

Melville Society EXTRACTS

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OUR YOUNG CUB

You already know how the balloting went but for the record: some 164 members approved the change in format, while 4 opposed it and a few suggested alternate designs. Voting on the title was closer, 85 to 76; there were also several suggestions for different titles.

But we need substance as well as form. We welcome notes, short articles (preferably five pages long,

or less), notices of references in the popular culture of Melville and his writings, queries, publication and book sales information -- anything, in short, you judge might be of interest to Melvilleans.

By the way, MSE is printed on acid-free paper to insure long shelf life.

MELVILLE'S "INCOMPETENT" WORLD IN BILLY BUDD, SAILOR

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At one stage in the composition of Billy Budd, Sailor, Herman Melville closed his tale with a coda appended to the chapter containing the distorted news account of the deaths of John Claggart and Billy Budd. To date no editor of the novel has been able to decipher the coda satisfactorily. Even Harrison Hayford and Merton M. Sealts, Jr., in their excellent edition of the book, admit their inability to make out one important word (BB, Chicago, pp. 8, 201, 422, and Plate VIII facing p. 5). This note, which depends fundamentally on the work of Professors Hayford and Sealts, suggests and defends a reading of that word and then examines the clues such a reading provides concerning Melville's thematic purposes and his intentions regarding his revisions.

My reading of the coda is this: "Here ends a story

not unwarranted by what sometimes happens in this incompetent world of ours -- Innocence and infamy, spiritual depravity and fair repute."

The problem has been with the word "incompetent." Hayford and Sealts, who leave the word undeciphered, find unsatisfactory the readings of Weaver and Freeman, who suggested "incongruous" and "incomprehensible" respectively, readings other scholars have picked up. However, "incompetent" fits the calligraphy of the manuscript, the sense of the passage in which the word appears, and the theme of the novel as a whole.

The first step in defense of this reading must be an examination of the physical fact. The problem with "incompetent" in particular is not with the first ten letters, which are fairly clear, but with the

~~Here ends a story not unwarranted by
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last letter, the final "t," which simply is not there. However, it was not unusual for Melville to drop letters, as those who have studied his handwriting -- such as Davis and Gilman (Letters, p. xxii) and Horsford (Journal, p. 44) -- have discovered. In the Billy Budd coda itself the line following the one in which "incompetent" appears presents another example of a condensed ending. So far as the calligraphy is concerned, the reading of the heretofore undeciphered word as "incompetent" seems justified.

The second test involves sense. Melville often used various forms of the word (and its antonym) to express the general idea of unfitness (or fitness) for accomplishing some purpose. But "incompetent" in the Billy Budd coda suggests a more specialized meaning that focuses on man's inability "to unravel, and spread out, and classify, the more this than gossamer threads which make up the complex web of life" (Pierre, N-N, p. 141). Incompetence of thought and judgment is the point here, as it is in much of the fiction after Moby-Dick. For example, Pierre was "entirely incompetent" to meet Dante on his peculiar ground because the youthful enthusiast as yet "had not seen so far and deep" as the sublime Italian (p. 54).

However, the most pertinent and convincing parallel to the use of "incompetent" in the Billy Budd coda lies hidden among the few surviving leaves of Melville's manuscript for The Confidence-Man, now in the Houghton Library. The third of five numbered leaves of draft titles for the book's chapters contains two canceled titles for Chapter 18. Both draft titles are somewhat garbled because Melville was emending as he was composing them and in neither case did he arrive at the final form that appears in the novel, "Inquest into the true character of the Herb-Doctor." The first draft title reads, "A jury of wise men hold an inquest on the innocence of the character of the herb doctor." (At the end of the preceding chapter the herb-doctor, having been struck and vilified, declares, "innocence is my redress" [C-M, Norton, p. 75].) The second reads, "The character of the herb-doctor discussed and what he truly is finally settled by one fully competent." Both draft titles are ironic, befitting the mode of The Confidence-Man, because, as is clear from the dramatized action of Chapters 16-21, the herb-doctor--an avatar of the title character--certainly is destitute of "innocence," and his fellow passengers are in no wise "competent" to judge his true nature. What pertains to the Billy Budd coda in these two draft titles is Melville's representation of his belief that men are specifically incompetent to judge the innocence of another person. This applies whether the person lacks innocence, as does the Confidence Man, or abounds with it, as does Billy Budd.

Hayford and Sealts say, "The coda, it seems apparent, was meant to bring out the main point of the story as it then stood: that the judgment and memory of 'the world' may attribute to human beings the direct opposite of their true natures; innocence may be consigned to infamy, spiritual depravity may be awarded fair repute" (8). The deciphering of the word that Melville uses to qualify "'the world'" illuminates further the point of his tale. The world does what it does because it is incompetent to judge or remember truly or accurately. Beyond its skepticism and cynicism, the coda suggests

ultimately tragic implications about human nature and the human condition. In the context of the coda, "incompetent" is a precise and powerful word that expands the significance of what, at one point in the writing of Billy Budd, its author thought of as his concluding passage.

The Confidence-Man

Yet, in spite of this, Melville canceled the coda. The simplest explanation for his doing so is based on Hayford and Sealts' statement (p. 8) that during the third and final phase of the manuscript's growth Melville reversed his final two chapters. The coda, beginning with the words "Here ends a story" would, of course, be inappropriate as the closing of any but the last chapter, and so Melville canceled it.

But perhaps Melville canceled it before this "reversal" took place. MS Leaf 334a/361 suggests that at one point he may have planned to remove the ballad from the body of his story. On that leaf the underlined phrase "For the Supplement" heads a notation about the fate of the yard from which Billy was hanged, a subject that now forms a principal part of the introduction to the ballad in Chapter 30. It may well be that Melville intended to put the ballad and its headnote into a supplement and to leave the news account as the last chapter and the coda as an appropriate closing to the story. This hypothetical delay in establishing the final order of the chapters would give Melville time to develop the story's third phase and to evaluate the coda's relationship to it before deciding to strike the passage. When he finally did strike it, he used blue crayon, indicating, on the basis of other uses of the same color, that its removal was probably a late revision. (See Hayford and Sealts' "Genetic Text.")

Perhaps Melville canceled the coda before the final order of the chapters could make it inappropriate because he believed he had sufficiently dramatized in the third phase the narrator's explicit point about the incompetence of the world to judge its fellow beings. The trial scene and the surgeon's surmises about Captain Vere--two major developments in the final phase of the manuscript--dramatize men's incompetence to see into the springs and motives of human action. And if Vere, for all his superior intelligence and sensitivity, is just as incompetent as the rest, the implications are tragic rather than merely satiric.

The question of the captain's actions was conjoined in Melville's mind, as Hayford and Sealts say, with the question of "the very existence of a problematical world." To see, as they do, Billy Budd as "an epitome, in art, of such a world" (39) is to focus on the objects of human perception. To see Billy Budd as an epitome also of an "incompetent" world is to focus on the human subjects that do the perceiving. Among them is the narrator himself, whose self-effacing dramatizations and "mutually neutralizing" (Pierre, p. 355) thoughts show him incompetent to make positive statements about a problematical world, though that world is his own creation. Once again the problem of knowledge that so fixed and fascinated Melville had become an informing force in his art, perhaps even the pervading thought that impelled the book, Billy Budd, Sailor.

ELIZABETH AND HERMAN (PART II)

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Elizabeth Melville was more cosmopolitan than many of Melville's biographers have realized. Eleanor Metcalf, for example, in *Cycle and Epicycle*, thought that the letters Elizabeth wrote home to her parents during the Melvilles' honeymoon trip revealed a preference for cosy domesticity rather than the "forbidding strangeness" of foreign travel in Montreal and Quebec. Yet the letters themselves suggest the opposite. Elizabeth is struck by the absurdity of the Quebec Citadel's military formality, where "every few steps you encounter a sentry in full Highland costume bare knees and all, pacing backward and forward fully armed and equipped, keeping strict guard over nothing at all." She is sensitive to the Gothic accoutrements of the "best" hotel, "a rambling, scrambling old castle of a thing, all stairs and entries and full of tawdry decorations." She is wryly amused by the sleeping accommodations on a canal boat, which can only be gained by crawling between the crowded tiers of the bunks "like a bug forcing its way through the boards of a fence." Her observations, in short, are sophisticated and, in fact, resemble the comments in her husband's later travel diaries, which have hardly been regarded as evidence of provincialism.

New manuscript letters that we introduced in EXTRACTS 33 give further proof that it is wrong to continue to regard Melville's wife as "poor Lizzie, the provincial Bostonian." We promised to say something about Elizabeth's trip to Chicago in 1845 and about possible romantic attachments that might have preceded her marriage to Herman.

Puett speculates that Elizabeth may have been interested in John Nourse, the son of Melville's Aunt Lucy and Dr. Amos Nourse. She says that from 1839, when John was attending Harvard, through 1842, Elizabeth and John made visits to their respective homes. However, Nourse died in 1844 and no evidence has survived to show whether they were ever more than just friends.¹ A more likely attachment is the Daniel McIlroy singled out in Elizabeth's greetings to her Chicago friends, in her letter of September 1847 to Sam Savage, her cousin.

Elizabeth knew Chicago from her visit there in 1845. Her brother Oakes had written to her from there on April 29, 1845, asking her to "pack up" her "duds" and come out; she could stay the whole summer as company for his wife, Cary, who had a new baby. Oakes suggested she could travel with Mr. Joseph Henshaw, his business partner, who would be returning from Boston about June 1. Elizabeth, reluctant to go so far with a person she did not know, asked her father's advice. When he decided to go as well, the two made the trip in the summer of 1845. It is not clear whether they went out and returned together, but they were both in the West at the same time.²

Chicago in 1845 was a frontier city of 12,000 inhabitants. It had no paved streets and no telegraph; cattle roamed free and refuse was deposited often in the alleys. Elizabeth and her father stayed in the center of the city's fashionable residential district in the one brick hotel the city boasted--the Lake

House, the center of social gatherings.³ Two of her "Chicago friends," Mr. Tracy and the McClellans, were boarding there in 1845; Mr. McIlroy was living in a nearby private residence. Elizabeth may have known Tracy and McIlroy from Boston. They were graduates of Harvard College, and McIlroy had worked in Judge Joseph Story's law office in Boston after leaving Harvard with an LL.B. in 1842. Since Story was one of Chief Justice Shaw's friends, McIlroy could well have known the Shaws before they encountered him in Chicago, and the tone of Elizabeth's message would suggest a more than passing acquaintance. Tracy, son of a well-connected family from Connecticut, had inherited his father's wealth in 1844; McIlroy had been practicing law for several years. They may have thought that with the former's wealth and the latter's experience, they could make a handsome living in a city just beginning to wield power as the Western capital. At any rate, they had gone to Chicago in 1844 and immediately began to achieve prominence, especially McIlroy.

In April 1849, he was elected States Attorney, a position he held for eight years. In 1851, he was made a school inspector, in 1852 was elected President of the Hibernian Benevolent Emigrant Society, and in 1852-1853 was appointed a school trustee for Cook County's First District. He is twice noted in Andreas' *History of Chicago*, once (with Tracy and others) for his part in protecting Stephen A. Douglas against an unfriendly crowd in Chicago in September 1854, and once under the vitae of deceased members of the Chicago Bar, where he is noted as "an accomplished scholar, a ready debater, and one of Chicago's really eloquent orators."⁴ Besides this evidence, his obituary notice in the *Chicago Tribune* (August 26, 1862, p. 4) summarizes all we know of him:



Death Notice of Daniel McIlroy

Died: In this city, yesterday, at 4½ o'clock A.M. 25th inst., of Bright's Disease, at the residence of Mrs. Carney, on Cottage Grove avenue, DANIEL McILROY, Esq., aged 48 years.

Death of Daniel McIlroy, Esq.

Daniel McIlroy, Esq., a well known citizen and for a long time identified with the Chicago bar as a successful practitioner, died yesterday morning at half past four o'clock, at his residence, after a brief illness.

Mr. McIlroy was a native of Tyrone county, Ireland, and was a fair specimen of the the

*Joyce Deveau Kennedy thanks the Canada Council for support of her part of this research.

Irish gentleman. He emigrated to America, with his family, when very young. For some two or three years he kept school in Boston, and some of his old pupils are at present residing in this city. He was a graduate of Cambridge University, [Harvard] and afterwards studied law with Judge Story, of Boston, whose office he left to study in the West.

He came to this city in 1844, and commenced the practice of law, in which he was eminently successful. Shortly after, he was elected States Attorney, a position which he continued to fill several years, successively, with credit to himself and satisfaction of the people. Mr. McIlroy was a man eminently qualified to take a leading position in the duties of his profession, being an accomplished scholar, a ready debater, and for eloquent declamation he has left few behind that will surpass him. During the celebrated trial of George W. Green, for the murder of his wife, Mr. McIlroy was pre-eminently distinguished throughout for those qualities and for the knowledge he exhibited of criminal law, and the eloquent argument to the jury which convicted the prisoner. He was also associated with the lamented Carlos Haven in the prosecution of Henry Jumpertz, the hero in the celebrated barrel murder.

Mr. McIlroy was never married, but he leaves an aged mother and a brother and sister in New York to mourn his loss. The funeral will take place from his late residence on Cottage Grove Avenue, this afternoon at two o'clock.

A search in the papers of Judge Story has turned up no correspondence, the Harvard archives have only a notation of McIlroy's LL.B. in 1842, and copies of his will which might have given clues to his family were destroyed in the 1871 Chicago fire. All we have discovered of Daniel McIlroy is not enough to elucidate Elizabeth's connection.⁵ However, in her relationships, Elizabeth always observed strict propriety. And it is inconceivable that a letter written so close to her marriage would have contained a surreptitious reference like the one to McIlroy unless she had felt some obligation toward him. Had McIlroy--an Irish immigrant--interested her, it may have troubled her conservative New England father. Perhaps, then, Melville's persistence and Shaw's approval of him as an eligible young man with old family ties, as well as Elizabeth's familial friendship with Melville's sisters (Augusta, for example, was visiting her at the time of the engagement), combined to persuade her to accept Herman's proposal. As she says in another context in her letter, "the romance of life must sometimes give place to the realities."

Whatever romantic attachments Elizabeth had before her marriage to Melville, she stood loyally beside him during the early years when he was striving to earn a living with his pen: As Hope Shaw reported to Sam Savage:

This last Wednesday Elizabeth with her beautiful little son of eleven months with her girl & my son Samuel left for New York--they went the new route all by land

and arrived in New York on the same day half past four in the afternoon. Elizabeth came here the 22 of last November with her family and would have staid longer but daily expecting her husband from Europe she quite impatient to return. Herman left New York last November for Europe upon some business, and to change the scene--he accomplished it sooner than expected and therefore he returns before we thought he would. The book that was last published is Redburn--beginning his own life with a fictitious name. It is very interesting as its so natural. The Melville family live as you left, Allen with a little daughter called Maria after the old lady & Herman with a little son called Malcolm after some of the first Melvilles that came into this country from Scotland.

As for wealth in this family there is not to be much--You know my veneration for an unblemished character stands first; and I will say no nobility, only as each one makes it by his own exertions.

(Boston: Hope Shaw to Sam Savage, January 28, 1850, Savage III)

Savage, in turn, observed her strength during the dark second decade of their marriage when Melville was suffering from sciatica, neuralgia and other nervous complaints, and travelling abroad to seek a cure for his recurrent depressions:

. . . Lizzy no doubt alone has had many of life's real trials to conflict with, but she's one of those who bear up well, & it shows her character--Herman I hope has had no more of those ugly attacks. Kind remembrances to them. . . .

(Guatemala: Sam Savage to Aunt & Uncle Shaw, August 27, 1856, Savage III)

She endured even during the grim sixties and seventies when their eldest son, Malcolm, died by his own hand and when Melville's spirits were about as black as they ever were.

More light has been shed on this later period by two letters recently discovered in the Massachusetts Historical Society's Bellows Collection by the Rev. Dr. Walter D. Kring, Minister of All Souls Unitarian Church in New York City.⁶ One, written from Boston, May 6, 1867, is from Samuel Shaw, Elizabeth's half-brother, to her pastor, the Rev. Henry Whitney Bellows; it comments on a proposed legal separation between the Melvilles and offers suggestions as to how this might be accomplished so that Elizabeth's reputation would be preserved. The most damaging statement in the letter is as follows:

I think that the safest course is to let her real position become apparent from the first; namely that of a wife, who, being convinced that her husband is insane acts as if she were so convinced and applied for aid and assistance to her friends and acts with them.

I think she would have done this long ago if

not for imaginary and groundless apprehensions of the censure of the world upon her conduct. If you can do anything to reassure her mind on that point I have no doubt it will contribute much to her future happiness and enable her to do her hard duty more easily.

The other, dated May 20, 1867, is a letter by Elizabeth to Dr. Bellows, just as he was embarking on a year long vacation in Europe; she thanks him for his "active interest in her behalf" and assures him that his "long talk. . . has been a very great comfort, both for its appreciative sympathy, and for other reasons."⁸

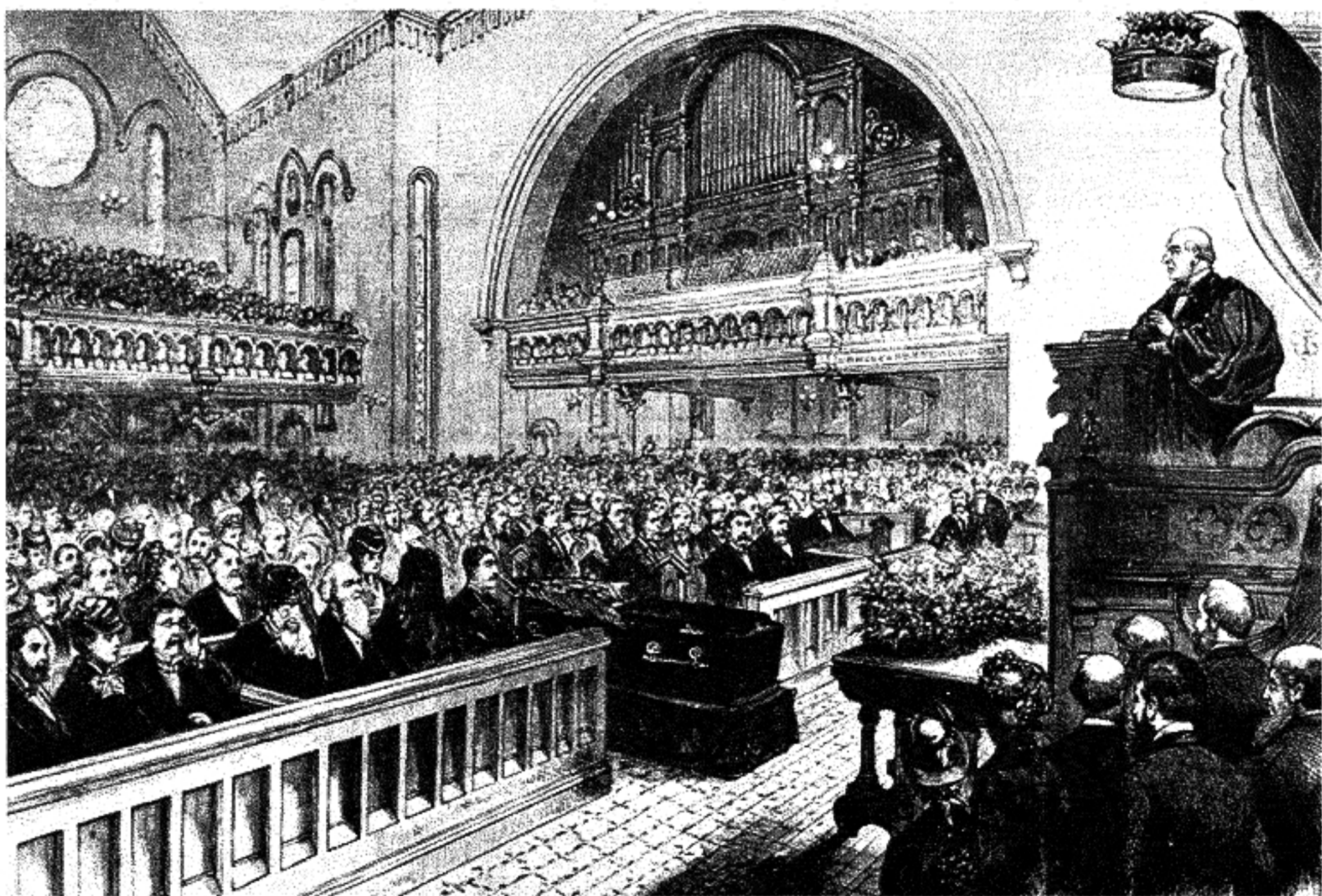
These letters seem convincing proof at last that Melville and his wife were deeply split, and that the depression which sent Herman to the Holy Land in 1856 had not abated but continued at least into 1867, the year of Samuel's letter and Malcolm's death. Whatever Elizabeth confided to Bellows about her marriage, and whatever her pastor recommended, her letter testifies that she thought Bellows was urging her to bear her trials with fortitude. She writes:

I also want to thank you for the active interest you took in my behalf. . . . and whatever further trial may be before me, I shall feel that your counsel is a strong help to sustain, more perhaps than any other earthly counsel could. . . . I

lay to heart your encouraging words, and pray for submission and faith to realize the sustaining power of the Master's love, and to approach his Table in the very spirit of his last command.⁹

As was true throughout her life, Elizabeth's religious beliefs gave her the necessary strength to bear misfortune and pain with dignity and patience.

Snatches from family records show that her life with Herman after 1853 was not tranquil.¹⁰ Samuel's 1867 letter refers to "my sisters case. . . which has been a cause of anxiety to all of us for years past." However, 1867 would have been a particularly bad time. Neither of Melville's voyages, in 1856 to the Holy Land or, with his brother Tom, to San Francisco in 1860, had brought him tranquility of spirit. His magazine writing and lecturing during the 1850s were as financially unsuccessful as his novels, and he returned to his Pittsfield farm in 1861 with no job and no prospects. In 1863 he sold Arrowhead, said goodbye to the Berkshires, the source of many happy literary and social associations with friends such as the Hawthornes and the Morewoods, and returned to New York still under financial obligation to the Shaws--as he had been for most of the years of his marriage. Finally, public and personal sadnesses such as the Civil War, the assassination of Lincoln, the death of Hawthorne, and the coming of age of Malcolm--who, seventeen years old in 1866, had found a position with the Great Western Marine Insurance



Bellows preaching at Bryant's funeral in 1878. Melvilles' pew in gallery at rear.

Company at \$200 a year while Melville was still unemployed--culminated in December 1866 with his getting a \$4 a day job at the New York Customs House. At the age of forty-nine, Melville must have felt that the new year--1867--was for him, truly, the end of the line.

But no matter how bad things may have been with Herman, Elizabeth kept her counsel, and aided by her sense of the "solemn words of obligation" she had spoken before God and Dr. Young on that day long ago, she persevered. Her fidelity is perhaps what saved Herman at the last from his demons.

Metcalf notes that although Melville was used to challenging Elizabeth all the time out of some psychological necessity, in the last eight or ten years of his life he ceased to do so and seemed to grow calmer and quieter.¹¹ She attributes this to the fact that with the legacy Lemuel Shaw, Jr. left his sister, Melville was able to retire from the custom house and enjoy the leisure to roam bookstores and write poetry and his last novel, Billy Budd. There may have been another reason as well.

Dr. Kring points out that the Melvilles had been pew-holders of All Souls Church ever since their marriage and that they had maintained their connection with Unitarianism by having the children baptized in Pittsfield by the Rev. Orville Dewey. It is assumed, though, that Elizabeth was the real link to All Souls and that Herman's ties were formal rather than personal. It is, therefore, a startling revelation to learn from Dr. Kring that in 1884 Melville's name is entered in the Communion Book of Dr. Theodore C. Williams, Bellows' successor.¹²

What circumstances in Melville's life might have prompted this more active membership in the Church? In March that year, his only surviving brother, Tom, the youngest in his family and a favorite of Melville, had died suddenly of a heart attack. That same spring Lemuel Shaw, Jr. had died suddenly at the Union Club in Boston. Perhaps the untimely death of these two younger men brought Melville nearer to thoughts of his own impending "annihilation." Another possibly significant event was the death of the long-time pastor of All Souls, the Rev. Henry Bellows, and his replacement by the new minister, Theodore Chickering Williams. An article in the New York Tribune in 1883, commenting on Dr. Bellows' successor says:

The successor of Dr. Bellows seems strongly antithetical in personality, purposes, and professional equipment. He is almost a youth, not yet thirty. He has been a licensed preacher hardly two years. He is slight of frame, has a light, delicate voice, and speaks under some physical constraint. He is without gifts that conquer and enslave attention. There is nothing astonishing or masterly on the surface of his ministrations. . . . But. . . he is. . . a man of exceptional ripeness, full of sinewy surprises, who in the morning of his career has captured the marvellous secret of putting things with an unerring achromatic simplicity and sufficiency of idiom such as few men come to achieve. It is not precocity nor the flush of dead ripeness, but a rare, early wisdom bringing purpose, thought and

speech, in their highest relations. Indeed the completeness and tissue of his art of expression in the outset elude critical inquiry, and there is a lulling impression of common-place truisms-- . . . It is after all like Lincoln's common-place, homespun knack of idiom, which all the world came at length to find inimitable; and soon enough the clinging phrases, delicately fashioned apothegms, deep, pregnant sayings, nuggets of rich sententiousness, begin to cling and stick like burrs, and one fain would put a brake on the minister until all these good, rare things could be gathered in.¹³

Perhaps the advent of such a churchman--young, poetic, humble, a bit diffident in his preaching--would have been attractive to a man like Melville who himself valued sincerity more than certainty and erudition in faith. Perhaps Elizabeth's understanding and love in the face of all hardship brought him at last to some measure of spiritual consolation.

What the church records at All Souls and the personal record of the Melville family show is that Melville, having wandered for years over "dismal and monotonous" philosophical "sand hills," came home at last to discover in his wife's love and friendship the gentle God who had eluded him everywhere else. The mellowness of these later years was reported by Sam Savage who wrote to his wife of the pleasant reception he found at the Melvilles' in 1881:

. . . I called on Lizzy. She was very kind. Saw Herman & the visit did me good. (New York: October 31, 1881, Savage V)

In 1849, only a year and a half after his marriage, Melville commented on the disintegration into madness of Charles Fenno Hoffmann, a former member of the Duyckinck circle:

Poor Hoffman--I remember the shock I had when I first saw the mention of his madness. --But he was just the man to go mad--imaginative, voluptuously inclined, poor, unemployed, in the race of life distanc'd by his inferiors, unmarried, --without a port or haven in the universe to make.¹⁴

All the traits Melville observed in Hoffmann also applied to himself--except that he was married.

The qualities Elizabeth brought to their marriage, and which endured even after Melville's death,¹⁵ can be observed in her wedding letter to Samuel. These are: first, her sense of religious obligation in the marriage contract (she has only a dreamy, indistinct vision of Herman, rustling dresses, and rows of boots; but a clear picture of "what Mr. Young said to me, and I said to him" as he stood "in full canonicals. . . giving utterance to the solemn words of obligation"); second, her intention to make a home with Herman no matter where it might be; third, her willingness to perform tasks of drudgery such as sewing on buttons and mending stockings in order to please her husband; fourth, her ability to conceal her agitation when necessary ("to all appearances. . . she went through the ceremony with the utmost calmness and composure"); and finally, her desire to shield Melville from unpleasantness (she was married

at home instead of in church, to protect Melville from unwanted notoriety).

If the ensuing years did bring regrets to Melville's life, it is impossible to believe he would have regretted marrying Elizabeth. In fact, he must have realized that he could not have borne the weight of those years unaided--that without her loyalty, intelligence, and affection, his own wild imagination would have had no "port or haven."



NOTES

1. Amy Puett (Emmers), "Melville's Wife: A Study of Elizabeth Shaw Melville," (Unpub. Diss., Northwestern), pp. 31-32.

2. Shaw Papers, MHS, Reel 13, Frame 392: Oakes's letter reads in part "I wrote to Father. . . a few days since, asking his permission for you to come out here & spend the summer with us. Nothing would give Cary so much pleasure & I need not tell you how happy I should be if you would."

3. Bessie Pierce, A History of Chicago, I, 204-205, 213.

4. Chicago City Directories from 1846 to 1856 list his accomplishments. Also see A. T. Andreas, History of Chicago from the Earliest Period to the Present Time, 3 Vols. (Chicago, 1884-86), which carries a full account of the Douglas affair on pp. 610ff. in Vol. I. For mention of McIlroy, see pp. 451, 611 in Vol. I; and p. 461 in Vol. II.

5. In vain we have searched for McIlroy correspondence in Judge Joseph Story's papers at the Library of Congress; the William Clements Library, Univ. of Michigan; the University of Texas Humanities Research Center; and the Mass. Historical Society. For their help in discovering information about McIlroy, we wish to thank the staffs of these libraries, as well as those at the American Antiquarian Society, the Chicago Bar Association Library, the Chicago Historical Society, Mr. James Bell, Librarian of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, and Mr. William Whalen, Assistant Archivist, Harvard University.

In spite of this blank, the Directory offers one scrap of personal information. Because McIlroy was President of the Hibernian Benevolent Emigrant Society, which was founded in 1846 under the patronage of the first Roman Catholic bishop of the Chicago diocese, William J. Quarter, it may be that McIlroy was a Catholic. Bishop Quarter died in 1848 at the young age of forty-two, and the Emigrant Society was apparently reorganized then with McIlroy as its

President. See Pierce, I, 238-243, 266.

6. Walter D. Kring & Jonathan Carey, "Two Discoveries Concerning Herman Melville," Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 87 (1975), 137-141. These letters, with other material pertaining to the Melvilles' membership in All Souls Church, uncovered by Dr. Kring when he was engaged in writing a biography of Rev. Dr. Henry Bellows, comprise new and valuable insights into the Melville marriage and the Melvilles' religious affiliation. We wish to thank Dr. Kring for his unfailing interest in, and help with, our investigation of Melville's Church affiliation.

7. It is difficult to accept the argument that Elizabeth could really have believed Herman was insane and nevertheless continued to live with him after Malcolm's death in September 1867. Had she thought her husband responsible for family tensions that might have contributed to such a catastrophe, would she have stuck by him--especially since she would have had the wholehearted support of her own family in leaving him? Surely, her desire to protect the younger children would have motivated her to leave. Besides, the strain that Dr. Bellows himself was under in 1867 might have made him a less than competent adviser to the Melvilles. See Dr. Walter Kring's forthcoming biography of Henry Whitney Bellows, "Orthodox Among the Liberals."

8. Kring & Carey, 140-141.

9. Ibid., 141.

10. Metcalf, pp. 159, 169, 176, 198, 208, 209, 213.

11. Metcalf, p. 259.

12. Using other Church records, Dr. Kring was able to date Melville's entry into Williams' Book as somewhere between January 1 and November 6, 1884 (letter from Dr. Kring of November 23, 1976). The records of All Souls show that the Melvilles rented pews in the church during the time they lived in New York, but there is no indication in the church records that Herman was actually a member before 1884. Dr. Kring informs us that between 1846 and 1923, one could be a communicant of All Souls Church without subscribing to a Covenant or Bond of Union, so that Williams' Communion Book is more accurately described as a list of church members. Such an arrangement would no doubt have been encouraging to a man like Melville who mistrusted the "clash of creeds." Even the more orthodox Shaw had refused Rev. Alexander Young's request to become a member of the New South Church instead of just a pew-holder, because he would have had to make a confession to his pastor (Frederic Chase, Lemuel Shaw, Boston, 1918, p. 315). This may explain why Elizabeth, though a lifetime adherent of the Unitarian Church, was never baptized until Easter Sunday, 1872 (Kring & Carey, 139).

13. Tribune transcript titled "Unitarianism in New-York" in All Souls Archives, courtesy of Dr. Kring.

14. Davis and Gilman, Letters, p. 83. Melville recognized possible kinship with the unhappy Hoffmann: "This going mad of a friend or acquaintance comes straight home to every man who feels his soul in him,--which but few men do. For in all of us lodges the same fuel to light the same fire. And he

who has never felt, momentarily, what madness is has but a mouthful of brains. . . ."

15. Metcalf, pp. 288-289.

Censorship and Symbolism in *Typee*

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In *Typee* there is a striking example of Melville's evading censorship. Within the space of two pages he cuts a detail which might be considered by many readers soft-core pornography, but leaves untouched a passage which might even qualify as hard-core. The erotic passage which describes the anointing of Tommo's body was cut in accordance with John Wiley's wishes: "And most refreshing and agreeable are the juices of the 'aka,' when applied to one's limbs by the soft palms of sweet nymphs, whose bright eyes are beaming upon you with kindness." Kory-Kory, Tommo's servant, would watch this operation from a discreet distance "with the most jealous attention" (N-N, p. 110).

Kory-Kory's services were of a different nature. After making sure that Tommo was perfectly comfortable, he would hand him his lighted pipe. Melville then writes a long account of the exertions required to produce a flame which leads Tommo to comment: "This operation appeared to me to be the most laborious species of work performed in *Typee*," especially when compared with the convenience of "a box of lucifer matches" (p. 111). On one level, Kory-Kory's flame is the Promethean flame of knowledge: the work required for its discovery and application provides further evidence that Tommo is not in Eden. This reading is affirmed when the incident is recollected at the beginning of a longer passage which was canceled, this one critical of the missionaries: "The penalty of the Fall presses very lightly upon the valley of *Typee*: for, with the one solitary exception of striking a light, I scarcely saw any piece of work performed there which caused the sweat to stand upon a single brow" (p. 195). Among the kinds of knowledge associated with the Fall is, of course, the knowledge of sexual shame. This description of making fire requires a closer look.

Kory-Kory works with two sticks, one partially decayed, six feet long and three inches in diameter, the other not more than a foot long and an inch wide:

The islander, placing the larger stick obliquely against some object, with one end elevated at an angle of forty-five degrees, mounts astride of it like an urchin about to gallop off upon a cane, and then grasping the smaller one firmly in both hands, he rubs its pointed end slowly up and down the extent of a few inches on the principal stick, until at last he makes a narrow groove in the wood, with an abrupt termination at the point furthest from him, where all the dusty particles from the friction are accumulated in a little heap. (p. 111)

Kory-Kory's activity become increasingly frenzied as he "drives the stick furiously along the smoking channel, plying his hands to and fro with amazing rapidity, the perspiration starting from every pore":

As he approaches the climax of his effort, he pants and gasps for breath. . . all his previous labors are vain if he cannot sustain the rapidity of the movement until the reluctant spark is produced. Suddenly he stops, becomes perfectly motionless. His hands still retain their hold of the smaller stick, which is pressed convulsively against the further end of the channel. . . as if he had just pierced through and through some little viper that was wriggling and struggling to escape from his clutches. The next moment a delicate wreath of smoke curls spirally into the air, the heap of dusty particles glows with fire, and Kory-Kory almost breathless, dismounts from his steed. (p. 111)

The viper is consistent with the Fall analogy: the snake is also a phallic emblem. The reader does not have to be particularly lynx-eyed-- or degenerate-- to see here a suggestion of the sexual act.

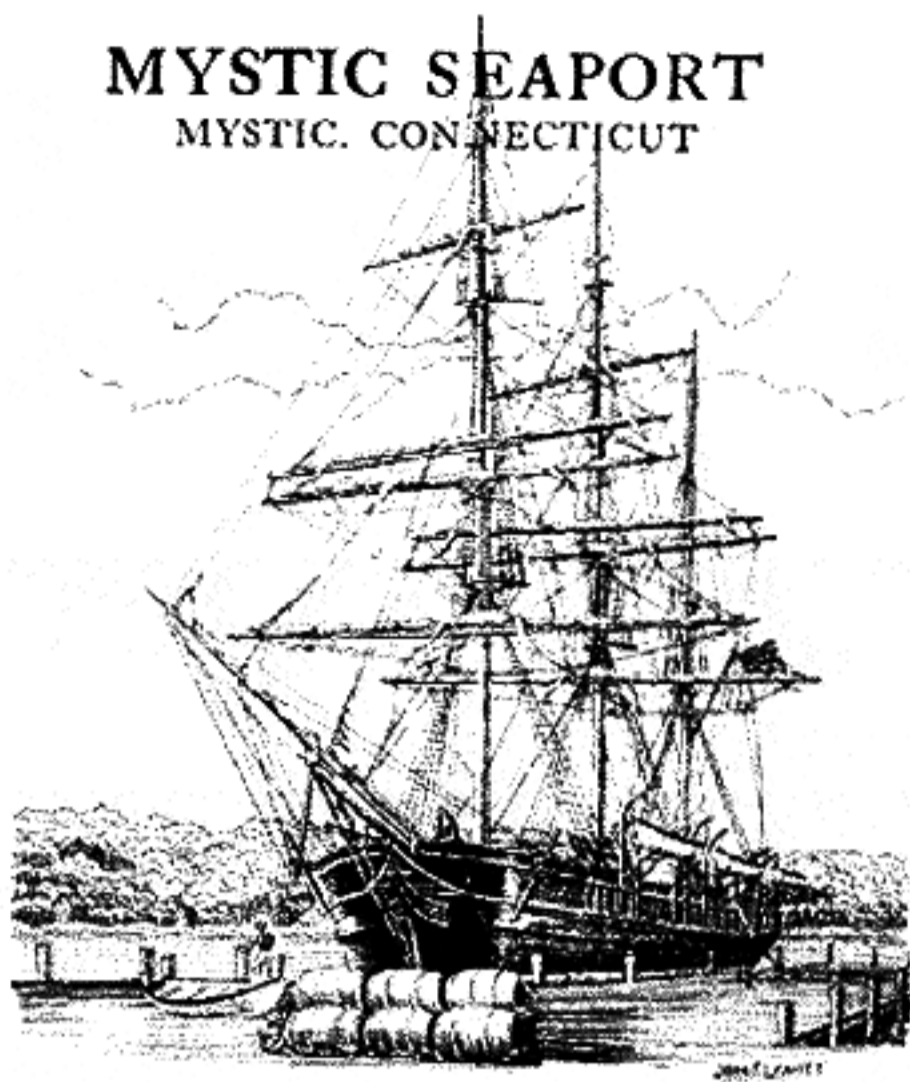
But is this a perverted reading? Was such direct sexual symbolism part of Melville's intention? Of course, a final answer is not possible. However, the suggestiveness of the passage is reinforced in the next paragraph when Tommo considers "the expediency of establishing a college of vestals. . . for the purpose of keeping alive the indispensable article of fire," thereby avoiding the tremendous outlay of effort. He is referring to the four or six virgins consecrated to the Roman goddess of the hearth, Vesta, who is charged with keeping the sacred fire burning perpetually on her altar. Tommo concludes that "there might. . . be special difficulties in carrying this plan into execution." Presumably he has in mind the common fate of virgins pointed to by Kory-Kory's oft-repeated exertions. The end result, family life, is conjured up in the following paragraph which contains references to "a gentleman of *Typee*" with "a numerous family of children" and "the children of a Polynesian father" (p. 112).

If my reading is correct, we might imagine what must have been Melville's wry, ironic amusement at this "striking" success in circumventing an official censorship. Having removed a relatively innocuous detail from one paragraph, he left intact the much more "offensive" material in the next paragraphs. Further, his sexual suggestion is sufficiently subtle that no one could protest without in effect damning himself.



MYSTIC SEAPORT

MYSTIC, CONNECTICUT



Charles W. Morgan

"New England and the Sea," a new permanent exhibition which presents three centuries of American maritime history, opened April 24 at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut. The \$180,000 exhibition, funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, is the largest and most comprehensive ever installed at the maritime history museum.

Designed to show the effect of the sea on New England history, economy and culture, the exhibit begins with the first coastal explorations and early settlements; traces the development of Colonial trades, Revolutionary War and War of 1812 involvements and post-war commerce; emphasizes the growth of American maritime enterprises in the 19th century and ends with a section on today's uses of the sea.

"New England and the Sea" ties together all of the exhibits, historical buildings and programs of the Mystic Seaport Museum. Such occupations as ship-building, whaling, and fishing, as well as coastal trades and 19th century life ashore are presented as a cohesive story of the past. This is achieved through a skillful display of 300 objects such as tools, shipmodels, fishing gear, charts, navigational instruments, and artworks.

THE PITTSFIELD CONNECTION

Kathleen B. Green, Executive Director of the Berkshire County Historical Society, which is housed at Arrowhead, invites Melvilleans to stop by during the summer. She also reports on the success of a Melville Seminar for Pittsfield English teachers, offered this spring by the Society. The speakers included Miss Green, Robert G. Newman of the Athenaeum, Paul Metcalf and his daughter, Adrienne M. Weinman.

Clarel in the International Review

George Monteiro
Brown University

Even when the count includes notices, announcements, and advertisements, the number of recorded contemporary reviews relating to *Clarel* total a meager sixteen. To those few can be added a rather thoughtful review from the *New York International Review*, 4 (January 1977), 107-08:

CLAREL.—Here is another work, of wholly different conception and execution. Thirty years ago, who could possibly have foreseen that the author of "Typee" and "Omoo" would at last appear as the author of a poem of 18,000 lines, inspired by religious doubts, questions and aspirations? That Mr. Melville has a vein of native poetry in his nature was already manifested by some ballads which he published during our civil war; but it still remains an amazement that the hero of whaling and Polynesian adventures, whose model seemed to be Defoe, should become a theological mystic in his ripened years. One of his novels, we remember, was entitled: "Pierre, or The Ambiguities,"—and this poem might properly have been called: "Clarel, or the Ambiguities." The title, to begin with, is ambiguous; how are we to understand "A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land?" It is one of those works which the author writes for himself, and not for the reader, wherein he simply follows the bent of his own interests and fancies, and relies either upon his personal value or assumed height of achievement for his popular success. This is an experiment which Browning has lately tried, compelling the sentence of failure from unwilling critics. We doubt whether the very greatest of poets could practice it successfully for any length of time unless the principles of his art had entered into and become an integral part of his imagination. How then should Herman Melville, who has not yet achieved a recognized place as a poet, hope to succeed with a public which has, first of all, to be taught faith in his powers? How large a portion of the reading class (small, at the best, in this country,) are so familiar with his literary individuality that they will venture upon the perusal of such a work, solely for the more complete appreciation of its author? Mr. Melville seems totally to lack the *literary sense*; and he ought not to be surprised if his poem, with all its scattered excellences, should fall comparatively unnoticed.

The plot has apparently been constructed as a frame upon which to hang descriptions of the scenery of Palestine and the theological discussions of a chance company of tourists. The principal characters are an American student, an English clergyman, a Jew, a Smyrniote Greek and a Jewish girl of whom we see little, as she dies in order to introduce a tragic element. So much remains as a clue to guide us through a chaos of description, incident, conversation, and conflict of ideas and beliefs, wherein there is no single governing and harmonizing conception. The poem is divided into four parts, respectively entitled: Jerusalem, The Wilderness, Mar Saba and Bethlehem; but these are only divisions of the "pilgrimage." The author, indeed, may have intended to give a symbolical meaning to the headings. If so, we fail to understand it, since "Jerusalem" is the beginning and "Bethlehem" the end. In like manner, we are unable to say whether he has meant to give any coherent spiritual development to his chief character. Whatever modifications of belief we notice, they seem to spring from the intimate personal intercourse of the parties rather than from the arguments they use. Throughout the whole work we trace, under many masks, the wanderings of a questioning and unsatisfied soul: yet at the close we do not feel clearly that peace has been attained, or, if it has been, upon what basis. The literary character of the poem corresponds to the intellectual. It is astonishingly unequal. After a couplet, quatrain or brief passage which bears a high poetical stamp, we stumble upon one which is awkward, feeble and immetrical. Reading the best parts, we can not understand why the whole poem is not greatly better: reading the worst, we are surprised to find it so good.

Mr. Newman reminds our readers that since the establishment of the Melville Memorial Room at the Athenaeum in 1953, he has been developing a resource collection for researchers and students. He welcomes contributions by Melvilleans--books, articles, manuscripts and related materials--to the permanent collection. You can mail materials to The Berkshire Athenaeum, 1 Wendell Avenue, Pittsfield, Mass. 01201.

METAMORPHOSES: SOME SURPRISING

Sally Hoople of White Plains High School calls attention to a television adaptation of "Bartleby" which was aired on PBS on May 30. Recommended for grades ten through college (later too?), it was produced by the Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting in association with Baltimore's Center Stage. Bartleby was played by Joel Colodner and the attorney by Nicholas Kepros.

Richard Colles Johnson of The Newberry Library notes a 4 page brochure containing reproductions of two early drafts of Robert Lowell's "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket." The facsimiles were produced as part of an exhibition of Lowell's books and manuscripts at the Houghton Library.

The "Players" at All Souls Church in New York offered several performances of Orson Welles's "Moby-Dick Rehearsed" in early March. The production was one of the events the congregation sponsored to celebrate the Church's newly discovered Melville connection.

Gil Wilson, the inspired and indefatigable artist whose recent work is reproduced in the next column, writes:

"Have been at work lecturing on The White Whale, using the scenic designs and new paintings relating thereto, also some tapes of music--the Shostakovich Prelude and a Vaughn Williams treatment of Greensleeves, which fits the tempo of Ahab's mental return to his family.

I have decided to try to work out an electronic score for the music drama. With no knowledge of conventional music and composition, I have decided that an electronic score might be more accessible to my limitations.

There is the feeling that abstract sounds of a rugged and elemental nature--'the wild, the watery, the unshored' as Melville puts it--

can lend mystery and support to Ahab's madness, which the music drama makes much of in the third act where Ahab confronts his alter-ego.

Huge timbers clashing together and hollowed as well as slowed down in recorded sound can give that disturbing effect of delirium arising out of Ahab's mutilated being.

I am suspending various lengths of telephone poles in my barn and beating this giant untuned xylophone with a sledge, recording it at 16 ips and slowing it to 3 $\frac{1}{2}$.

The tornado 4 years ago left me with a large sheet of tin, which makes marvelous thunder. And I have found that blowing on a mike can make wonderful sounds of wind.

Blending these sounds and cadenced with a borrowed kettle drum, I will have a score yet. And can at least put it all on film with sound track."



QUERIES AND ANSWERS

Several readers (Leon Kaplan of New York City, Edouard Stackpole of Nantucket and Richard C. Malley of Mystic) have responded to John Seelye's question in EXTRACTS 32 about the Acushnet chest. The ship's document box is indeed on display in the Mystic Bank exhibit at the Seaport, where it has been since 1941. At first a loan from a private collection, it was later purchased for the Museum by a trustee.

S. Ross Beharriell offers a query posed by a student. He seeks clarification of the line "A hatchet to my panzer?" ("Billy in the Darbies"). Send suggestions to Mr. Beharriell, c/o Department of English, Royal Military College, Kingston, Ontario, Canada K7L 2W3, and to the Editor.



Three Sermons to the Fishes

Santos Silva and Carlos Daghlian

Universidade Estadual Paulista (Brasil)

The average reader of Portuguese Literature will think of two literary models for Fleece's speech in Chapter 64 of Moby-Dick, namely, a sermon delivered by the seventeenth century Portuguese preacher Antonio Vieira in the city of Sao Luis do Maranhao, one of the centres of Portuguese colonization in South America, and, more remotely, a sermon by Saint Anthony of Padua, included in The Little Flowers of St. Francis, which undoubtedly inspired Vieira. But the actual connection between both or either of the two sermons to Melville's text remains to be investigated.

Three basic similarities among the three sermons, however, can be discerned:

1. The three men were privately unwilling to preach; they were forced into an undesirable action.
2. In the three cases the audiences were ambiguous: they consisted of fishes and people. Being unable to speak to people, the orators had to talk to the fishes.
3. In all cases the sermon was the genre selected to convey the linguistic message.

Since the rhetorical message is, by its own nature, oriented towards an audience and can be modified according to the speaker's intentions, we conclude that the double meaning of the three texts, with different ironical applications, was conditioned by the ambiguity of the speakers' situations and the audiences.

The article from which this note is abstracted appears in the second number of Estudos Anglo-Americanos, a publication of ABRAPUI (Brazilian Association of University Professors of English).⁷

LOOSE FISH

First Printings of American Authors, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli, et al., a projected 4 volume series to be completed this year, has been published by Gale. \$140 for the set. Melville is, of course, included.

Melville is one of the authors covered in the two-volume compilation by Philip Butcher, The Minority Presence in American Literature, 1600-1900: A Reader and Course Guide. (Howard University Press, \$25.45, cloth, \$14.90, paper.)

The University of California Press has issued The Metaphysical Novel in England and America: Dickens, Bulwer, Melville, and Hawthorne, by Edwin M. Eigner. (\$12.50)--to be reviewed.

Indiana University Press has published Myth and Literature in the American Renaissance by Robert D. Richardson, Jr. (\$15). Melville is one of the myth-makers considered.

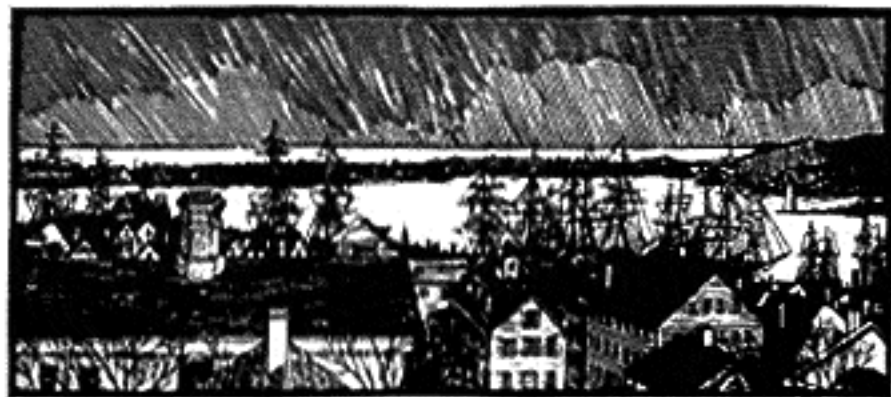
LUTHER S. MANSFIELD

Luther Stearns Mansfield, professor emeritus of American history and literature at Williams College, died on Thursday, April 6, at the Sweetbrook Nursing Home where he had been a resident for several years. Mr. Mansfield is perhaps best known to Melvilleans for his co-editing of the Hendrick's House Moby-Dick and for arranging the memorable Williamstown conference in 1951.

He was a former president of the New England American Studies Association and national president of the Melville Society. He was awarded an honorary lifetime membership in the Society in 1969.

Born April 25, 1906, in Arlington, Neb., the son of Albert and Lulu Elizabeth Stearns Mansfield, he grew up in Fort Worth, Texas. He was valedictorian of his college class at Texas Christian University in 1927, graduating summa cum laude. He earned his masters degree at T.C.U. and his Ph.D., in 1936, at the University of Chicago, teaching in the meantime at Illinois Military School in Abington, Ill., and at Jamestown (N.D.) College. He joined the English faculty at Williams in 1936, was named a professor of history and literature in 1947, and retired in 1971.



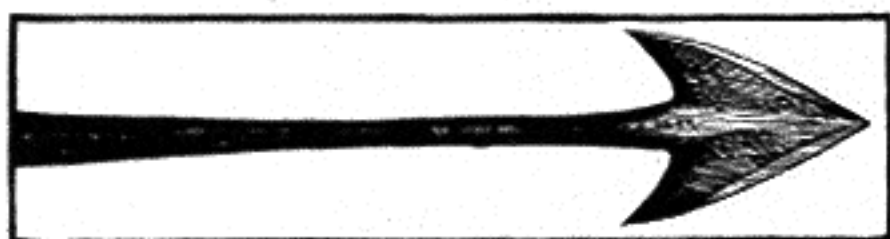


View of New Bedford, engraved on boxwood by Barry Moser.

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Melville Society Extracts

is published quarterly by The Melville Society of America. We welcome short articles, notes and miscellany concerning the life, times, writings and reputation of the American author Herman Melville (1819-1891). Manuscripts and correspondence should be sent to the editor, Donald Yannella, Department of English, Glassboro State College, Glassboro, NJ 08028.



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