an affirmation and emphasis of the ideas in Typee, does present itself. There is for example, the Lem Hardy sequel which points up the importance of Tommo's (Melville's) previous allegorical escape from the primitive life, as well as the political, social, and religious episodes which give weight to the Typee theme of the brotherhood of man.[86] One who reads both books cannot fail to note that the man called Typee has escaped from Eden into a grosteque world in which Polynesian innocence and Western experience are incongrously and degradingly joined.

The isolatoe protagonist becomes a reckless beachcomber, attempting to find in that life the ideal he had failed to discover in Typee. However, in portraying that life, Melville, as indicated, substitutes humor for Typee's suspense, and consequently, loses much of the driving force which makes his latter book condusive to symbolic

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[85]Herman Melville, Omoo, p. 134.

[86]Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 36. In episodes presenting the injustice of authority are found Melville's first use of the ship as a microcosm (Willard Thorp, Herman Melville, p. xlviii), and his first attacks on flogging. (Edward Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the American Novel, p. 64.)

examination.[87] That very joviality, however, serves to heighten, by contrast in mood, the degeneracy brought upon the natives by the influence of Western man.[88]

The pranks of Dr. Long Ghost and the sailors' carefree life ashore stand in sharp relief to the plight of the natives. Moreover, the very nature of that existence is founded upon further exploitation of the natives. The comical old Tahitian keeper of the Calabooza, an open area when the "mutineers" are kept in stocks, is prevailed upon to let the prisoners forage for their food since that which the islanders bring them is so scanty. A visitor must always be fed. The squeal of a dying pig, therefore, sounds the call to a feast. Occasionally, when the sailors arrive, the pig is still alive, and the natives let the pig escape rather than share what has become to them a luxury. "To provide for these emergencies, Flash Jack generally repaired to the scene of operations, with a sheath knife between his teeth, and a club in his hand."[89] Except for Long Ghost and Typee's brief stay on Imeeo, the sailors never provide for themselves, but subsist on the native's generosity. Under the circumstances, it is significant

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[87]Tyrus Hillway, Herman Melville, p. 70.

[88]Lawrence, op. cit., p. 18.

[89]Herman Melville, Omoo, p. 138.

that Dr. Long Ghost is the most irresponsible, the greatest wag, and the hungriest of all the "mutineers."

The sustained pungency of the "native queen" passage illustrates the author's present command of his materials in the pursuit of a definite goal. His handling of the matter of the crown is representative:

> Some time ago, the queen received from her English sister, Victoria, a very showy, though uneasy, headdress--a crown; probably made to order, at some tinman's in London. Having no idea of reserving so pretty a bauble for coronation days, which come so seldom, her majesty sported it whenever she appeared in public; and, to show her familiarity with European customs, politely touched it to all foreigners of distinction--whaling captains and the like--whom she happened to meet in her evening walk on the Broom Road.[90]

There is humor in the passage, derived from its straightforward tone. Melville is a lecturer whose dead-pan manner is not at all compatible with the words which come from his mouth. Conjured up by the word "sister," the picture of Queen Victoria and Queen Pomaree sitting down to tea and discussing their boy-friends is immediately outrageous. The ignorant queen gives herself airs and touches her crown in recognition of the importance of--whaling captains! One may laugh,

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[90] Ibid., p. 296.

but cannot escape Melville's point. Pomaree is, after all, a queen and a person of considerable magnitude to her people. If she is a figure of burlesque, she has been made so only by Western influence, for it is her attempt to imitate a foreign culture that destroys her dignity.

The meeting with Marbonna serves as a final proof to Typee (the protagonist of Omoo) that he cannot ignore his relationship to the world. Oblivion is not the answer, simply because it is impossible. Marbonna is a Marquesan. As such, he, like his original neighbors, the Typees, is the product of a society relatively untouched by Western man. Therefore, he is a perfect physical speciman, ". . . well made as a statue, and with an arm like a degenerate Tahitian's thigh."[91] Since seeing the contrast with its obvious conclusion is not enough, Melville drives home the point both to the reader and to Typee:

> . . . I found this islander a philosopher of nature--a wild heathen, moralising upon the vices and follies of the Christian court of Tahiti--a savage, scorning the degeneracy of the people among whom fortune had thrown him.[92]

Typee-Melville could do no other than continue his search

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[91] Ibid., p. 300.

[92] Loc. cit.

for a perfect life, and, in the next chapter, he ends his book with the isolatoe once more at sea.

The concept of Melville as a completely natural writer is incorrect, for the brooding he experienced over each book made the puzzle of his own talents manifest to him.[93] As one would expect, there are, indeed, some new developments in artistic technique to be found in Omoo. Vincent, in his study of White Jacket, notices that Melville's sermon chapters are generally compact statements of the central meaning in Melville's books and indicates the origin of that characteristic to be "A Book from the 'Ponderings of Old Bardianna'" in Mardi.[94] Omoo contains such a sermon chapter, "A Missionary's Sermon; With Some Reflections."[95]

The sermon is given by an English Protestant missionary and is anti-French, anti-Catholic and anti-sailor in nature. These attacks, the plea for support in the form of food, and an admonition against wickedness make up the whole of the sermon. One is struck by the fact that each one of the evils alluded to could only have

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[93]Willard Thorp, Herman Melville, p. xl.

[94]Howard P. Vincent, "White-Jacket: An Essay in Interpretation," NEQ, XXII (September, 1949), 314.

[95]Herman Melville, Omoo, p. 174.

been introduced by Western influences. If Western man had not come to Tahiti, the islanders' political sovereignty would not have been lost, there would be no concern over which Christian's God was the true one, licentious contact with sailors would not be possible, and the missionaries would have no worries about the source of their next meal. The most ironic section in the account occurs when the missionary describes the riches, fine houses, and fine clothes which the British have as a reward for their goodness (proof of which rests in the fact that they send missionaries to Tahiti) and blames the Tahitians' degeneracy for their current state of poverty. When one thinks of the innocence and abundance of Typee and, for that matter, pre-Western Tahiti, he is forced to agree with Melville, but at the same time must ask himself, "Whence cometh this bounty?" The rest of the chapter is occupied with Typee's reflections upon the sermon, substantiating Melville's stand that true conversion of Polynesians is impossible and that only ill can come of the attempt. Thus, Vincent's concept holds true for Omoo, the book in which Melville first uses the sermon device.

Melville's most significant growth in Omoo occurs in his characterizations. However, this aspect of authorship is not fully realized by him, for, at this

point, he only reflects a Smollett influence.[96] However, the personification of the gay, devil-may-care, footloose existence which Melville wishes to adopt is given so much development that Dr. Long Ghost becomes the writer's first tangible person and the book's leading character.[97] He is also the first of a series of medical men to be described in Melville's books, all of whom, as professionals, Melville regards with a somewhat jaundiced eye.

Ordinarily, a ship's doctor is a member of the official staff. Long Ghost, however, has had a quarrel with the captain. This disagreement was so profound that he refused to have further associations with the captain, resigned his duties, and moved out of his personal stateroom and into the forecastle with the crew. These circumstances permit Typee, a member of the crew, to become Long Ghost's associate, and allow the doctor to be known by a nickname.[98] From the time Long Ghost moves into the forecastle, he never attends a patient and will not aid the ailing captain. He will, however, use his

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[96]Wagenknecht, op. cit., p. 62.

[97]Newton Arvin, Herman Melville, p. 86.

[98]The man in real life was John B. Troy. (Tyrus Hillway, Herman Melville, p. 70.)

medical knowledge for his own pleasure. In the open-air British prison on Tahiti, where the "mutineers" are sent, Long Ghost falls down in a fit and assumes a death-like coma. The prison doctor, whose business it is to tend to the "mutineers," decides that bleeding will be necessary. Long Ghost recovers as the operation is to commence. The prison physician cannot determine the nature of the illness, and, when asked by the crew to explain it, Long Ghost only smiles mysteriously. After deploring his situation, an invalid in a prison, he acquiesces to the keeper's offer to send him where he may receive better care. Typee comments:

> Now, I do not pretend to account for his remarkable swoon; but his reason for suffering himself to be thus removed from the Calabooza was strongly suspected to be nothing more than a desire to insure more regularity in his dinner-hour; hoping that the benevolent native to whom he was going would set a good table.[99]

In summary, Omoo enables Melville to practice his craft, so in the book one may discover the initial expression of some areas of subsequently developed thought, Melville's first "real" personality, and the employment of some new techniques and devices; but the book owes its final literary and popular success to the fact that it is Typee's sequel.

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[99]Herman Melville, Omoo, p. 198.

CHAPTER III

Mardi

To his public, Melville seemed to have had two styles, the realistic narrative and the poetic romance. The former had firmly established him in the world of mid-nineteenth century letters. The success of Typee and Omoo had opened to him new doors in society and new vistas in the craftsmanship of writing and, as a result, in philosophy. Perhaps the most significant of his new relationships was the result of his meeting Evert A. Duyckinck, a member of Wiley and Putnam's company (Melville's initial American publisher), a man with considerable contacts in the world of literature (through him, Melville met Hawthorne), and a man with a vast personal library.[100] Duyckinck offered Melville counsel on his books as well as opportunities to read and to discuss his philosophical and writing ideas with well-read men. In addition, Melville's own perception and evaluation contributed to his rapid growth. Matthiessen writes:

> . . . the double discovery--of his inner self and the social and intellectual world of which he was a part--took place so swiftly during his first years

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[100]Eleanor M. Metcalf, Herman Melville: Cycle and Epicycle, p. 38.

> back in America that it seemed to him like a new birth.[101]

Melville's third book, Mardi, is an attempt to symbolize that great development.

Since both his mind and technique improved as he wrote, Melville's books become increasingly complex. All the books after Omoo reveal expanding insight beyond fact to truth and broader use of symbolism and figures of speech for embellishment and assistance in the production of symbolism. Whereas Typee and Omoo are Melville's statement of a human condition from which modern civilization necessitates a change for better or worse, the books that follow reveal a tracing of that movement.[102] In Mardi, Melville presents the conflicting doubts and faith of the 1840's in America and arrives at the conclusion, expressed in this book, that all things are one, that nothing and no one should be rejected, since everything and everyone is a part of a whole.[103] (In Mardi, Melville attempts to express that belief by being all-inclusive, by portraying the entireity of his views.) The themes in Mardi, therefore, are the broadest of any in Melville's works, including

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[101]Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 378.

[102]Mason, op. cit., p. 39.

[103]Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 378.

Moby Dick and Pierre.[104] Perhaps the clearest indication of the breadth which Melville wished to bring to the book appears in the chapter on dreams, in which he states that there are many souls in himself, and translates those factors into a list of practically every author he had ever read or of whom he had heard.[105]

> And like a frigate, I am full with a thousand souls . . . Ay: many, many souls are in me . . . Homer's old organ rolls . . . Shakespeare soars . . . my Wallers warble . . . blind Milton sings bass to my Petrarchs and Priors . . . St. Paul . . . argues the doubts of Montaigne; Julian the Apostate cross-questions Augustine; and Thomas-a-Kempis unrolls his old black-letters . . . Zeno murmurs . . . and though Democritus laugh . . . and the sneer of Pyrrho be seen; yet, divine Plato, and Proclus, and Verulam are of my counsel . . . I walk a world that is mine . . . Bacchus my butler, Virgil my minstrel, Philip Sidney my page.[106]

To exhibit such a broad view in book form required a new form, other nineteenth century forms being inadequate, and Mardi becomes for Melville, in the process of its writing, an experiment with several different styles.[107] The wild, even blind groping for a new form makes Mardi Melville's first truly unconventional work. It is a

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[104]Mason, op. cit., p. 40.

[105]Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 378.

[106]Herman Melville, Mardi, II, 34-35.

[107]Newton Arvin, Herman Melville, pp. 89-90.

world of metaphors, a fantastic display of mysticism and delight, and, in its lyricism, falls short of Moby Dick only because it is less substantial, less coherent.[108] In this quest for the reality beneath the fact, Melville seems to be following no literary theory at all, since his efforts to produce complexity in a prose which approached poetry often were spontaneous and inadequate.[109] Melville had seen beneath the surface, recognized truth in natural events and facts, but the ability to put into words the things which he saw required a skill and a technique which he had not yet mastered but, indeed, was in the very process of discovering. Grotesque as the book may be, it is important to a study of Melville's art, because it reveals an increased imagination in both artistry and thought so that the form which Melville only sought in Mardi was to become a reality in Moby Dick.[110]

Mardi is in complete contrast with Typee and Omoo. Whereas they contained Melville's statements of innocence, Mardi is his first statement of experience.[111] Whereas they were based upon biographical data, Melville tells in

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[108]Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 37.

[109]Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 388.

[110]Mason, op. cit., p. 45.

[111]Loc. cit.

his preface to Mardi that its sequence of events is entirely imaginary. There is also in Mardi a deliberate extensive use of myth, allegory, and symbol, not present in the other books.[112] Thus, Mardi marks the shift of Melville's interest from the actual to the symbolical in his turning from the plain, witty style of Typee and Omoo to the involved manners of Browne and Burton.[113] Melville's first consciously artistic creation, the book is his first attempt to make symbolic the form of the book itself. An indication of this attempt is to be found in a conversation of the seekers, in which they liken Koztanza, a work by an ancient Mardian author, to the world called "Mardi:"[114]

> . . . And so is Mardi itself; 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, fens and moors. And so, the world in the Koztanza.[115]

Another conversation in which poets are shown to be true historians, indicates Melville's self-justification for his efforts and for his belief that truth is a great deal

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[112]Newton Arvin, Herman Melville, p. 92.

[113]Van Doren, op. cit., p. 71.

[114]Nathalia Wright, "Form as Function in Melville," PMLA, LXVII (June, 1952), 331.

[115]Herman Melville, Mardi, II, 246.

more than fact:[116]

> "He has not spoken the truth," persisted the chronicler.
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> "Mohi," said Babbalanja, "truth is in things, and not in words: truth is voiceless; so at least saith old Bardianna. And I, Babbalanja, assert, that what are vulgarly called fictions are as much realities as the gross mattock of Dididi, the digger of trenches . . ."[117]

But Melville was not Dante, and his history of civilization and picture of the present world lack the unity required.

One cause for the failure is his choice of the usual first-person-protagonist-point-of-view. The book ends with Taji's being chased out to the sea as witnessed by an omniscient author: "And thus, pursuers and pursued flew on, over an endless sea."[118] Therefore, it is impossible for one to consider that any of the tale could be the recollections of the protagonist.[119] Moreover, there are periodic occasions in which Taji speaks of himself by means of the editorial third person:

> . . . For whoso has touched flagons with monarchs, bear they their back-bones never so stiffly on the throne, well know the rascals, to be at bottom

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[116]Hayman, op. cit., p. 217.

[117]Herman Melville, Mardi, I, 257.

[118]Ibid., p. 299.

[119]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 69.

> royal good fellows . . .
> If ever Taji joins a club, be it a Beek-Steak Club of Kings![120]

In such a case, it becomes difficult for one to determine if the teller of the story is Taji, Taji speaking of Taji, or someone else (omniscient author) speaking of Taji.[121]

The primary defect, however, arises from Melville's failure to select a particular view to expound. The isolatoe's allegorical pursuit of the ideal (Taji's search for Yillah) is made to include a Swiftian satire on the world and practically anything else in which Melville happened at the time to be interested.[122] In addition, in order to reach Mardi, Melville's world of the mind, it is necessary for the author to include a rather lengthy introduction of fictional but realistically presented material. The result is that Mardi contains three stories, each marking steps in an increasingly complex structure. The first of these includes the events centered around the "Arcturus," "Chamois," and "Parki" (introductory material told in the realistic Typee-Omoo manner); the second, the Taji-Yillah quest (the isolatoe's search for the ideal,

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[120]Herman Melville, Mardi, I, 235-236.

[121]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 69.

[122]Wagenknecht, op. cit., p. 65.

marking the introduction of fantasy); and the third, the Babbalanja-Media story (the development of the education of king and philosopher, in which symbols are omnipresent).[123]

After spending some pleasant days together with Yillah, Taji awakes one morning to find her gone. He resolves to find her and sets off in search. The story of the search, involving as it does elements of good and evil in the rescue, is a fine one. The quest for the ideal Yillah while evil, in the form of Hautia's heralds, threatens to pervert Taji's mind and, in the form of Aleema's vengeful sons, to destroy his body, could have made interesting and, if skillfully handled, significant reading.[124]

However, in order to seek Yillah, Taji must have the aid of King Media. Media will provide the wherewithal to conduct the search. As a plot device, the circumstances seem to warrant Media's assisting Taji in his search, but Media decides to bring along three other characters, Babbalanja, Yoomy, and Mohi. It is in this way that Melville respectively introduces philosophy, poetry (Mardi contains Melville's first poetry), and history into his story. When

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[123]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 68.

[124]Mason, op. cit., p. 46.

these new passengers get on, realism, in the form of the earlier characters Jarl and Samoa, gets off. Furthermore, in the analogy, these passengers prove so talkative as to distract the "driver" and make him forget where he intends to go. The epitome of this digression occurs in Chapter CLXXX when Taji is made to forget his pursuit long enough to indulge in a discussion of the ancients, then report in a Socratic dialogue (in which he utters not one speech) a philosophical discussion of Homeric bards, principally, the Mardian poet, Lombardo:

> Media--You seem to know all authors; you must have heard of Lombardo, Babbalanja; he who flourished many ages since.
> Babbalanja--I have; and his grand Koztanza, know by heart.
> Media (to Abrazza)--A very curious work, that, my lord.
> Abrazza--Yes, my dearest king.[125]

The dialogue device is a new one in Melville and will lead to the effectively utilized play-like scenes in Moby Dick, but, as employed here, it has the effect of eliminating not only Taji's story, but Taji himself.

In order to return to the search at the conclusion of such philosophical or pleasure-seeking digressions, it is often necessary for Melville to remind Taji and the reader of the initial reason for the cruise by making the voyagers aware of the pursuing sons of Allema, following

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[125]Herman Melville, Mardi, II, 239.

which awareness there is an inevitable visit by Hautia's flower bearing heralds. Herein lies the primary fault in Melville's symbolic method in Mardi. The simultaneous rescue of Yillah and murder of the priest Aleema are the common origin of the dramatic and philosophical direction of the book, but the Babbalanja-Media story occupies more than one-half of the book's space.[126] Thus, the symbolism does not grow from the literal level but is made to suspend from the thread of the Taji story and is, therefore, contrived.

The weaknesses in Mardi are the fault of Melville's new awareness, an awareness which prompted new and productive creativeness but would not allow his speculative mind to remain subservient to that activity. The vastness of the speculation, in turn, required new methods of expression, leading to such rhapsodic chapters as the one on "Dreams," in which chapter

> . . . the crowded alternation of the images, the way the sentence structure breaks in the middle into virtual incoherence, indicate how far Melville had gone . . . .[127]

A sample of this poetic style follows:

> Dreams! dreams! passing and repassing, like

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[126]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 76.

[127]Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 385.

> Oriental empires in history; and scepters wave thick, as Bruce's pikes at Bannockburn; and crowns are plenty as marigolds in June. And far in the background, hazy and blue, their steeps let down from the sky, loom Andes on Andes, rooted on Alps; and all round me, long rushing oceans, roll Amazons and Oronocos; waves, mounted Parthians; and, to and fro, toss the wide woodlands; all the world an elk, and the forest its antlers.[128]

Mardi is important to a study of Melville, if for no other reason than that he made in it his first conscious and extensive use of symbolism, thoroughly exploring the possibilities. His first group of symbols involves his assignment of allegorical names to places real and imaginary. Since Melville himself was concerned with finding a method in which to reconcile thought and emotion, mind and heart, the greater part of the "countries" visited during the search embody one of these attributes or the other. It is significant, therefore, that the people of the midmost island, Pimminee, suffer from ossification of the head and "stone in heart," both of which maladies are incurable.[129] The last island where the complete group of voyagers visit is Serenia, at which place Babbalanja, the philosopher, departs. It is in Serenia that each of the travelers (except Taji) finds the

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[128]Herman Melville, Mardi, II, 33.

[129]Nathalia Wright, "Form as Function in Melville," PMLA, LXVII (June, 1952), 337.

thing he seeks: a way of life which allows the worship of Oro (God) and adherence to Alma's (Christ's) teachings, but always tempered with right reason, the "light" of love.

Provision is also made to incorporate Melville's political and social views into the book by having the searchers visit a world within a world. The allegorical circumnavigation of the planet appears as an intrusion, even though Melville attempts to connect it to his narrative through the plot device of the search and the symbolic quest for a perfect combination of mind and heart (each of the countries seems to be dominated by one or the other). Perhaps the obtrusiveness of the episode could have been at least reduced, if not eliminated, if Melville had interspersed his accounts of visits to the nations of the "real world" with those of visits to lands which are representative of various mental points of view. As it is, the reader must become aware that Melville is allegorically traveling about the planet. Consequently, he becomes more interested in tracing his route on a globe than in contemplating the ideas which caused Melville to include the account of the journey in the first place. The problem is compounded when Melville asks the reader to maintain three levels of geographic presence. First, in the realistic beginning of the book, the reader is placed with Taji in the Pacific. Then, he is asked to leave

reality and believe himself in an imaginary world which represents the activities of the mind. Finally, he finds himself in an allegorical tour of the real world, a tour which begins and ends in the Atlantic--a world (semi-real--Atlantic) within a world (mental--Pacific) within a world (real--Pacific), requiring a thrice-removed willing suspension of disbelief.

Some of the place-names involved in the cruise of the semi-real world, as noted by various critics, are the following:

Porpheero--Europe
Dominora--England
Franko--France
Ibeereea--Spain
Kaleedone--Scotland
Verdanna--Ireland
Kolombo--the American continents
Kanneeda--Canada
Vivenza--United States
Cape of Capes--Cape Horn
Hamora--Africa.[130]

As indicated, the account of the semi-real world cruise enabled Melville to comment upon specific contemporary political and social problems. In this respect, Melville's democratic state of mind observed in Typee and Omoo is sustained.

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[130]Hayman, op. cit., p. 40; Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 382; Tyrus Hillway, Herman Melville, p. 79; Nathalia Wright, "Biblical Allusion in Melville's Prose," AL, XII (May, 1940), 186; Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 80.

The searchers are prevented from visiting Porpheero by the eruptions (revolutions of 1848) occurring there. After praising Porpheero as an enchanting land and, no doubt, the place to which Yillah has fled, Media, the king, becomes distraught at seeing the eruption in Franko and witnessing the scattering of the sparks in distant corners of the island. Mohi, the fact collector, is similarly disturbed, fearing that only ashes will remain. Yoomy, poet and true historian, observes that vineyards flourish over burned villages. Philosopher Babbalanja expands Yoomy's comment, eventually observing that peace may very likely be the result of the present chaos.

The concern for the common man and his plight is exhibited on Dominora, where farmers starve in the midst of abundance because the harvests are given to the lords, and workers are made unemployed by mechanization (Melville's distrust of science as a guide to a better life). Having shown a demonstration prompted by the demand for food, and the betrayal of that cause, Melville warns that King Bello of Dominora must recondition his "state canoe" if his nation is to remain the world's dominant and enlightened leader.

Finally, Melville suggests that democracy may not be the means by which the brotherhood of man is to be achieved; for, as the group approaches Vivenza, they behold

an arch whereupon immense hieroglyphics proclaim "In-this-re-publi-can-land-all-men-are-born-free-and-equal," but the almost illegibly small print beneath reads, "Except-the-tribe-of-Hamo."[131] In all of his discussions of politics and society, Melville is haunted by what he saw in Polynesia and in America and by his resulting conclusion that the sincerity of beneficial intent will not insure the achievement of good and may, instead, be productive only of evil.[132]

As with the place-names, the names of characters and the characters themselves are obviously representative of easily recognizeable real persons, types of persons or states of mind. Among those noted by critics are the following:

Allano of Hio-Hio: Senator Allen of Ohio
Saturnina: Daniel Webster
Lombardo: Dante (Koztanza, The Divine Comedy)
The sorcerers of Minda: lawyers
Mohi: historians
Yoomy: poets
Babbalanja: philosophers
Azzageddi: (Babbalanja's alter ego) the wisdom of the individual, intuition
Bardianna: the wisdom of tradition, scholasticism
Media: monarchial government, mediators or moderators
Doxodox: orthodoxy, conventionality
Oro: God
Alma: Christ

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[131]Herman Melville, Mardi, II, 168.

[132]Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 382.

a, i, and o: petty detail (Melville makes repeated use of the letters in this connotation)
Piko and Hello: dispassionate rulers
Pani: the inadequacy of clerics to serve as guides to heaven
Hivohitee MDCCCXLVIII: the Pope.[133]

The above characters require nothing more than their existence to establish their meaning. Other characters, however, need the assistance of additional systems of symbols in order to convey completely the nature of their function as symbols. One such system involves the botanical symbol, particularly the use of symbolic flowers. The quality that is Yillah is associated with a lily, and Hautia's heralds carry her messages in the form of flowers rather than in the written or spoken word.[134] Hautia's island itself is characterized by a profusion of flowers.

Another such system involves Melville's continued use of color symbols. There is the blue of Serenia's "heavenly" contentment, the green of Aleema's decayed corpse, and the pink of Yillah's secret-of-life-containing pearl. Most important is the continued employment of white to indicate otherworldliness, and black to represent

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[133]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 79; Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 382; Hayman, op. cit., p. 79; James E. Miller, Jr., "The Many Masks of Mardi," JEGP, LXVIII (July, 1959), 408; David Jaffe, "Some Sources of Melville's Mardi," AL, IX (March, 1957), 65; Tyrus Hillway, Herman Melville, p. 79.

[134]Nathalia Wright, "Form as Function in Melville," PMLA, LXVII (June, 1952), 337.

earthliness. The use of light and dark clarifies the meanings associated with Samoa (dark--self-preservation, the physical man), Hautia (dark--temptation, gratification of the senses), Jarl (bronze--nobility of the common man), Taji (white--isolatoe, presumed a demi-god from the sun), and Yillah (white--heaven born ideal).

Mardi contains Melville's first consciously symbolic synthesis of good and evil, one of his chief sources of ambiguity.[135] For example, Taji is crushed when he realizes that Yillah and Hautia are somehow connected, and the sons of Aleema, originally the dark servants of religious tradition, become the white symbols of Taji's conscience. Color in the form of black and white, then, becomes a dominant controlling symbol, growing with the action of the story.

Another attempt at a controlling symbol is the star, Arcturus, which seems to represent a detached, scientific observation and evaluation of the events. The "control" it brings to the story is, however, artificial in that it is arbitrarily scattered throughout the book. It appears at the beginning in the name of the ship from which Taji escapes and, at the end, as Taji's guiding star.[136]

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[135]Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 384.

[136]Gordon Mills, "The Significance of 'Arcturus' in Mardi," AL, XIV (May, 1942), 160.

A new treatment and use of character by Melville is also displayed in Mardi. Since some of his characters are multi-valued, a closer inspection of these characters and of Melville's method in dealing with them is warranted. It has been suggested that, by the time Melville began Mardi, or while the novel was in progress, he decided to make the book expressive of his perception of the relativity of truth. As a result, his definitions of the symbolic characters must be relative:

> . . . there is no beginning point in the development of symbolic meaning. Symbol one may have meaning "A;" symbol two may have meanings "B" and "D;" symbol three may have meaning "C," and so on. But after symbols two and three are seen, because of the relationships of "A," "B," "C," and "D," symbol one no longer has the constant meaning of "A." As each symbol is discovered, each symbol changes and grows.[137]

Unfortunately for Mardi, Melville had not yet completely learned to make experience the source of the symbol's growth, but, rather, he generally proceeds from the artificial source of an absolute concept.[138] His figures such as the "world cruise" do not grow out of the story, but are stamped upon it; therefore, one accounts for the contrived nature of his work and the ultimate necessity for his abundance of philosophical

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[137]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 90.

[138]Ibid., p. 86.

discourse in the presentation of his thoughts. That Melville is aware that his book is not under control is indicated in the speech in which Taji admits the lack of a guide but proclaims the value and necessity of searching and emphasizes his determination to do so:[139]

> Oh, reader, list! I've chartless voyaged. With compass and the lead, we had not found these Mardian isles . . . . Hug the shore, naught new is seen; and "Land Ho!" at last was sung, when a new world was sought . . . So, if after all those fearful, fainting trances, the verdict be, the golden haven was not gained; yet, on bold quest thereof, better to sink in boundless deeps, than float on vulgar shoals; and give me, ye gods, an utter wreck, if wreck I do.[140]

However artificially these symbols are imposed, Mardi does represent a conscious attempt by Melville to construct symbolic characters. Taji is the fully developed quest-figure, the man of mind and will.[141] Like Tommo and Typee, he must exhibit certain reprehensible characteristics, notably the practice of deception. He deserts his ship, stealing from it as he goes, and his entire existence in Mardi is a masquerade--he pretends to be a demi-god descended from the sun. Moreover, in the rescue of Yillah, he murders Aleema, whose sons

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[139]Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 383.

[140]Herman Melville, Mardi, II, . 207.

[141]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 95.

subsequently act as Taji's conscience as they attempt to avenge their father's death. Finally, he twice commits symbolic suicide by leaving both the real world in the form of the ship and the allegorical world of Mardi. In each case, the suicide-escape is caused by his will to pursue his quest.

In describing Mardi's protagonist, Sterne notes, "Melville's first Ahab, Taji is a false and dehumanized Prometheus."[142] A fundamental reason for his pursuit of Yillah is that, as the ideal, she represents an innocence which Taji seeks--absolution for his crimes. His persistence in his innocence and the resulting pursuit lead to the deaths of Jarl and Samoa at the hands of the avengers (two symbolic murders, since the avengers are Taji's conscience).[143] Taji has had a taste of innocence and has been on the threshold of realizing a spiritual self-consciousness (Taji's time with Yillah corresponds to Melville's sojourn in Typee Valley).[144] The fact that Taji is not innocent precludes his possession of Yillah, and the search for her in Mardi, where evil is omnipresent,

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[142]Ibid., p. 96.

[143]James E. Miller, Jr., "The Many Masks of Mardi," JEGP, LVIII (July, 1959), 411.

[144]Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 50.

must prove fruitless. Still, his pride will not allow him to admit his own guilt. As a result, he can neither accept Hautia and oblivion to the world of cares through the indulgence of sensual gratification (corresponding to Melville's rejection of the vagabond life in Omoo), nor Serenia and the peace offered by the ideal spiritual existence, primitive Christianity (corresponding to Melville's rejection of Typee because of historical reality). In order to embrace either life, it is obviously necessary for Taji to admit his guilt and give up Yillah. Since such an admission for him is impossible, he can only resort to spiritual suicide and endless pursuit.

Melville immediately warns the reader that Yillah is an ambiguous character, one not subject to final interpretation. Her own story reveals that she was born on the island of Amma, where her skin was dark, then spirited to Oroolia, isle of delights (heaven--note "Oro," or God, in the name), where her skin became white.[145] Taji himself does not understand her, even when she is with him.[146] As the Ideal, Yillah must be all things to all men,

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[145]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 111.

[146]Tyrus Hillway, "Taji's Quest for Certainity," AL, XVIII (March, 1946), 30.

a unity which cannot exist when separated from any of its parts, whose parts cannot exist as Ideal when separated from the unity.[147]

In connection with Typee, one noted that the sea in Melville may be said to represent the mind, or, in broader terms, man's consciousness. Melville shows, therefore, that Yillah is brought into the world by means of the mind of man. She is nurtured in a seashell which the sea casts upon a beach. She is discovered by a religious tradition (Aleema) which keeps her secret, and then proceeds to sacrifice her by casting her into a whirlpool. However, Taji rescues her at sea, but her obsession to return to the sea by leaping into the whirlpool, presumably, causes her to leave him. His search for her takes the form of a cruise, and, finally, in his last glimpse of her he finds her under the waters.[148] It is small wonder that the symbol of mind and conscious will (Taji) should be taken with her.

A connection between Yillah and Hautia has been noted previously. The probable source of this connection lies in the fact that both characters possess elements of the flesh. Yillah is spiritual and otherworldly while

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[147]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 115.

[148]Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 41.

Hautia is very definitely of the earth. Yet both appear in corporeal forms, and both seem to promise Taji a kind of sensual accommodation. Yillah, then, is a combination of flesh and spirit.[149] But Taji denies the world of the spirit in his rejection of Serenia, such rejection having taken place before his meeting with Hautia. Therefore, the world of the spirit may no longer exist in Taji's consciousness. The pride which will not allow him to acknowledge his guilt and forces him to pursue Yillah, transforms her into the evil Hautia, or flesh without spirituality.[150] Because of his pride, Taji is forced to pursue an ideal which his same pride has destroyed.

The isolatoe must have an associate. In this case, Jarl becomes indispensable to the questor. It is Jarl whose down-to-earth practicality makes possible the isolatoe's escape from the real world. He may be said to represent the virtue, nobility, and common sense of the common man.

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[149] Ibid., p. 52.

[150] Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 133. Fiedler would go a step farther and equate the Taji-Yillah relationship to marriage, saying that the loss of her virginity on the wedding night necessarily transforms a bride into a Hautia; in which case, man is doomed to choose between a blasphemous search for an unattainable "virgin-consummation" and a "self-destructive plunge into the gulf of sensuality." (Leslie A. Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, p. 297.)

He is the only character who is not impressed with Yillah, the only one who believes she will lead Taji astray.[151] When Taji has no more use for Jarl, he abandons him.

Whereas Jarl represents the nobility or virtue of the common man, Samoa represents his physical life. In the Samoa-Annatoo story, which occurs in the realistic portion of the book, one finds a burlesque of the Taji-Yillah situation. While Taji is the man of mind and will, Samoa is the physical man and, while Yillah is heaven, Annatoo is earth.[152] Annatoo is the goal of the physical, earthly man, as Yillah is the goal of the mind of man. Moreover, while Yillah as Hautia tempts Taji, Annatoo pursues Jarl. Both lures are inscrutable and unpossessable. Finally, Annatoo's death is a foreshadowing of the disappearance and death of Yillah. Since both Jarl and Samoa represent aspects of the real world, they must not accompany Taji upon his allegorical journey, because, besides being of no further use, they would be a positive hindrance on such a trip, and the isolatoe dispassionately leaves them behind.

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[151]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 102.

[152]Ibid., p. 104.

The program of increased reading which prompted Melville to alter his form so that Mardi could become a philosophical speculation must necessarily be reflected in a new style. His use of sources remained the same; that is, his borrowing of specific incidents, customs, legends and other Polynesian ethnological data from previous travel reports to substantiate and expand the work in progress.[153] His treatment of these materials was still evidenced in the paraphrasing which put the gathered data into his own style.[154] However, the thought-provoking reading which he had undertaken was obviously not in such narratives, but in works of long established literary reputations. The result is his use of many new devices and a cataloguing of allusions so excessive as, virtually, to become absurd.[155]

A few devices which are either new in Melville or are marked by an increased and conscious use in Mardi as noted by certain critics, are tabulated below:

1. The production of satire by the "reductio ad absurdum;"[156]

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[153]Jaffé, op. cit., p. 56.

[154]Ibid., p. 62.

[155]Guttmann, op. cit., p. 239.

[156]Jaffé, op. cit., p. 69.

2. The increased use of metaphor and simile in description and the addition of their use in the conscious production of symbols;[157]
3. The use of poetic rhythm patterns in description;[158]
4. Thematic progress by the conscious use of
   a. Reinforcement--repetition of similar details,
   b. Contrast,
   c. The multiple view--establishes relativism by requiring an object to be described or discussed by several parties,
   d. Circular reflexion ". . . structural symbolism wherein the meaning comes out of the preparations which set up a shock of recognition rather than from metaphysical position . . .";[159]
5. The use of phrenology and physiognomy to assist descriptions, add humor, establish symbolic overtones--marked by the first mention of Lavater's charts in Melville.[160]
6. The catalogue used for embellishment.[161]

Melville's allusions in Moby Dick are woven into the pattern of the work, while those in Mardi are present largely as ornamentation.[162] The profusion of these ornamental devices, however, represents a significant step away from the straightforward style of Typee and Omoo. Some indication of the scope of the departure from the

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[157]Mason, op. cit., p. 41.

[158]Gilman, op. cit., p. 166.

[159]Milton R. Stern, "Some Techniques of Melville's Perception," PMLA, LXXIII (June, 1958), 257.

[160]Tyrus Hillway, "Melville's Use of Two Pseudo-sciences," MLN, LXIV (March, 1949), 150.

[161]Guttmann, op. cit., p. 239.

[162]Ibid., p. 244.

previous style and the profundity of its effects can be seen in studies by Pommer in Milton's influence upon Melville as a source of idea, technique, and diction, and Wright in Biblical influence on Melville's style, characterization, plot construction and philosophy. The two studies reveal the following statistics (numbers are representative of specific references):

	Typee	Omoo	Mardi	Redburn	W-Jacket	Moby Dick
Pommer/Milton	2	1	16	8	8	16
Wright/Bible	6	8	75	51	52	155.[163]

A comparison of these statistics shows an interesting pattern. Prior to Mardi, references to both the Bible and Milton are so slight as to be insignificant. With Mardi, however, there is a marked increase in Melville's number of references. This number is not achieved by him again until the writing of Moby Dick, conceded to be Melville's masterpiece. Next, while there is a distinct reduction in references between Mardi and Moby Dick, both Redburn and White Jacket contain more than twice the combined number of Typee and Omoo references to each source. Moreover, as regards the two sources, figures not presented show that the number of references in Mardi was never exceeded in subsequent works, with the exception of

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[163]Henry R. Pommer, Milton and Melville, pp. 127-129; Nathalia Wright, "Biblical Allusion in Melville's Prose," AL, XII (March, 1940), 185.

Billy Budd's ninety-five references to the Bible, nor was there ever a retrogression by Melville to the level of Typee and Omoo. Finally, it should be noted that, whereas the method of Melville's previous borrowings was a Shakespearean-like adaptation of specific incident or detail, these studies were concerned with the effect of the sources upon Melville's technique itself. Other studies mark his decided shift away from the factual narrative as the primary type of source. Specific indications of the influence upon Melville of Spenser, Dante, Burton, Browne, Rabelais, Malthus, Swift, Seneca, and the Elizabethans also have been noted.[164]

Mardi also sets forth Melville's ironies. The right and wrong incompletions, the relativity of truth, the ambiguities that will dominate his succeeding books are all present in Mardi.[165] That these problems remain unresolved at the end of Taji's story is exemplified by the increasing mood of despair and the final, tragic, suicidal

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[164]Nathalia Wright, "A Note on Melville's Use of Spenser: Hautia and the Bower of Bliss," AL, XXIV (March, 1952), 83-85; William Braswell, "Melville's Use of Seneca," AL, XII (March, 1940), 98-104; Cesare Pavese, op. cit., pp. 407-418; Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 40 passim; Tyrus Hillway, "Melville and the Spirit of Science," SAQ, LVIII (Fall, 1959), 587-602; Tyrus Hillway, Herman Melville, p. 80 passim.

[165]Milton R. Stern, The Fine Hammered Steel of Herman Melville, p. 129.

escape from the world of the mind.[166] Thus, in his search for full realization of himself, Taji becomes Melville's first tragic hero, his first clear portrayal of the man who cannot combine mind and heart.[167] However, the fact that the heart is completely absent is a defect in the book, since the true tragic hero must be capable of evoking pity.[168] Melville, in this respect, falls short of artistic success. Nevertheless, the intellect and imagination involved in the attempt through plan and design, to achieve a work embracing all aspects of his developing mind, especially following such overtly superficial works as Typee and Omoo, is a significant achievement, an important advance in Melville's developing art.[169] It is, at least, an heroic if disappointing undertaking.

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[166]Tyrus Hillway, "Taji's Abdication in Herman Melville's Mardi," AL, XVI (November, 1944), 205.

[167]Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 56

[168]Ibid., p. 60.

[169]Mason, op. cit., p. 64.

CHAPTER IV

Redburn and White Jacket

Mardi was a failure. Following the book's March 15, 1849, publication by Richard Bentley in England, Melville found his literary reputation and financial position in considerable jeopardy.[170] To say the least, critics and public were confused by the book. Melville knew there were faults in Mardi, but he also claimed it as his brain-child, the type of book he had wanted to write. He tried continually to justify the book to his publisher, writing in a letter, June 5, 1849, that, although the English critics had ". . . fired quite a broadside into /It/" and the fact of its being brought forth in novel format no doubt caused the public to take it for something other than "what it really is,"

> . . . it will reach those for whom it is intended; and I have already received assurances that Mardi, in its higher purposes, has not been written in vain.[171]

What Melville thought Mardi really is, is matter for conjecture. At any rate, it was not a novel, and it was not popular. It was, however, the end of the Typee and

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[170]Leyda, op. cit., p. 292.

[171]Davis, op. cit., pp.85-86.

Omoo form of novel in Melville's personal make-up and literary style.

Melville's problems arising from the failure of Mardi were increased with the birth of his son, Malcolm.[172] Forced to write a type of book that would sell, Melville dashed off Redburn and White Jacket:

> . . . 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.[173] (emphasis Melville's)

Following the writing of Mardi, Melville took some time off from his work to relax, or to recover from the trial of writing Mardi, by indulging in social life and going to plays and recitals, but, most importantly, by reading Shakespeare. In the month of February, Melville found a large-type copy of Shakespeare's works and discovered in his reading that

> . . . /Shakespeare's/full of sermons-on-the-mount, and gentle, aye, almost as Jesus. I take such men to be inspired . . . if another Messiah ever comes twill be in Shakespeare's person . . .[174] I now exult over it /his copy/, page after page.

Then, came the bad news of Mardi's failure and the obvious

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[172]Mumford, op. cit., p. 92.

[173]Davis, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

[174]Ibid., p. 77.

realization that he would have to return to work.

The previously quoted letter of June 5, 1849, contains the first known indication that Melville is now preparing a new book:

> I have now in preparation a thing of widely different cast from "Mardi":--a plain, straightforward, amusing narrative of personal experience . . . no metaphysics, no conic-sections, nothing but cakes & ale . . . [the book] will be printed here by the Harpers, & ready for them two or three months hence, or before.[175]

His concentration on the writing of Redburn made a virtual hermit out of Melville during the months of May and June, but eventually the book was finished and an agreement signed with Harpers for its publication on July 2, 1849.[176] His work on a second book must have begun immediately, for by the end of August, White Jacket was finished.[177] Since it is not likely that Melville began to do any serious work on Redburn before the end of April, it would seem that

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[175] Ibid., p. 86.

[176] Howard, op. cit., p. 133.

[177] Ibid., p. 134.

he wrote these two books in the space of four months.[178] Such a short length of time, in addition to its evidence of some overlapping in composition, would not appear to admit of Melville's conscious efforts at symbolism or allegory. Yet, Melville has said that these books reflect his feelings, and a glance at the conclusion of White Jacket, in lieu of the book's subtitle, The World in a Man-of-War, must remove any doubt from one's mind that some such efforts, over and above the message inherent in Melville's selection of events and phraseology, are present:

> As a man-of-war that sails through the sea, so this earth that sails through the air. We mortals are all on board a fast-sailing, never-sinking /the name of the book's ship is USS Neversink/ , world-frigate, of which God was the shipwright; and she is but one craft in a Milky-Way fleet, of which God is the Lord High Admiral.[179]

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[178]Mardi was published in America on April 13, 1849; Melville indicates his intention to pursue his reflective reading by ordering a copy of Macauley of April 25; and his review of Cooper's The Sea Lions was printed April 28. (Leyda, op. cit., pp. 297-301.) Gilman notes that the 170,000 word White Jacket was composed in two and one-half months, but extends the conclusion date to September 13, 1849, the day on which Harpers agreed to publish the book. (Gilman, op. cit., p. 174.) Leyda writes, "New York August /1849/ M completes the writing of White-Jacket." (Leyda, op. cit., p. 311.) Even if one were to concede to Gilman and, furthermore, were to add two weeks to the end-of-April beginning of Redburn, the resulting five month span is certainly no large amount of time to compose two books comprising a total of 677 pages.

[179]Melville, White Jacket, p. 374.

The importance of these two books to Melville's artistic development is second only to that of Mardi. The key to the importance lies in Melville's own words. He admits that he was forced to write them for monetary reasons, forced to give up the wildness of Mardi with its convoluted and obvious symbols and allegories, forced to write a straightforward and apparently "truthful" account. Yet, he would speak as he felt. He solved his problem by arranging his narratives in such a fashion that, while presenting a straightforward narrative, he could make clear his observations and thoughts concerning human existence. Money, Melville's gadfly, forced him to give up his desired career as a Polynesian Bunyan who derived his symbols from an absolute concept, in exchange for a better career as an artist whose thoughts emerge from the literal level of his books.

Naturally, full realization of Melville's ultimate method cannot be found in either Redburn or White Jacket. The books are experiments in the discovery, steps in the progress, reflections of past and current influences; and, as such, things learned in the act of creation can only be shown in subsequent books. Nor should one expect to find a great many of the lessons which Melville had learned in Redburn to be utilized in White Jacket, for the two books were composed in such a short space of time that

the concept of the latter, and, perhaps, some rough notes on it, must have been developing even as Melville composed the former.

With the conclusion of Mardi, Melville had made use of a considerable amount of his personal experiences at sea, only three major materials, the first voyage, the voyage home from the Pacific, and his whaling experience, remaining.[180] The necessity of writing profitable books did not allow him to expand specific incidents encountered in his travels to exploit to the fullest the things he had seen. Moreover, it had been proved to him that those works in which he had reversed his former method and relied on imagination augmented by realities (Mardi) had not been profitable. It must have been apparent, then, that he had need to return to his former method of personal narrative, that of realities augmented by imagination. As a result, by the end of 1849, only his whaling experiences remained to be exploited.

Melville surely had realized by the end of his composition of Mardi that his books had, perhaps unconsciously, taken a particular direction. Any traveler must see the similarity between his actual experiences and a book, since both have a beginning, an end, and a "plot." It was

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[180]James Baird, Ishmael, pp. 86-88.

probably some such impression that caused Melville to write Typee; indeed, the experiences which he had related in that book had a very definite beginning (desertion) and end (escape), and the "plot" had inherent suspense. But, the Typee episode was only a chapter in Herman Melville: His Voyages. It must have occurred to him that, to finish that "book," he would need to supply it with a beginning and end. Moreover, he realized, as Mardi shows, that he was making a philosophical voyage of his books, each book being a stopover in his own search for truth; he must give that voyage, too, a beginning and, hopefully, an end. Since it was experience which made the philosophical voyager, Melville, aware of his lure, the "beginning book" must show not only a first encounter with the sea, but a first encounter with experience; i.e., a child's meeting with the adult world.

Redburn

First voyages by sons of gentlemen were common, even passé, before Melville began Redburn. Some years before, Dana's book had set the model by which gentlemen sailors told their tales, his work having been widely imitated.[181] Melville's book is a deviation from Dana's

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[181]Gilman, op. cit., p. 171.

form in that the protagonist is changed from a young man to a boy of fifteen.[182] The change in age brought a fresh approach to the narrative, since a boy so much younger must react with greater intensity to the hard facts of shipboard existence. Such an alteration not only permits the avoidance of imitating Dana, but necessarily presents a foundation for an examination of the initiation of experience into the world. Thus, whatever symbolic overtones may be attached to the book are derived from the facts as they are presented rather than from an absolute concept.

Since it is a narrative of personal experience, the work must also utilize the first-person-protagonist-point-of-view. Formerly, Melville appeared to have lost control of Mardi when he confused the reader with alterations within that point of view. Redburn, however, presents his further experiments with view-point. Here, however, the alterations contribute to the progress of the book. Redburn is told by a reminiscing author, who allows his younger self to do the speaking, but the voice matures as the boy himself matures until the adult Redburn intrudes

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[182]Redburn cites his brother as being eight years older (Herman Melville, Redburn, p. 9.), whereas Melville's brother was in fact only four years older (Metcalf, op. cit., p. 1.). Melville actually sailed at age nineteen (Leyda, op. cit., p. 88.).

to offer his own views.[183] When he is teased about his shooting jacket, the young Redburn comments:

> They are all witty dogs, thought I to myself, trying to make the best of the matter, for I saw it would not do to resent what they said; they can't mean any harm, though they are certainly very impudent; so I tried to laugh off their banter, but as soon as ever I could, I put down my name and beat a retreat.[184]

Later, after speaking of the immigrants aboard the ship, the mature Redburn comments:

> But, I, Redburn, am a poor fellow, who have hardly ever known what it is to have five silver dollars in my pocket at one time; so, no doubt, this circumstance has something to do with my slight and harmless indignation at these things.[185]
> (Note the irony employed in the older Redburn's speech.)

Bowen notes that the shift in the speaker from reminiscing youth to reminiscing adult held certain advantages for Melville, which advantages may be listed as follows:

1) the youthful testimony makes the story more believable,
2) factual material and moral comment are conveniently introduced by the older Redburn,
3) time gaps in the story are easily bridged,
4) increased opportunities for foreshadowing are presented,
5) the presence of the enlightened narrator permits greater irony and provides a goal to be reached by the aging protagonist.[186]

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[183]Merlin Bowen, "Redburn and the Angle of Vision," MP, LII (November, 1954), 106.

[184]Melville, Redburn, p. 17.

[185]Ibid., p. 235.

[186]Bowen, op. cit., p. 102.

If the basic presentation is a first brush with reality, it seen is man's inhumanity to man. Time and again, young Redburn is shown the world as it is in incidents which reveal to him the cruelty with which men deal with their fellows--the human brotherhood, or democratic theme, first seen in Typee and shown in various ways in Omoo and Mardi. The most dramatic evidence of this theme occurs in Redburn's discovery of a woman and two children, dying of starvation in an underground vault. He is overcome with compassion and attempts to obtain help for them--but everyone he sees either completely ignores him, angrily refuses him aid, or remains indifferent to him and to the situation. He manages, however, to steal some food for the sufferers and then repents, since he realizes that he has only prolonged their misery. He concludes that euthanasia is not the answer,

> . . . for I well knew that the law, which would let them perish of themselves without giving them one cup of water, would spend a thousand pounds, if necessary, in convicting him who should so much as offer to relieve them from their miserable existence.[187]

Here one may detect another of Melville's ideas: namely, mankind's organizations are to be particularly distrusted. The missionaries in Typee and Omoo, the political structures in Mardi, and the law, here, in

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[187]Melville, Redburn, p. 177.

Redburn demonstrate the validity of this belief. None of the policemen he approaches would concern himself with the woman's plight, but each of them would vigorously pursue "justice" should Redburn attempt the only humane solution to her problem.

A second example of Melville's humanity theme and his distrust of the law is presented by a new facet of an old technique. He had long ago shown his ability to transform elements of factual narratives into specific incident in his own story. For example, the portrayal of the immigrants on the Highlander's return to America indicates his ability to assimilate current events into his books. There were only thirty-two steerage passengers on the St. Lawrence, Melville's ship, yet the Highlander has four or five hundred immigrants.[188] The chapters concerning these immigrants are created from various sources, notably from newspapers.[189] The result of Melville's imaginative efforts is a poignant illustration of the Irish immigrants' passage and a condemnation of both the law which refuses to enforce a Congressional act designed to protect those individuals ignorant of the provisions which

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[188]Gilman, op. cit., p. 201.

[189]Loc. cit.

must be taken to insure a safe and healthy passage, and the inadequacies of this same act.[190]

The pursuit of a symbolic method, as previously noted, leads Melville to treat his materials in such a way that their significance derives from the facts surrounding them. In such a case, the symbolic value of objects comes to the fore. There are three definite object symbols in Redburn: the glass ship, the guide book, and the shooting jacket.[191]

The glass ship is a curiosity which had been in Redburn's family for thirty years. As a child, Redburn was fascinated by the ship, weaving romantic fancies about it. Such fancies were, in a large part, responsible for Redburn's choice of the sea as a means of escape from his financial difficulties. The key to an interpretation of the ship lies in Redburn's statement:

> We have her yet in the house, but many of her glass spars and ropes are now sadly shattered and broken,--but I will not have her mended; and her figurehead, a gallant warrior in a cocked-hat, lies pitching head-foremost down into the trough of a calamitous sea under the bows--but I will not have him put on his legs again, till I get on my own; for between him and me there is a secret sympathy; and my sisters

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[190] Ibid., p. 239.

[191] Newton Arvin, Herman Melville, p. 108.

> tell me, even yet, that he fell from his perch the very day I left home to go to sea on this my first voyage.[192]

The glass ship, then, becomes a statement of Redburn-Melville's present state. He, too, has fallen from the world in which all things are fixed, or secure (i.e., childhood) and lies with his head or mind buried in the "calamitous sea" of man's consciousnous.

It is Redburn's naivete that makes him an isolatoe aboard the Highlander. He is totally unfamiliar with shipboard life and the duties of a sailor. In Redburn, the emblem of the landlubber is the shooting jacket. The book begins:

> Wellingborough, as you are going to sea, suppose you take this shooting-jacket of mine along; it's just the thing--take it, it will save the expense of another. You see, it's quite warm; fine long skirts, stout horn buttons, and plenty of pockets.[193]

Of course, the jacket is eventually revealed as the kind of cloak least serviceable for Redburn; innocence and shore manners have nothing in common with life at sea. Redburn's jacket is immediately noted by the chief mate who makes plain its symbolic function:

> A sailor! . . . a barber's clerk, you mean; you going out in the ship? what, in that jacket? Hang me, I hope the old man hasn't been shipping any more greenhorns

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[192]Melville, Redburn, p. 8.

[193]Ibid., p. 1.

> like you . . . they think nothing of shipping a parcel of farmers and clodhoppers and baby boys.[194]

Following this observation, the mate nicknames Redburn, "Buttons," presumably because it is a name associated with a child and because of the rakish horn buttons on the jacket. The appropriateness of the shooting jacket as a symbol of naivete is clearly demonstrated as the voyage proceeds. One would assume that daily encounters with the facts of navy life would teach Redburn, so that eventually he would lose his naivete. Such experiences as working above decks in rough or rainy weather must certainly have taught him a few things:

> But I had almost forgotten my shooting-jacket, which was made of moleskin. Every day, it grew smaller and smaller, particularly after a rain . . . This made it pinch me under the arms, and it vexed, irritated, and tormented me every way . . . .[195]

The jacket remains with Redburn throughout his voyage, but becomes increasingly shabby as experience wears it away. Here, for once, is the appearance of a symbol, the significance of which is made clear only by the facts surrounding it.

The guidebook is another. The instructions of the past, as a guide to present life, are expounded by Babbalanja in Mardi, but in Redburn the thought grows out

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[194] Ibid., p. 26.

[195] Ibid., p. 72.

of the realism of the guidebook, rather than being didactically set forth.[196] The book is one which was used by Redburn's father on a business trip several years prior to Redburn's voyage. Redburn dotes upon it, ". . . I should like to immortalize it if I could."[197] The book itself is a relic, containing poetry, personal notes by Redburn's father, and complete directions to Liverpool, including a map. But all things about the book are of and calculated for another age: ". . . a guide-book . . . might have done good service in its day, yet it would prove but a miserable cicerone to a modern."[198] The book directs him to the hotel in which his father had lodged, but, when he arrives at the indicated spot, he learns that the hotel has been torn down. His guidebook has been false to him:

> . . . this precious book was next to useless. Yes, the thing that had guided the father, could not guide the son . . . Guidebooks . . . are the least reliable books in all literature; and nearly all literature, in one sense, is made up of guidebooks . . . But there is one Holy Guide-Book, Wellingborough, that will never lead you astray, if you but follow it aright.[199]

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[196]Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 65.

[197]Melville, Redburn, p. 136.

[198]Ibid., p. 145.

[199]Ibid., p. 150-151.

Melville's guide book was another excellent device, for, as Thorp observes, in addition to indicating that the signs of the past may cause one to be lost today, the guidebook gave Redburn something to do while awaiting the ship's return to America, lead to comments about the city of Liverpool and its history, and provided opportunities for satirization by utilizing its pompous style in discourses on the passage of time.[200]

One other aspect in Melville's growing symbolic method appears in Redburn. The earlier books had included voyages, and it has been noted that Omoo contains Melville's first use of the ship as a microcosm. Redburn, however, is the first instance in Melville in which there is only one ship involved and in which the voyage as a whole is symbolic. (Taji sails in search of Yillah, but that lure is not introduced until more than one hundred pages have passed.) In Redburn, the voyage idea is a metaphor of death and rebirth, of the end of childhood and the birth of maturity.[201] Both the trip to Liverpool and the return to America begin with a death. The vividness with which these deaths are related are tributes to Melville's

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[200]Thorp, op. cit., p. 1148.

[201]Newton Arvin, Herman Melville, p. 106.

imaginative writing, for neither death actually occurred.[202] The deaths may also be said to mark the end of childhood, the first of Redburn's, the second of Harry Bolton's.

Such an observation necessarily leads to a consideration of character. Parallels between the two men are made clear, and their reactions indicate Melville's new awareness of the importance of character. Both Bolton and Redburn embark on their first voyages; both are naive at the beginning; both are ridiculed and persecuted for that naivete. The initiation into the consciousness which in Melville comes with the sea has different effects on them. The isolatoe must somehow encounter the idea of falling to death. When Redburn is first ordered aloft, he notes:

> . . . whenever I incautiously looked down toward the deck, my head spun round so from weakness, that I was obliged to shut my eyes to recover myself. I do not remember much more. I only recollect my safe return to the deck.[203]

Yet, he returns to the mast and, before the voyage is concluded, he is able to write a chapter called, "He Begins to Hop About in the Rigging Like a Saint Jago's Monkey." As a result, his return voyage is not so tedious; he is accepted, to a degree, by the crew.

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[202] Ibid., p. 107.

[203] Melville, Redburn, p. 29.

On the other hand, when Bolton, a more delicate boy, returns from his first trip up the mast,

> He came down pale as death, with bloodshot eyes, and every limb quivering. From that moment he never put foot in rattlin . . . Harry then told the mate solemnly, that he might do what he pleased, but go aloft again he could not, and would not.[204]

The result is that the crew derides Bolton continuously. An attempt is, then, made to remove Bolton's name from the list of the crew, since he cannot and will not perform his job. The captain refuses, saying that once a sailor has signed on, he must remain a sailor for the duration of the cruise. This ultimatim reinforces the death metaphor--Bolton cannot return to ignorance. Doomed to the sea and consciousness, but refusing to accept his fate, Bolton becomes another Lem Hardy, attempting to "go back" to another way of life. Bolton's attempt, like Hardy's, can only end in disaster, and he is killed on a later voyage.

Bolton's life aboard ship serves another purpose. He becomes a foil for Redburn's observations on his own growth and a reinforcement of the guidebook theme. The similarity in the two characters, as previously noted, lies in their initial naivete. The details offered in the depiction of that naivete are, also, similar. As a matter

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[204]Ibid., pp. 248-249.

of fact, the same type of incident happens to each in the same order and at about the same intervals.[205] On the return trip, however, Redburn is older and wiser. He is, therefore, able to comment upon the incidents, thereby revealing his own development:

> Will you believe me, this Bury blade once came on deck in a brocaded dressing-gown, embroidered slippers, and tasseled smoking-cap, to stand his morning watch . . . the slightest acquaintance with the sea-life and sailors, should have prevented him, it would seem, from enacting this folly.[206]

Furthermore, no matter how Redburn attempts to help Harry, he never succeeds. Prior to sailing, Redburn warns Harry about Captain Riga's two faces. Bolton either refuses to believe him or to understand him. Again, prior to the mast episode, Redburn had repeatedly warned Bolton that he had best practice at climbing the riggings so as to overcome his fear of the heights. Harry could not be persuaded, and the results have been recorded. Redburn was as useless to Bolton as his father's guidebook had been to Redburn.

The portrait of innocence in the character of Redburn involves a new direction in Melville's treatment of character, that is, the employment of what, today, is

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[205]Bowen, op. cit., p. 108.

[206]Melville, Redburn, pp. 244-245.

called psychology. The previous discussion of Melville's point of view shows that Redburn's character is revealed by his own words and emotional reactions. "Even in mortification Melville makes Redburn analyze what is happening to him"[207] This psychological self-examination makes the young Redburn a more sensitive youth than Huck Finn or Tom Sawyer, and the many aspects of his nature, such as his ability to see the humor in his predicaments, thus given to the boy, make him a character worthy of sympathetic appreciation and a near equal of Pip or David Copperfield.[208]

The most complete characterization, however, appears in another isolatoe, Jackson. Mason notes that Jackson is ". . . Melville's first character of dramatic quality."[209] Arvin sees in Jackson ". . . Melville's first full length study in depravity."[210] Hillway calls Jackson ". . . the first embodiment of absolute evil."[211] There was a man named Jackson aboard the St. Lawrence, but the description of that man in Redburn was probably the result of Melville's imagination. Since Melville is known to have altered the physical descriptions of some

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[207]Gilman, op. cit., p. 215.

[208]Ibid., p. 210.

[209]Mason, op. cit., p. 71.

[210]Newton Arvin, Herman Melville, p. 104.

[211]Tyrus Hillway, Herman Melville, p. 72.

of his other characters to suit his purpose, it is logical to think that the Gothic figure he makes of Jackson is also his own creation.[212] Bald, rheumatic, yellow skinned, broken nosed, walleyed, he

> . . . was such a hideous looking mortal, that Satan himself would have run from him . . . one glance of his squinting eye, was as good as a knock-down, for it was the most deep, subtle, infernal looking eye, that I ever saw lodged in a human head . . . It was a horrible thing; and I would give much to forget that I have ever seen it; for it haunts me to this day.[213]

Jackson's character is no better than his physical features. He controls the crew with his eye, forces them to bow to his wishes and make him, tacitly, their leader. He is a physically weak man, so ill he cannot perform the usual duties as a sailor, and always manages to be assigned to the lightest tasks. The crew's fear of him, though he is physically no man's equal, prevents their saying anything to his face. Moreover, some members wait upon him by filling his pipe, warming his coffee, mending his clothes, and rubbing his back. His past is despicable. He delights in telling stories of things he has seen and done, of slave ships and their inhuman conditions, of plagues, snakes, poisons, piracy, and of the

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[212]Newton Arvin, "Melville and the Gothic Novel," NEQ, XXII (March, 1949), 46.

[213]Melville, Redburn, p. 54.

indulgence in vices so infamous that it seems incredible to Redburn that Jackson could have lived to his now indeterminable age. Efforts to unseat the tyrant are always futile, because, when the time comes for execution, everyone is silent. Redburn, perhaps because youth must lay the blame elsewhere, decides that it is Jackson's envy of Redburn's youth that causes Jackson to hate him and, since Jackson controls the crew, says, ". . . I found myself a sort of Ishmael in the ship."[214]

In his reading of Shakespeare prior to the writing of Redburn, Melville had scored a speech by Edmund (King Lear, V:3.) and commented, "The infernal nature has a valor often denied to innocence."[215] The logical extension of such a comment is that those who are infernal in nature are to be pitied for the flaw that made them so and for their perseverance in the face of overwhelming opinion against them. It was noted in connection with Taji that the tragic hero must be capable of evoking pity. Jackson is a demonstration of Melville's learning that one way of eliciting pity in a tragic personality is through the very evil in the person's nature. Redburn labels Jackson as a man who was convinced

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[214] Ibid., p. 60.

[215] Leyda, op. cit., p. 290.

> . . . that there was nothing to be believed; nothing to be loved, and nothing worth living for; but every thing to be hated, in the wide world . . . But there seemed even more woe than wickedness about the man; and his wickedness seemed to spring from his woe . . . there was that in his eye at times, that was ineffably pitiable and touching . . . I have pitied no man as I have pitied him.[216]

As for valor, Melville notes that, as the Highlander nears America, Redburn observes that Jackson is approaching death, yet, like Tiberius

> . . . /he/ did not give over his blasphemies but endeavored to drag down with him to his own perdition, all who came within the evil spell of his power . . . I account this Yankee Jackson full as dignified a personage as he /Tiberius/ . . . .[217]

Off Cape Cod, the sailors are called into action, and Jackson forces himself to take part in the work. Though he avoided work in calms, in times of trouble Jackson would never surrender his position as the most worthy of seamen and was always present wherever good seamanship was most called for. In this case, he finds himself on the end of a spar, hauling in the sails. His weakened condition will not endure the strain, and he falls, his blood gushing from a throat that is shouting blasphemies, dead before he strikes the water. Thus, ends Melville's second Ahab.

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[216] Melville, Redburn, p. 100.

[217] Ibid., p. 265.

Stylistically, Redburn is an advance over its predecessors in Melville's use of realism. Melville does more in five pages than Dickens could accomplish in five hundred.[218]

> . . . I tried to lift the woman's head; but, feeble as she was, she seemed bent upon holding it down. Observing her arms still clasped upon her bosom . . . /a thought/ impelled me forcibly to withdraw her hands for a moment; when I caught a glimpse of a meager little babe . . . Its face was dazzlingly white, even in its squalor; but the closed eyes looked like balls of indigo. It must have been dead some hours.[219]

The evocation of horror, pity, and anger does not depend upon descriptive ability alone. Conversation is utilized by Melville to present laconic, biting comment on the reactions of those who hear of the woman's plight. Immediately following his discovery of the family, Redburn meets two rag pickers.

> I said she was alive, and not dead.
> "Then she'll never die," was the rejoiner. "She's been down there these three days, with nothing to eat;--that I know myself."
> "She deserves it," said an old hag . . . "that Betsy Jennings desarves it--was she ever married? tell me that."[220]

Next, he meets a policeman.

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[218]Mason, op. cit., p. 71.

[219]Melville, Redburn, pp. 176-177.

[220]Ibid., pp. 174-175.

> "It's none of my business, Jack," said he. "I don't belong to that street."
> "Who does then?"
> "I don't know. But what business is it of yours? Are you not a Yankee?"
> "Yes," said I, "but come, I will help you remove that woman, if you say so."
> "There, now, Jack, go on board your ship and stick to it; and leave these matters to the town."[221]

One of the people Redburn asks for help is a porter.

> "Well," said he, "what of it?"
> "Can't we get them out?" said I, "haven't you some place in your warehouse where you can put them? have you nothing for them to eat?"
> "You're crazy, boy," said he; "do you suppose, that Parkins and Wood want their warehouse turned into a hospital?"[222]

It will be noted in the pagination that these conversations follow one another in rapid order. In fact, Redburn's search for help is made frantic by his encounter, within two pages, of seven separate incidents of denial of aid. Thus, pacing contributes to the effect which Melville seeks. The author of Redburn, therefore, had learned much while in the act of realistically portraying imagined events; for, although the deaths at sailing, the London trip, the great number of immigrants aboard the episodes connected with them, and Jackson's fall have no basis in fact according to the log of the St. Lawrence, Redburn

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[221] Ibid., p. 175.

[222] Loc. cit.

was for years considered autobiographical with only few elements of Romance.[223]

Melville is not yet purged of the exuberance of Mardi, but his lyricism in Redburn is considerably more appropriate. The catalogue of allusions, for example, is used here in the description of a small Italian immigrant who plays a hand organ and whose music is a delight to all aboard the ship.[224] Melville's diction in this case becomes more poetic, and his sentences break into meter:

> Again--what blasted heath is this?--what goblin sounds of Macbeth's witches?--Beethoven's Spirit Waltz! the muster-call of sprites and spectors. Now come, hands joined, Medusa, Hecate, she of Endor, and all the Blocksberg's, demons dire.
>
> Once more the ivory knobs are tapped; and long-drawn, golden sounds are heard--some ode to Cleopatra; slowly loom, and solemnly expand, vast rounding orbs of beauty; and before me float innumerable queens, deep dipped in silver gauzes.[225]

A third style is to be noted in Redburn. Essentially, it pertains to the development of character. It has been seen that the voice of young Redburn, speaking in the manner of youthful thoughts (i.e., digressively) contributes to the development of this character in both its youthful effect and in the opportunities for self-examination which

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[223]Gilman, op. cit., p. 204.

[224]Ibid., pp. 224-225.

[225]Melville, Redburn, p. 242.

it affords. The third style, then, is the youthful manner of Redburn.[226]

It is not Redburn alone who speaks in his own voice. Many other characters are allowed to make utterances in keeping with their portraits, witness the rag pickers and the policeman previously cited. It is in the sailors' speech however, that language and character most clearly and consistently coincide. Larry the whaleman from Nantucket comments on his first sight of Liverpool:

> "Why, this 'ere is a considerable place--I'm dummed if it ain't quite a place.--Why, them 'ere houses is considerable houses. It beats the coast of Afriky, all hollow; nothing like this in Madagasky, I tell you;--I'm dummed, boys if Liverpool ain't a city!"[227] (emphasis Melville's)

Jackson philosophizes:

> ". . . Do you think, you Greek, that there's any heaven for you? Will they let you in there, with that tarry hand, and that oily head of hair? Avast! when some shark gulps you down his hatchway one of these days, you'll find, that by dying, you'll only go from one gale of wind to another . . . ."[228] (emphasis Melville's)

An announcement of a relief of the watch runs as follows:

> "Starboard watch, ahoy! eight bells there, below! Tumble up, my lively hearties; steamboat alongside waiting for your trunks: bear a hand, bear a hand with your knee-buckles, my sweet and pleasant fellows!

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[226]Gilman, op. cit., p. 221.

[227]Melville, Redburn, p. 121.

[228]Ibid., pp. 99-100.

> fine shower-bath here on deck. Hurrah, hurrah! your ice-cream is getting cold!"
>
> Whereupon some of the old croakers who were getting into their trowsers would reply with--"Oh, stop your gabble, will you? don't be in such a hurry, now. You feel sweet don't you?" with other exclamations, some of which were full of fury.[229]

It is important to note that, whereas the jumbled styles in Mardi had contributed to that book's detriment, the employment of discourse and realistic or lyrical narrative in Redburn is managed with a considerably greater selectivity, so that Melville's style in the latter book virtually always fits the material at hand. (The one principal section notable for its strain on credibility is that of the London trip.)[230] The result is that "in its richness and variety of tone, Redburn generally is the most likable of Melville's secondary books . . . ."[231]

Redburn displays Melville's progress in several aspects of his art. It shows his use of point of view to increased effect; his employment of a system of symbols which grows from the literal level of the book; his derivation of supporting themes from one controlling

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[229] Ibid., p. 117.

[230] Wagenknecht, op. cit., p. 63.

[231] Newton Arvin, Herman Melville, p. 107.

thought, the loss of innocence; an improvement in his characterization through the use of psychology, physical description, and appropriate language in the evocation of pity for the isolatoe (Redburn, Bolton, and Jackson) and respect for his courage; and, perhaps most important, the noted improvements are governed by a selectivity in style that generally gives the book a credibility not seen in its predecessors.

White Jacket

White Jacket seems to mark a regression on Melville's part, since the book contains flaws, in a manner either reminiscent of the earlier works or deviating from discoveries established in Redburn, in at least three major aspects of writing.

The first of these faults lies in Melville's overall concept of the book. Whereas Redburn had been constructed so that all elements of that book assisted in the dramatization of one basic theme, the loss of innocence, White Jacket's purpose is to examine the entire world, with all its faults and virtues. It is the same sort of thing Melville had tried to do in Mardi, and his failures to do justice to his idea in White Jacket are caused by the same fact that, ultimately, is the cause of Mardi's failure: the world is too complex an organization for Melville to analyze. Certain aspects of the world are presented in such books as Redburn and Typee, and the analysis is well handled; but neither of these works sets as its goal a step by step dissection of life on earth. Instead, the reader is forced to make conclusions about life by the observation of the drama at stage center. In White Jacket as in Mardi, the real drama of the piece is pushed to one side. It is much the same as if Hamlet were to perform up stage while

a parade of supporting characters acted between him and the audience. The result is a highly episodic structure.

The book fails to make complete utilization of the lesson in character portrayal which Melville had learned in Redburn. He had seen that Jackson, the most wicked of his early characters, had a certain nobility and a quality which caused young Redburn to pity the man. There was something good even to be said of Jackson. There is nothing detrimental in the character of Jack Chase, who is pictured as the noblest of sailors, and is referred to throughout the book in glowing terms. Chase has erred in the eyes of society, for he has deserted. In the eyes of White Jacket, however, that desertion is praiseworthy:

> He abandoned the frigate from far higher and nobler, nay, glorious motives . . . He went to . . . befriend, heart and soul, what he deemed the cause of the Right.[232]

There is no sailor more capable, no man more democratic, no hero more courageous, no artist more aesthetic, ultimately, no Christ more divine--and no character less believable. (Note that Melville goes so far as to employ the initials "J.C.") Chase is literally "too good to be true." One wonders at Melville in this situation, for he has already clearly demonstrated his near obsession with life's ambiguities as well as his intellectual perception. Surely,

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[232]Herman Melville, White Jacket, p. 29.

the reverse of the Lear observation must have occurred to him. One can only conclude with Ronald Mason that Melville's hero worship is too strong to permit, at this time, a successful portrayal of an essentially good person.[233] Billy Budd will have to wait.

Finally, as regards the book as a whole, there is a step backward in the production of symbolism. It is true that the Neversink panorama is the source of its being a microcosm emblem, that the creation of that metaphor is in the reporting of facts, but a complete tour through any ship should cause the visitor to see that ship as another world. The facts of a ship's existence, no matter how inartistically related, must cause a reader to establish that relationship. Similarly, the individual points which Melville wishes to make are adequately revealed in his handling of the various scenes. There is, therefore, no cause for the reader to be instructed regarding their proper interpretation. In such a case, the didactic concluding chapter serves no purpose other than that of providing an opportunity for Melville himself to come center stage and present the moral of his story. The book ends with a White Jacket Babbalanja holding forth:

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[233]Mason, op. cit., p. 87.

> Oh, shipmates and world-mates, all round! we the people suffer many abuses. Our gun-deck is full of complaints. In vain from Lieutenants do we appeal to the Captain; in vain--while on board our world-frigate--to the indefinite Navy Commissioners, so far out of sight aloft. Yet the worst of our evils we blindly inflict upon ourselves; our officers cannot remove them, even if they would. From the last ills no being can save another; therein each man must be his own saviour. For the rest, whatever befall us, let us never train our murderous guns inboard; let us not mutiny with bloody pikes in our hands. Our Lord High Admiral will yet interpose; and though long ages should elapse, and leave our wrongs unredressed, yet, shipmates and world-mates! let us never forget, that
>
> "Whoever afflict us, whatever surround,
> Life is a voyage that's homeward bound!"[234]

One can only conclude from the above that Melville is either unaware of the success of his present abilities or fearful of another "misunderstood" Mardi.

Yet White Jacket is not without its fine points. The book deals, as did Redburn, with the presence of good in an evil world. In Redburn, good was asked to endure; no successful positive action could be taken to overcome evil. One purpose of White Jacket is to bring a new understanding to the lot of the common sailor; particularly, it is for the abolition of flogging in the navy. Thus, the book itself is a positive action taken to redress wrongs.

Specific examples of positive action taken against malignant forces occur throughout the book. When White

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[234]Herman Melville, White Jacket, p. 376.

Jacket is accused of dereliction of duty because of circumstances not of his own creation, he decides that he will jump overboard and take Captain Claret with him rather than be flogged. A marine corporal and Chase, however, intervene in his behalf, and the flogging is prevented. Mad Jack, one of the officers, countermands Captain Claret's orders, thereby saving the ship when it is in difficulty off Cape Horn. Finally, it is his own actions after he falls overboard that save White Jacket from the curse of his garment.

In each case cited, the relief from evil is associated with a positive action, generally necessitating a reproof of society or a violation of its laws. Melville's distrust of the organized man is perhaps nowhere so clearly stated as it is in White Jacket. No system is more stringently organized than the military, and a ship at sea, as Melville makes clear, is a world of its own with a dictator who has god-like authority (it is not noon until the Captain declares it to be). Such a system is productive of evil. It is the Western world, the world of the mind, and its pedantry makes it a world without a heart.[235]

There is no heart in the legalities of the Articles of War, a group of rules which provide only a system of

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[235]Mason, op. cit., p. 91.

punishments for those who violate it. Strictly enforced in the case of the crew or people, violated with impunity when it applies to officers, the Articles are ". . . the unjust, despotic, and degrading laws under which the man-of-war's man lives."[236]

Melville's irony is perhaps nowhere more devastating than in his portrait of scientific heartlessness, surgeon Cuticle. A sailor has been shot in the leg, and Cuticle, after proclaiming that the only cure is amputation, asks the opinions of his subordinate collegues. He becomes angry when one of the surgeons advises against the operation, and he takes another's hedgings as concurrence in his own views. Another of Melville's physically incomplete men, Cuticle is a hypocrite. He wears a wig, false teeth, and a glass eye and, advising his fellows that they should join the army if war comes with Mexico in order to practice their skills, he avows that his conscience causes him discomfort every time he performs surgery: "And so saying, the knife and carver touchingly dropped to his sides . . . ."[237]

Preparing for the operation, Cuticle describes in graphic detail the method he will pursue, all in the presence

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[236]Herman Melville, White Jacket, p. 289.

[237]Ibid., p. 247.

of the listening patient. The patient is admonished to relax and told that ". . . the precision of an operation is often impaired by the inconsiderate restlessness of the patient."[238] The operation is described with a succinct realism giving force to the irony:

> . . . as the quivering flesh parted in a long, lingering gash, a spring of blood welled up between the living walls of the wound, and two thick streams, in opposite directions, coursed down the thigh . . . the limb writhed; the man shrieked; his messmates pinioned him; while round and round the leg went the unpitying cut.[239]

Following the operation, Cuticle plans an examination of the amputated leg in order to find the rifle ball and continue demonstration of his knowledge, when he is interrupted:

> "Who's there?" turning to the curtain, which then rustled.
> "Please, sir," said the steward, entering, "the patient is dead."
> "The body, also, gentlemen, at ten precisely," said Cuticle, once more turning round upon his guests. "I predicted that the operation might prove fatal; he was very much run down. Good morning"; and Cuticle departed.[240]

Pedantry is not confined to the surgeon nor the official language of the Articles of War. The young midshipmen are taught by a man who has learned the art of

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[238] Ibid., p. 248.

[239] Ibid., p. 251.

[240] Ibid., p. 254.

tactics, not by experience, but by solitary study. His lessons are a compendium of historical references, scientific terminology, and intellectual games. Even the ship's chaplain is touched by this apparent epidemic of pedantry. His sermons are so filled with allusions to literature and philosophy that they cannot be understood by the people. The result is that the crew must be driven to services by cursing boatswain's mates, for the Articles of War will not allow a sailor off duty to absent himself, even if those services are contrary to his personal religion.

The Neversink is, then, organized, Western civilization. It is the epitome of the society to which Tommo discovered he belonged historically, the one which Taji rejected, the one to which Redburn was introduced, and the one which White Jacket, in the end, will accept, if only as an alternative to death.

The isolatoe in White Jacket is at odds with the microcosm ostensibly because of his coat. An examination of the cloak as a symbol reveals that it is a culmination of Melville's previous efforts in that it is a statement of the ambiguities of existence (his established thought), characterized by evil in the color white (an already

developed relationship), realized by the presentation of the facts surrounding and object (a previously utilized method). Moreover, the same object had been used to serve a similar purpose. As an object, the white jacket has its symbolic origin in Redburn's shooting jacket, but it is a much finer symbol for a number of reasons. The shooting jacket had been grey, therefore, automatically ambiguous. The later symbol is a step forward in the use of absolutes by being gleaming white. The shooting jacket serves its function, primarily because of Redburn's demonstrated innocence, a factor outside the jacket itself, whereas the white jacket is in itself the cause for the protagonist's isolation. Therefore, the Neversink coat marks an advancement in the creation of symbols whose values are determined only by the facts of their existence.

That Melville benefited from the above improvements lies in the fact that, because of them, a definite interpretation of the symbol is difficult to achieve. The shooting jacket must be a symbol of innocence, since it is innocence that defines the symbol. The white jacket, on the other hand, is considerably more complex. Richard Chase sees the jacket as the heir of the symbolic function of the shooting jacket, another emblem of innocence.[241]

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[241] Chase, op. cit., p. 9.

The doffing of the jacket, then, becomes a sign that Melville has emerged from his philosophical puberty and is now, literally, a man of the world. Arvin admits that the jacket symbol is equivocable, but indicates it is interpretable and decides that it signifies the impirical Self or Ego and an unconscious impulse to suicide.[242] Therefore, the jacket's removal signals a rejection of suicide as the solution to the isolatoe's problem and the discovery that the isolatoe can join humanity only by submergence of his Ego. Vincent says that the jacket is a metaphor of pseudo-self-sufficiency, "patched up from wishful thinking, childhood dreams, and escapist hopes."[243] In any case, when White Jacket rises sans jacket from the sea, he has decided that no man can remain apart from humanity and must involve himself in its problems.

Each of the above explanations points only to one block in the same pyramid. It is obvious that Melville is concerned with the theme of isolation, and that fact is clearly reflected in all of the above analyses. In addition, if Melville were present and asked the specific meaning of the jacket, his answer would most likely

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[242]Newton Arvin, Herman Melville, pp. 115-116.

[243]Vincent, op. cit., p. 308.

resemble his explanation of Moby Dick. He wrote to Mrs. Hawthorne:

> . . . your allusion for example to the "Spirit Spout" first showed to me that there was a subtile significance in that thing--but I did not, in that case, mean it. I had some vague idea while writing it, that the whole book was susceptible of an allegoric construction, & also that parts of it were--but the speciality of many of the particular subordinate allegories, were first revealed to me, after reading Mr. Hawthorne's letter, which, without citing any particular examples, yet intimated the part-&-parcel allegoricalness of the whole.[244] (emphasis Melville's)

In the light of these considerations, it would seem most prudent to attach to the white jacket a much broader significance. Perhaps the most appropriate definition would be that the jacket symbolizes those aspects in a man's nature which cause him to be an isolatoe. The jacket is, therefore, malevolent.

The characters in White Jacket demonstrate Melville's versatility in portraiture. The satiric intent behind the surgeon, the tactics instructor, and the chaplain result in their being caricatures with exaggerated personalities. The attempt to portray virtue results in the paragon that is Jack Chase. But the book also contains its realistic characters, the two most notable of whom are Bland and Mad Jack. The scope of the book, its attempt to embrace the

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[244]Davis, op. cit., p. 146.

entire population of the ship, does not allow more than a sketch of the two men, but the sketches are succinct portraits of real men.

Mad Jack is described as a man born to the sea. Strong, well proportioned as Marbonna, he is a clear-headed, "take charge" man who assumes control of a situation with lusty vigor. As the embodiment of what it means to be a man, he lacks only Jack Chase's familiarity with literature. "Mad Jack was a bit of a tyrant--they say all good officers are--but the sailors loved him all round."[245] The realism in Mad Jack's character comes from the fact that he is not, like Chase, perfect. He is a bit of a tyrant and, particularly, he is addicted to brandy. His drinking is so serious a problem that it has caused him to be removed from duty and, once, nearly caused him to lose his rank. The scene in which his character is best displayed occurs off Cape Horn. A gale springs up, and the ship is immediately in danger. The officer of the deck is subordinate to the first lieutenant, who customarily relieves the officer of the deck in such cases. But Mad Jack has the deck, and the first lieutenant does not see fit to relieve him. The suddenness of the storm causes the captain himself to

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[245]Herman Melville, White Jacket, p. 45.

burst from his cabin and order, "Hard up the helm." "Damn you!" raged Mad Jack to the quarter-masters; "hard down--hard down, I say, and be damned to you!"[246] The captain is the god of the ship; his word is law; yet it is Jack's orders which are obeyed and which save the ship. He has cursed his captain and countermanded the orders of that august personage:

> . . . yet that severe Article of War, to which he thus rendered himself obnoxious, was never enforced against him. Nor, so far as any of the crew ever knew, did the captain even venture to reprimand him for his temerity.[247]

A master-at-arms and Claggart's predecessor, Bland is hated by the crew. It is his duty to discover slackers and wrong-doers in general. A report made by a master-at-arms nearly always leads to punishment, generally flogging. Below decks, the master-at-arms is, therefore, supreme in the ship. Outwardly, Bland is a gentlemen. He has a charming personality, is socially irresistable and anything but "bland."

> Nothing but his mouth, that was small, Moorish-arched, and wickedly delicate, and his snaky, black eye, that at times shone like a dark lantern in a jeweller-shop at midnight, betokened the accomplished scoundrel within.[248]

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[246] Ibid., p. 111.

[247] Ibid., p. 116.

[248] Ibid., pp. 183-184.

A part of Bland's job as policeman is to discover and apprehend smugglers. Yet, even as he makes arrests and is the principal figure in the subsequent floggings (he has charge of the prisoners, sees that all necessary arrangements are made, and removes the guilty men's shirts), he is himself the most successful smuggler aboard the ship. Bland is not so important a character to White Jacket as Jackson is to Redburn, yet one must agree with Arvin that he is

> . . . at least as subtle analytically; and his well-bred, unvulgar "organic" scoundralism is both more inexplicable and more profound than Jackson's understandable blackguardliness.[249]

The isolatoe's fall, White Jacket's plunge from the yardarm, is stylistically the high point in Melville's fiction before Moby Dick.[250] The sequence is a fiction, whose source is Nathanial Ames' A Mariner's Sketches.[251] The facts involved in the fall and some details of the feelings Ames describes are retained, but Melville's overall treatment gives the event emotional overtones that are doubly impressive because of the symbolic significance also attached to the fall.[252] In his use of color

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[249]Newton Arvin, Herman Melville, p. 119.

[250]Vincent, op. cit., p. 310.

[251]Thorp, op. cit., p. 1.

[252]Newton Arvin, Herman Melville, p. 116.

and sound, in his effective employment of rhythms, in his handling of things felt, in short, in his utilization of all the senses to convey an immediate moment, a second stopped by an artist's watch, Melville achieves a craftsmanship which is Keatsian in its completeness:[253]

> . . . It was over one hundred feet that I fell--down, down, with lungs collapsed as in death. Ten thousand pounds of shot seemed tied to my head . . . With the bloody, blind film before my eyes, there was a still stranger hum in my head, as if a hornet were there; and I thought to myself, Great God! this is Death! . . . Like frostwork that flashes and shifts its scared hues in the sun, all my braided, blended emotions were in themselves icy cold and calm . . . As I gushed into the sea, a thunder-boom sounded in my ear; my soul seemed flying from my mouth . . . I sank almost feet foremost through a soft, seething, foamy lull . . . The horrible nausea was gone; the bloody, blind film turned a pale green; I wondered whether I was yet dead, or still dying. But of a sudden some fashionless form brushed my side--some inert, soiled fish of the sea . . . I was conscious of a feeling like being pinioned in a feather bed, and moving my hands, felt my jacket puffed out above my tight girdle with water . . . I whipped out my knife . . . and ripped my jacket . . . as if I were ripping open myself. With a violent struggle I then burst out of it, and was free . . . Sink! sink! oh shroud! thought I; sink forever! accursed jacket that thou art![254]

In summary, having thus learned in each of his first five books something of the way in which character,

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[253]Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 390. Matthiessen's analysis is recommended as a thorough examination of the elements that make the passage significant.

[254]Herman Melville, White Jacket, pp. 369-371.

sources, form, symbol, and style can be blended into a technique expressive of his themes, Melville has progressed from the promising but largely unconscious novice of Typee to the practiced author of works whose substance is the product of craftsmanship. But his development is not complete. He has yet to meet Hawthorne.[255] And he has yet to write Moby Dick. Melville knew he would continue to learn, that no book's completion signaled the end of his search, the possession of his lure:

> Would that a man could do something & then say--It is finished.--not that one thing only, but all others--that he has reached his uttermost, & can never exceed it.[256]

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[255]Leyda, op. cit., p. 358.

[256]Davis, op. cit., p. 83.

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