SUMMER 1989

THE LOG OF MYSTIC SEAPORT



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FRONT COVER: *Detail from Ambroise Louis Garneray's* Pêche du Cachalot (Sperm Whale Fishery), *which Herman Melville considered to be among the most accurate whaling scenes of his day. Aquatint, engraved by Frédéric Martens, Paris, 1834. (Courtesy the Kendall Whaling Museum)*

BACK COVER: *In his impressionistic* Noank Shipyard, Whaler *Rosa Baker* on ways, *Reynolds Beal depicted the 1867 brig being readied for her 1899 whaling voyage from New London. Oil, signed:* Reynolds Beal, 1906. *(M.S.M. 40.405)*

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THE LOG
OF MYSTIC SEAPORT

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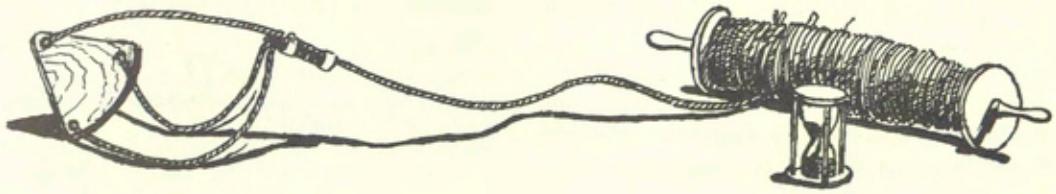
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SIGHTINGS



"Another issue of *The Log* focused on whaling!" you may say. "Here they go again," you might think. Yet several facts attest to the legitimacy of whaling as a major area of involvement for the Seaport.

The whaling industry was critical to the development of this nation in the nineteenth century, and the international leadership of Nantucket, New Bedford, and New England in this industry gave the country a significant economic position very early in its history. Based on this alone, whaling is appropriate as a major theme of this maritime museum.

We must also consider the whaling collections we have here, dominated by the *Charles W. Morgan*. With this wealth of fascinating material, it is our responsibility to interpret the whaling trade for our visitors, assist researchers working in this field, and publish material on the subject.

Just as the *Morgan* dominates our waterfront, it is easy to let whaling dominate our other programs. What we must achieve is a proper balance. In this issue of *The Log*, whaling is actually a secondary theme to the primary emphasis on literature and art. Stuart Frank, who served on the Seaport staff for more than a decade and is now director of the Kendall Whaling Museum, has done exhaustive research into pictorial influences on Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, which is encapsulated for presentation here. Melville scholar Mary K. Bercaw, who has been a member of the Seaport staff for nearly a decade, shares her literary insights on Melville with us as well.

The Museum, of course excells in documentation on whaling, but the subject by no means dominates our collections. Our Library assists researchers from all over the world as they use our extraordinary book and manuscript collections, which cover not only whaling but also virtually every other aspect of American maritime history. Our collection of paintings, cared for by the Curatorial Department, contains many whaling-related scenes, but hundreds of others depict the full range of maritime activity, from the coastal trade to naval battles. Other curatorial collections contain artifacts related to life at sea, life ashore, maritime industries, maritime arts, and ship modeling. Except for the whaleman's art of scrimshaw, none of these collections is dominated by whaling.

Our shipwrights have poured their energies and talents into the preservation and restoration of the *Morgan*, but they have also put their abilities to work on the rest of our extraordinary watercraft collection, from the fishing schooner *L. A. Dunton* to a Kingston lobster boat.

Our education programs, at all levels, address whaling. Visitors see our "Whales, Whaling, and Whalemen" presentation; our in-school programs often include whaling; and school groups visiting the Museum absorb whaling history while here. In our undergraduate Williams College–Mystic Seaport Program and graduate-level Munson Institute, portions of the courses focus on whaling.

Our publications include important books on the *Charles W. Morgan*, scrimshaw, and whaleboats. These whaling books, however, represent only a few of the more than thirty remarkably diverse Seaport titles in print.

Mystic Seaport is no longer "that whaling museum in Connecticut," as it was perceived in the 1950s. The Seaport has matured into a broad-based institution striving to achieve balance in its preservation and representation of America's maritime history. We are fortunate to be the custodians of the *Charles W. Morgan*, and we must incorporate whaling in our programs. But in our efforts we will continue to place the industry in its proper context.

J. Revell Carr

Melville's Borrowings

MARY K. BERCAW

"One of the surest tests is the way a poet borrows. Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal."

T. S. Eliot

Herman Melville wrote books filled with a richness of detail that owes much to the varied experiences of his own life. But his voracious reading habits were also the source of details, information, and stories that he used throughout his writings.

"I have swam through libraries," wrote Melville in *Moby-Dick*.[1] He consumed books and was consumed by them. And as he read books, he argued with them, laughed and cried over them, exulted in them, and became fiercely angry with them. The books he owned were filled with notes and jottings done with slashing pen marks and furious periods. "What execrations! What hatred against the human race! What exultation and merriment at eternal sufferings!—In this view, the 'Inferno' is the most immoral and impious book ever written," Melville quoted from Walter Savage Landor at the beginning of his copy of Dante. "Thus savagely writes Savage Landor of the still more savage Tuscan!" he scrawled. Melville never simply read anything; he always responded emotionally to it.

Melville's weak eyes limited his reading to books with large type. Here is what he wrote to his editor and friend Evert Duyckinck on acquiring his first large-type edition of Shakespeare:

It is an edition in glorious great type, every letter whereof is a soldier, & the top of every "t" like a musket barrel. Dolt & ass that I am I have lived more than 29 years, & until a few days ago, never made close acquaintance with the divine William. Ah, he's full of sermons-on-the-mount, and gentle, aye, almost as Jesus. I take such men to be inspired. I fancy that this moment Shakspeare in heaven ranks with Gabriel Raphael and Michael. And if another Messiah ever comes twill be in Shakesper's person.—I am mad to think how minute a cause has prevented me hitherto from reading Shakspeare. But until now, every copy that was come-atable to me, happened to be in a vile small print unendurable to my eyes which are tender as young sparrows. But chancing to fall in with this glorious edition, I now exult over it, page after page.—[2]

In his novel *Pierre*, Melville deplored "the heavy unmalleable element of mere book-knowledge."[3] Much of what Melville wrote about was indeed based on his personal history. He sailed to Liverpool, England, and back aboard the merchant vessel *St. Lawrence* at the age of nineteen, a voyage that became the basis for his fourth book, *Redburn: His First Voyage, Being the Sailor-boy Confessions and Reminiscences of the Son-of-a-Gentleman, in the Merchant Service*. He then journeyed inland to Galena, Illinois, and the steamboats he saw on the rivers appeared in his eighth novel, *The Confidence-Man*. At the age of twenty-one, Melville signed on board the whaleship *Acushnet* out of New Bedford. When the *Acushnet* reached the Marquesas Islands in the South Pacific, Melville jumped ship and lived for four weeks among the Typee natives, who were reputed to be cannibals. From this episode came his first novel *Typee*. Melville escaped from the Typees aboard the Australian whaleship *Lucy Ann*. He was involved in a bloodless mutiny, which turned out to be a rather comic affair, and was imprisoned in a Tahitian jail. He escaped—which was not difficult—and ended up in Eimeo (Moorea) planting potatoes. These adventures

Mary K. Bercaw received her B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in English from Northwestern University. Her book, *Melville's Sources*, was published by Northwestern University Press in 1987. Dr. Bercaw is also a sailor, having sailed around the world with her family in a thirty-eight-foot ketch. She is presently foreman of the Seaport's outdoor demonstration squad and a professor of literature for the Williams College-Mystic Seaport Program in American Maritime Studies.

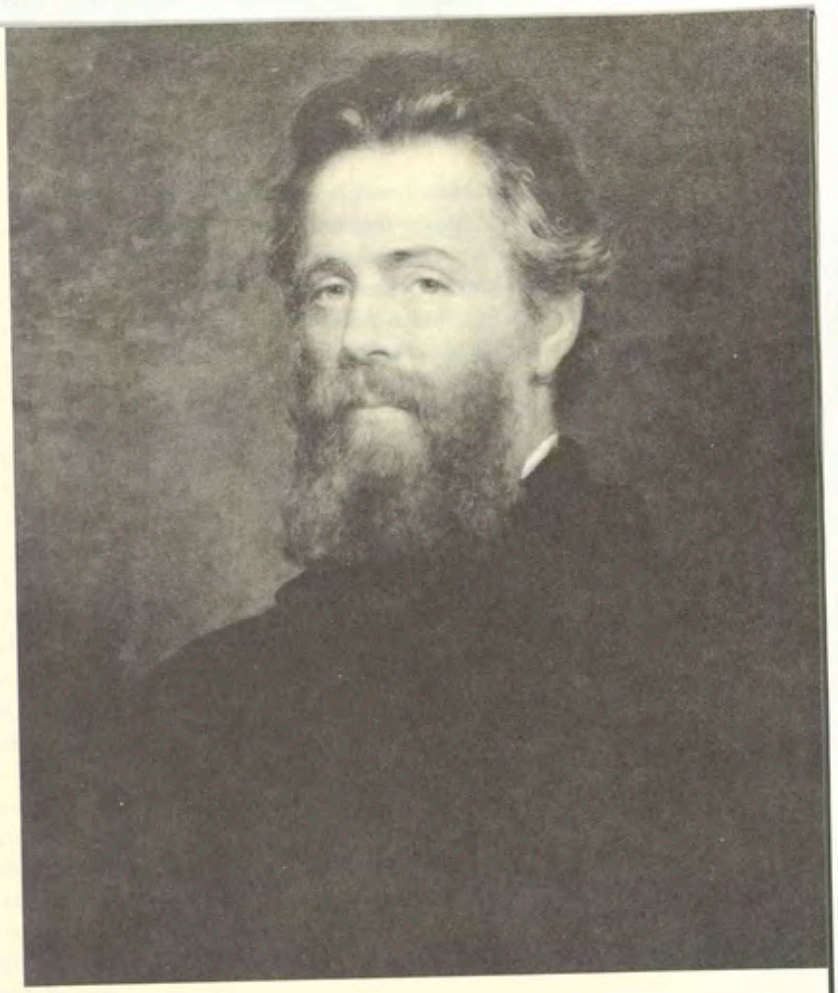
were recorded in his second book, *Omoo*, the most autobiographical of his writings. Melville sailed from Moorea to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) on the Nantucket whaler *Charles and Henry*, an experience that he used for the beginning of his third novel, *Mardi*. In Hawaii he got a job setting up pins in a bowling alley (Herman Melville!) and was entering a partnership in a general store when the *Acushnet* arrived in port and Captain Valentine Pease swore out an affidavit against him for desertion. Melville, like countless people before and since, escaped the law by joining the navy. He sailed home to Boston on the frigate *United States* and saw 163 floggings in fourteen months. The horror of that time came out in his fifth book, *White-Jacket*.

One would think that this stock of early experiences would supply a writer with a lifetime worth of material, but Melville also lived in a world of books, and as an artist he drew on that world, too, both consciously and unconsciously. The ways in which Melville's reading influenced his writing have intrigued scholars for decades. Scholars have suggested over 950 separate works that Melville read and borrowed from.[4]

Melville often took information that he found in other books, weaving it into his own writing as though that information came from his own experiences or observations. At a time when readers and publishers demanded "useful knowledge," even in novels, the reviewers of *Typee, Omoo, White-Jacket,* and *Moby-Dick* gave Melville high marks for the informational value of these books, even when they failed to understand them as works of art. Much supplementary detail about the customs, dress, and language of the South Seas islanders in *Typee* was drawn from popular travelogues, such as Charles S. Stewart's *A Visit to the South Seas*, David Porter's *Journal of a Cruise made to the Pacific Ocean*, William Ellis's *Polynesian Researches*, Georg H. von Langsdorff's *Voyages and Travels*, and the Harper Family Library summary of Pacific narratives called *Historical Account of the Circumnavigation of the Globe*. Melville may have journeyed from his home in upstate Lansingburgh to New York City in January 1845 to find some of these books. Even after his brother Gansevoort had taken a manuscript of *Typee* to England to find a publisher for it, Melville continued to search sourcebooks for interesting information. He wrote three additional chapters derived mostly from David Porter's *Journal of a Cruise* and sent them on to his brother in November. This new material, especially chapter 27 ("The Social Condition and General Character of the Typees"), made the narrative seem more authentic by establishing the narrator as a close observer of the Marquesan people. When Gansevoort sent the three chapters on to the English publisher, John Murray, he noted that "from their subject matter, especially that of chapter 27, [they] will go far to give a more life-like air to the whole, an[d] parry the incredulity of those who may be disposed to regard the work as an ingenious fiction."[5]

As he gradually exhausted what seemed usable in his own stock of early experiences on sea and land, however, Melville occasionally chanced upon a tale that he recognized could be worked up into an entire book or story. Melville acquired books ravenously from all kinds of sources—from his publishers, from used bookshops, and even from rag-pickers, who gathered rags and old books and sold them to paper manufacturers as raw material. In the preface to *Israel Potter*, Melville's story of the adventures of a Revolutionary War veteran, he wrote, "From a tattered copy [of Henry Trumbull's *Life and Remarkable Adventures of Israel R. Potter*], rescued by the merest chance from the rag-pickers, the present account has been drawn."[6] Melville went on to rewrite Henry Trumbull's obscure little pamphlet into an imaginatively expanded serial novel, *Israel Potter*.

Melville also obtained potential source material when friends lent or gave him books, sometimes on their own initiative and sometimes at his request. When he stayed with his in-laws in Boston, Melville sent his father-in-law out to the library to get books for him. Evert A. Duyckinck, at the center of the New York literary circle to which Melville belonged, lent Melville many books during his early years there. In the winter of 1847–48, Melville first borrowed from Duyckinck, among other books, *A Narrative of the Suffer-*



Herman Melville (1819–1891), painted by Joseph O. Eaton, ca. 1870. (Gift to Houghton Library, Harvard University, by Mrs. Henry K. Metcalf)

ings and Adventures of Capt. Charles H. Barnard, Esaias Tegner's *Frithiof's Saga*, and the works of Rabelais and Sir Thomas Browne. Melville's comments on Browne caused Duyckinck to write his brother: "By the way Melville reads Old Books. He has borrowed Sir Thomas Browne of me and says finely of the speculations of the Religio Medici that Browne is a kind of 'crack'd Archangel.' Was ever anything of this sort said before by a sailor?"[7]

At the time Melville was working on *Mardi*, a phantasmagorical and philosophical allegory set in the South Seas, and the influence of these authors, especially Browne and Rabelais, is very apparent. Duyckinck's list of "Books Lent" eventually recorded twenty-nine titles lent to Melville.

Duyckinck continued to supply Melville with books even after Melville left New York to live in Pittsfield. Through him Melville also received issues of the *Dollar Magazine*, edited by Duyckinck, which, like many periodicals of the time, featured new literature. Melville mentioned the magazine to Duyckinck in letters of 12 February and 26 March 1851, and to Hawthorne of [1?] June 1851. In the *Dollar Magazine* Melville read Hawthorne's "Ethan Brand," the story of a man in search of the unpardonable sin. Scholars Howard P. Vincent and Leo Marx have argued that "Ethan Brand" had a profound influence on "The Try-Works" chapter (96) of *Moby-Dick*. Marx wrote that the "Try-Works" chapter "is quite literally constructed out of the symbols of 'Ethan Brand.' Again it is night, and vision is limited to the lurid light of a 'kiln' or 'furnace.' Fire again is a means of production, rendering the whale's fat, and again it is also the source of alienation."[8]

Further evidence of Melville's dependence on Duyckinck for reading material in Pittsfield is

found in a letter Melville wrote to Duyckinck in November 1851: "Why didn't you send me that inestimable item of 'Herman de Wardt' before? Oh had I but had that pie to cut into! But that & many other fine things doubtless are omitted. All one can do is to pick up what chips he can buy[?] round him. They have no Vatican [the Vatican library] (as you have) in Pittsfield here" (*Letters*, p. 140). Melville had only recently finished writing *Moby-Dick*, a fact that explains his regret at not having the "Herman de Wardt" piece sooner.[9]

Much later, after his move back to New York, Melville continued to borrow books from Duyckinck. On [1?] February 1862, he wrote him: "I want you to loan me some of those volumes of the Elizabethan dramatists. Is Deckar among the set? And Webster? If so, please put them up and let the bearer have them.—Send me any except Marlowe, whom I have read" (*Letters*, p. 213). Melville had been laid up with rheumatism and so had not been able to visit to get the volumes in person.

Family members and other friends also supplied Melville with books. Momentously, on 18 July 1850, an aunt gave him a copy of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse*. This gift, followed by Melville's first meeting with Hawthorne in August 1850, inspired "Hawthorne and His Mosses," Melville's seminal essay on Hawthorne.

Melville's friendship with Hawthorne, growing from that first meeting, opened up another source of books. On 22 January 1851, Hawthorne presented Melville with a copy of *Twice-Told Tales* and on 14 March 1851 with four volumes of *The Mariner's Chronicle*, a collection of narratives on shipwrecks, fires, famines, and other calamities, which Hawthorne had received from his uncle. As Howard P. Vincent argued, "the gift [of *The Mariner's Chronicle*] suggests that Melville had discussed his plot problems [in the book that became *Moby-Dick*] with his friend and that Hawthorne had given his old volumes . . . in a helping spirit."[10]

There is no evidence that Melville used *The Mariner's Chronicle* in *Moby-Dick*, but the source for the apocalyptic ending of *Moby-Dick* was provided by his father-in-law, Judge Lemuel Shaw. From Thomas Macy of Nantucket, Judge Shaw secured a copy of Owen Chase's *Narrative of the Most Extraordinary and Distressing Shipwreck of the Whale-Ship Essex*, which he presented to Melville in April 1851. We know that Melville had asked Judge Shaw to find him a copy because of Thomas Macy's letter of 4 April 1851 to the judge, reporting that this "mutilated copy" was "the only copy" that he had been able to procure.[11] Melville was fascinated by Chase's narrative, the true account of the sinking of a whaleship by an enraged bull sperm whale ramming it repeatedly, and added eighteen pages of notes and commentary to it in his own hand. He later based the conclusion of *Moby-Dick* on the events in the *Narrative*.

Shaw had earlier given to Melville a copy of Lay and Hussey's *A Narrative of the Mutiny, on Board the Ship Globe*, the story of one of the bloodiest mutinies on record, which he had also received from Macy. After *Moby-Dick* was published, Thomas Macy inscribed to Melville himself a copy of Obed Macy's *The History of Nantucket*. Melville had already used some other unrecorded copy as a source for *Moby-Dick*.

Melville always read whenever his weak eyes permitted, and what he read stayed with him. His eyes hurt him at night, so he read little then; in late 1850 he spent his evenings, as he wrote Duyckinck on 13 December, "in a sort of mesmeric state in my room—not being able to read—only now & then skimming over some large-printed book" (*Letters*, p. 117). Sometimes during an evening spent with his family one of them would read aloud, further adding to the material he would draw upon for his own works.

In all his works Melville made allusions from his extensive reading. His language reflected his long hours with Shakespeare, Milton, Carlyle, Dante, and the Bible, though there is no evidence that he had any of these open before him as he wrote. For example, Melville's reading of Montaigne's "An Apologie of Raymond Sebond" found its way into *Moby-Dick*: Melville unconsciously retold Montaigne's story of an elephant in the flower-market at the end of chapter 86, "The Tail."[12] Melville was also influ-

enced by Montaigne's "Apologie" when he wrote the following chapter, "The Grand Armada." While Frederick Debell Bennett's *A Whaling Voyage Round the Globe* provided Melville with the factual information for chapter 87, Montaigne, which he was reading for his own pleasure, affected his wording, phrasing, and the overall feel of the language in his writing.

Although most early scholars accepted Melville's works as strict autobiography, some sensed that he was relying on other sources. In 1928 Harold H. Scudder published his discovery that Melville had based his short story "Benito Cereno" on chapter 18 of Amasa Delano's *A Narrative of Voyages and Travels, in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres*. Scudder stated that Melville "merely rewrote" Delano's chapter, "including a portion of one of the legal documents there appended, suppressing a few items, and making some small additions."[13] From 1928 on, scholars began to hunt for other extensive borrowings and rewritings by Melville—and they found many. Even the "Cetology" chapter of *Moby-Dick* was taken almost word for word from the "Whale" entry in volume 27 of *The Penny Cyclopaedia*. Melville appropriated blocks of writing whose origin is so clear that the source-hunter can often identify not only Melville's source but also the very edition he used. The "fingerprints" by which scholars make such identifications with confidence include peculiar wording, errors in titles or dates, and misspellings. In chapter 41 of *Moby-Dick*, for instance, Melville misspelled Olafsen as "Olassen" when he referred to Olafsen and Povelsen's representation of the sperm whale as incredibly ferocious and thirsting for human blood. Since Thomas Beale made the same reference with the same misspelling in *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale*, it is clear that Melville got his information from Beale and not directly from Olafsen and Povelsen's *Travels in Iceland*.

It was not until the late 1940s that a few scholars became interested in questions about Melville's compositional process. How did Melville take material from other sources and transform it into his own unique works of art? At what stages did he get his ideas and source materials, when did he work them into his manuscripts, and how did unforseen additions affect the work in progress?

In his earliest method of composition, Melville inserted into his running narrative—both as he wrote and in later drafts—facts or description he gleaned from other books. This is his first and most characteristic manner of borrowing, and hence the one that has received the most attention from scholars. These theorists try to follow Melville step by step through the creation of a text.

Editor Harrison Hayford investigated Melville's compositional process for the Hendricks House edition of *Omoo*. He found that William Ellis's *Polynesian Researches* had been Melville's major source for several chapters of *Omoo* and that he repeatedly used information from Ellis without ever citing him as an authority. But Ellis's contemptuous missionary attitude toward the pagan elements of Tahitian culture is not reflected in Melville's writing. For his own interpretation of Polynesian culture, Melville went to "the unevangelical Reverend Michael Russell,"[14] whose philosophic reservations about missionary work—and whose topics, quotations, and footnotes—Melville followed closely. Hayford concluded from his study of Melville's use of Ellis and Russell that originally chapter 49 had followed chapter 47 and that Melville had later inserted chapter 48, based on Russell. Melville first quoted Russell's references to two of Russell's sources, Frederick W. Beechey and Otto von Kotzebue. He then found Beechey's and Kotzebue's own works and drew directly from them. As Hayford explained: "Since he made little further use of Kotzebue and Beechey, two reporters whose views were close to his own, it seems likely that he did not have their works to draw upon while he was writing his first draft, but looked them up later for amplification of what he had found quoted by Russell."[15] This suggestion is supported by the fact that Judge Shaw withdrew Kotzebue's volumes from the Boston Athenaeum during a visit Melville made to the Shaws just before making the last revisions in his manuscript of *Omoo*.

The same method of compositional study has

been applied by other scholars to the composition of *Moby-Dick*. But the work of these scholars points out a possible fallacy in this method: the assumption that writers write their chapters in order, from the first to the last. It is tempting, but possibly misleading, to assume that if a writer changes his conception in the course of composition the change will show up only in subsequent chapters. This fallacy is evident in those theories that, pointing to Ahab's late appearance in *Moby-Dick*, argue that the character of Ahab was inspired by Melville's rereading of Shakespeare and thus postulate two *Moby-Dick*s, the first conceived and written before July/August 1850 (when Melville made his comparison of Hawthorne and Shakespeare in his essay on *Mosses*), the second re-imagined and continued after. Charles Olson used this type of reasoning, flatly asserting:

> *Moby-Dick* was two books written between February, 1850 and August, 1851.
>
> The first book did not contain Ahab.
>
> It may not, except incidentally, have contained Moby-Dick.[16]

George Stewart made the same assumption, dividing *Moby-Dick* into two books with the break occurring between chapters 22 and 23.[17] James Barbour, too, in his extensive study of the composition of *Moby-Dick* for his doctoral thesis, also accepted the assumption of linear composition.

Until Harrison Hayford's "Unnecessary Duplicates: A Key to the Writing of *Moby-Dick*" (1978), all theorizers—including Barbour, Olson, and Stewart—assumed that all the early land chapters (1–21) must have been written first and were part of the original narrative that was "mostly done" in August of 1850. Hayford's argument is based on internal evidence of what he called "unnecessary duplicates"—e.g., two introductory chapters, two whaling ports, two inns, two experienced whaleman "comrades," three captains, and so on. Hayford conjectured that Melville did not proceed in linear fashion from start to finish; he repeatedly went back to revise what he had written and to insert new description, chapters, or episodes. Vestigial elements usually survive from the earlier stages of composition, a fact that can help one to follow the compositional process. But the stages Hayford posited were always more complex than most of the "two *Moby-Dick*s" theorists have assumed; these stages of composition did not always break cleanly at the chapter breaks.[18]

Another possible fallacy in compositional study is inferring dates of composition from the dates when Melville acquired certain books. James Barbour did this in dating his stage two as consequent upon Melville's acquisition of his copy of Thomas Beale's *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale*, one of the major sources for *Moby-Dick*. This copy did not reach Melville until 10 July 1850 (at least if he signed and dated it without delay), and in the month that followed, so Barbour inferred, Melville was too busy with social engagements to work on his manuscript. Therefore, Barbour concluded, Melville could not have begun writing the scientific whaling chapters based on Beale until fall 1850.[19]

But the hazard is that the copy of Beale that Melville received in July was not necessarily the first copy Melville had used. He may have had access to some other copy of which no record happens to have survived (as was the case with Macy's *History of Nantucket*), or, before his own copy arrived, he may have found and used, at least for some passages, materials from Beale reprinted or summarized in other sources. For some matters Melville used the "Whale" entry in the *Penny Cyclopaedia*, in which passages from Beale are paraphrased and his book is cited. Perhaps this was how Melville learned about Beale's book, prompting him to ask his booksellers to import it from England; or he could also have learned about it from J. Ross Browne's *Etchings of a Whaling Cruise*, a work we know he had read because he reviewed it for the *Literary World* on 6 March 1847. Browne's appendix contained extensive quotations from Beale, on which Melville could already have been drawing, before his copy of Beale arrived. In short,

Opposite: Melville's knowledge of whales was partially based on this entry in volume 27 of the *Penny Cyclopaedia* (1833–43). (Courtesy author)

nearly three times as great as the width of its own mouth. As the animal in which these remains were found had a tusk of seven feet, Mr. Scoresby apprehended that this instrument had been employed in the capture of the fishes on which it had recently fed. It seemed probable to him that the skates had been pierced with the horn and killed before they were devoured; otherwise, he observes, it is difficult to imagine how the narwhal could have swallowed them, or how a fish of any activity would have permitted itself to be taken, and sucked down the throat of a smooth-mouthed animal without teeth to detain and compress it.

Narwhals swim with great swiftness. When at the surface for respiration, they blow repeatedly with considerable force, and then frequently lie motionless for several minutes with their back and head just above water. Mr. Scoresby describes them as often sporting about his ship, sometimes in bands of fifteen or twenty together, often elevating their long tusks and crossing them with each other as if they were fencing. They often uttered a very unusual sound, resembling the gurgling of water in the throat, which Mr. Scoresby thinks produced it, as it only occurred when they reared their tusks, with the front of the head and mouth out of the water. Several of them followed the ship, seeming to be attracted by curiosity: as the water was perfectly transparent, they could be seen descending to the keel and playing about the rudder for a considerable time. Sir Joseph Banks stated to Dr. Fleming, who has published a very interesting account in the 'Wernerian Transactions,' that a narwhal stranded on the Lincolnshire coast was found with the whole of its body buried in the mud of the beach, and seemed safely and securely waiting the return of the tide.

Utility to Man.—The blubber yields a very superior oil, which, as well as the flesh, is considered a dainty by the Greenlander, who regards the Narwhal as the herald of the Mysticete, in whose neighbourhood the former is, they say, generally to be found, perhaps from partaking of the same food. When harpooned, it swiftly dives to about two hundred fathoms, and on its return to the surface is killed by lances. The Greenlander drives them to fissures in the ice, where they come up to respire, and kills them with harpoons, &c. The ivory of the tusk is considered superior to that of the elephant: it is very dense and hard, very white, is not subject to become yellow, and is susceptible of a high polish. They formerly brought a high price, and many virtues were attributed to them [UNICORN]: they still form a valued article in commerce. The celebrated throne of the Danish kings is stated to be made of the tusks of this animal.



The Narwhal.

Physeteridæ.

Physeter.

Generic Character.—Length of the head equal to a third or half of the total length; upper jaw large, elevated, and either without teeth or furnished with very few, which are short, and nearly entirely hidden by the gum; lower jaw narrow, and armed with stout conical teeth; orifices of the blow-holes united, and situated at the end of the upper part of the muzzle; no dorsal fin.

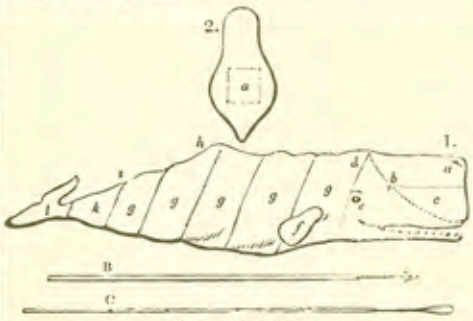
The subjoined cut is from M. F. Cuvier, who gives it from the skeleton in the Paris museum, and is confined to the lower jaw only, from which it may be inferred that in the French specimen there is no appearance of teeth in the upper jaw: in the lower there are 27 on each side = 54.



Teeth of Cachalot.

Example, *Physeter macrocephalus.*

Description.—To render the following abridgment of the description by Mr. Beale (who, in his excellent work on the 'Natural History of the Sperm Whale,'* has done more to elucidate its habits and form than any other writer) more intelligible, we prefix, as he himself does, his cut, which is by far the most accurate published figure extant of the Spermaceti Whale.



Spermaceti Whale.

1. Outline of the entire form. 2. Anterior aspect of the head. *a*, nostril or spout-hole; *b*, situation of the case; *c*, the junk; *d*, bunch of the neck; *e*, eye; *f*, fin; *g*, spiral stripe or blanket pieces; *h*, the hump; *i*, the ridge; *k*, the small; *l*, the tail or flukes.

B, a harpoon.

C, a lance.

a, in *Fig.* 2: the lines forming the square are intended to represent the flat anterior part of the head.

The head presents a very thick blunt extremity, constituting about a third of the whole length of the animal; at its junction with the body is a large protuberance on the back called 'the bunch of the neck;' immediately behind this is the thickest part of the body, which from thence gradually tapers off to the tail, but it does not become much smaller for about another third of the whole length, when 'the small' or tail commences; and at this point also, on the back, is a large pyramidal prominence called 'the hump,' from which a series of smaller processes run half way down the 'small' or tail, constituting what the whalers term the 'ridge.' The body then contracts so much as to become finally not thicker than that of a man, and terminates by expanding on the sides into the 'flukes' or tail, forming a large triangular horizontal fin with a slight notch or depression posteriorly between the flukes, which are about six or eight feet in length, and from twelve to fourteen in breadth in the largest males or 'Bulls.' The chest and belly are narrower than the broadest part of the back, and taper off evenly towards the tail: the depth of the head and body is, in all parts except the tail, greater than the width. The head, viewed in front, presents a broad somewhat flattened surface, rounded and contracted above, considerably expanded on the sides, and gradually contracted below, resembling in some degree the cutwater of a ship. The slit of the single blowing-hole or nostril is about twelve inches in length. In the right side of the nose is the 'case,' a cavity for the purpose of secreting and containing an oily fluid, which after death concretes into a granulated yellowish substance: this is the spermaceti. In the case of a large whale there is not unfrequently a ton, or more than ten barrels, of spermaceti. Beneath the case and nostril is the elastic 'junk,' formed of dense cellular tissue strengthened by strong tendinous fibres, and infiltrated with very fine sperm oil and spermaceti. The mouth extends nearly the whole length of the head. Both the jaws, especially the lower, are contracted in front to a very narrow point; and when the mouth is closed the lower jaw is received within a sort of cartilaginous lip, or projection of the upper one; but principally in front, for further back at the sides, and towards the angle of the mouth, both jaws are furnished

* London, John Van Voorst, 1839, 8vo.

the assumption that Melville's use of a source can be "precisely dated" by Melville's acquisition of a copy of it is hazardous for the simple reason that surviving documentary evidence is generally incomplete.

Melville's first method of composition, as discussed above, was to incorporate old facts in new narratives; his second was to refashion an already-published narrative. His method in these cases can be reconstructed by closely comparing his source with his final work. "Benito Cereno" was the first story he wrote this way, borrowing from Amasa Delano's *Narrative of Voyages*, but *Israel Potter*, because it has been much less studied, is the example given here.

Evidence that Melville was already thinking of reworking a book about Israel Potter from Henry Trumbull's *Life and Remarkable Adventures of Israel R. Potter* occurs in his London journal for 18 December 1849: "Looked over a lot of ancient maps of London. Bought one (A.D. 1766) for 3 & 6 pence. I want to use it in case I serve up the Revolutionary narrative of the beggar."[20]

Nothing more is known about Melville's writing this book until 7 June 1854, when he wrote to his publisher, George P. Putnam, to ask about sixty-odd pages of its manuscript he had sent and the terms under which the story was to be published (*Letters*, pp. 169–70). Subsequently, *Israel Potter* was serialized in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* from July 1854 through March 1855. This is the only hard evidence we have of the book's composition, but much more can be inferred by directly comparing Trumbull's and Melville's versions.

The Northwestern-Newberry edition of *Israel Potter* includes a photographic reproduction of Trumbull's *Israel R. Potter* with marginal page and line numbers (keyed to Melville's text) to show where Melville used each passage. The first pages are full of these marginal numbers—Melville followed his source so closely that there are many words and phrases in common—but the later pages have fewer and fewer marginal numbers. As Melville continued writing, he invented more and used fewer passages from the original. Trumbull's account of Israel's life became bleaker and less eventful after the Revolution episodes, and Melville evidently found his earlier idea of developing a story about the long London years of Israel's poverty too constraining.

After Trumbull's midpoint, Melville returned to that source only briefly and occasionally. He turned to other sources and invented lively Revolutionary War encounters for Israel, with Benjamin Franklin in Paris and with John Paul Jones at sea! From what was four pages in Trumbull, Melville built up five chapters of the humorous sequence on Franklin. *The Works of Benjamin Franklin* provided the grist for these chapters.[21] From Trumbull's mere mention of John Paul Jones (p. 60), Melville created his own flamboyant Jones chapters (10–11, 14–20) with liberal use of new material from Robert C. Sands's *Life and Correspondence of John Paul Jones* and James Fenimore Cooper's *History of the Navy of the United States of America*. As he rewrote material from these two books, Melville inserted Israel's name where they wrote of "a sailor" or "one man" doing a gallant deed.

In the following passage from Cooper's *History of the Navy*, the words kept by Melville in his reworked account of the same incident in the *Bon Homme Richard*'s battle with the *Serapis* in *Israel Potter* are italicized:

> At length one man, in particular, became so hardy as to take his post on the *extreme* end *of the yard*, whence, provided with *a bucket* filled with *combustibles*, and a match, he *dropped* the *grenades* with so much *precision that* one passed through the *main-hatchway*. The *powder*-boys of the Serapis had got more *cartridges* up than were wanted, and, in their hurry, they had carelessly laid a *row* of them on the main-deck, in a line with the guns. The *grenade* just mentioned set fire to some loose powder that was lying near, and the flash passed from cartridge to cartridge, beginning abreast of the main-mast, and running quite aft.
>
> The effect of this *explosion* was awful. *More than twenty men were instantly killed* . . . while the official returns of the ship, a week after the action, show that there were no less than thirty-eight *wounded* on board. . . .
>
> The advantage thus obtained, by the coolness and intrepidity of the topman, in a great measure *restored the chances of* the combat (pp. 108–109).

In his writing of the passage (in his chapter 19),

Melville not only made Israel Potter the "one man," but had John Paul Jones suggest the deed to him:

> "Look, lad; I want a *grenade*, now, thrown down their *main hatch-way*. I saw long piles of *cartridges* there. The *powder* monkeys have brought them up faster than they can be used. Take *a bucket* of *combustibles*, and let's hear from you presently."
>
> These words were spoken by Paul to Israel. Israel did as ordered. In a few minutes, bucket in hand, begrimed with powder, sixty-feet in air, he hung like Apollyon from the *extreme* tip *of the yard* over the fated abyss of the hatchway. As he looked down between the eddies of smoke into that slaughterous pit, it was like looking from the verge of a cataract down into the yeasty pool at its base. Watching his chance, he *dropped* one *grenade* with such faultless *precision, that*, striking its mark, an *explosion* rent the Serapis like a volcano. The long *row* of heaped *cartridges* was ignited. The fire ran horizontally, like an express on a railway. *More than twenty men were instantly killed*: nearly forty *wounded*. This blow *restored the chances of* battle, before in favor of the Serapis (*Israel Potter*, p. 127; italics added to identify the words Melville took directly from Cooper).

Cooper was writing as a historian, Melville as a novelist. Not only did Melville make Cooper's anonymous "one man" Israel, but he also brought Israel into intimate contact with the great hero, John Paul Jones. And he turned Cooper's expository account into dramatic speech with Jones's explanation to Israel that the powder monkeys had brought up the cartridges faster than they could be used. Melville brought in his own graphic and unusual similes, such as that of the cataract with its "yeasty pool," and used them, with judicious cutting, to streamline Cooper's detail-laden historical account. The difference between Cooper as historian and Melville as novelist is especially apparent in a comparison of the two authors' reports of the wounded: Cooper's "the official returns of the ship, a week after the action, show that there were no less than thirty-eight wounded" became Melville's concise "nearly forty wounded."

Reshaping a source while keeping the main structure and narrative line of the original was thus Melville's second method of composition. Early source-hunters recovered the central sources for *Israel Potter*, "Benito Cereno," and chapters 26–27 of *The Confidence-Man* by investigating the names—Potter, Delano, Hall—which Melville cited along with the words he borrowed.

Melville's third method of using his sources is much more difficult to document, since it is hardly a "method" at all. As William H. Gilman wrote, "Melville's knowledge was not deep but eclectic. Although he had acquired some familiarity with the classics, he was no more a scholar in his thirties than he had been in his teens. He was a wide reader with a brilliant memory who abstracted with rare perception the quintessence of what he read."[22] Melville's allusions to his wide reading and his sometimes shaky recollection of it make up his third method, which I will refer to as "recall," to denote those moments when Melville presumably did not have the sourcebooks in front of him as he wrote. The authors Melville drew on in this way were typically among the greatest literary figures—Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Spenser, Carlyle—because theirs were the works that persisted in his mind and inspired him. These great authors did in fact sometimes contribute to Melville's works more directly. For example, Melville adapted from Spenser almost all the epigraphs to the sketches in "The Encantadas" without identifying his source. But it was the indirect borrowing that was most significant.

Melville's Ahab bears much resemblance to Shakespeare's King Lear. Ahab cries to Starbuck, "let me tell thee, that my vengeance will fetch a great premium *here*!" and Stubb whispers, "He smites his chest . . . what's that for? methinks it rings most vast, but hollow" (*Moby-Dick*, pp. 143–44). The feeling aroused by Ahab echoes that from Lear's crying out, "The tempest in my mind Doth from my senses take all feeling else, Save what beats there" (*King Lear*, III.iv.12–14). And Ahab's comments later on his crew, "Look! see yonder Turkish cheeks of spotted tawn—living, breathing pictures painted by the sun. The Pagan leopards—the unrecking and unworshipping things, that live; and seek, and give no reasons for the torrid life

they feel! The crew, man, the crew!" (*Moby-Dick*, p. 144), is like Lear's "Is man no more than this? . . . man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art" (*King Lear*, III.iv.105–10). Ahab's speeches throughout *Moby-Dick* have a wild, mad, Shakespearean ring to them.

Thus, all Melville's reading affected his writing, whether he willed it or not. Melville, as a great writer, enriched his sources, recombining them within his own special vision to create something even more enduring. This transformation was part of his skill as a magician of words.

Herman Melville spent the last twenty years of his working life as a customs inspector in New York City. *Moby-Dick*, the work we now remember him for most of all, was rejected by the critics and reading public of his own day. The failure of this book crippled Melville's reputation as a writer, and he never recovered it. Misunderstood and rejected by literary circles, Melville's lively, questing, restless mind retreated more and more into the company of the books he loved so much.

"My library was dukedom large enough"
(William Shakespeare, *Tempest*, I.ii.109–10)

NOTES

[1] Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker, eds., *Moby-Dick* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), p. 118; hereafter all citations to *Moby-Dick* are to this edition.

[2] Merrell R. Davis and William H. Gilman, eds., *The Letters of Herman Melville* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), p. 77; hereafter cited in the text as *Letters*.

[3] Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle, eds., *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities* (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1971), p. 283.

[4] As listed in my *Melville's Sources* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1987). This essay is based on my introduction to that work.

[5] Jay Leyda, *The Melville Log: A Documentary Life of Herman Melville, 1819–1891*, 2 vols., (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951), 1:200–201; hereafter cited in the text as *Log*. The *Log* was reissued in 1969 with a supplement (New York: Gordian Press), and a third edition is forthcoming.

[6] Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle, eds., *Israel Potter: His Fifty Years of Exile* (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1982), p. vii; hereafter all citations to *Israel Potter* are to this edition. Melville worked the same way with Amasa Delano's *Narrative of Voyages* and James Hall's *Sketches of History, Life, and Manners in the West*: he became interested in them through an association with a shipmate or a publisher and eventually recognized that he could shape parts of them into "Benito Cereno" and the Indian-hater chapters of *The Confidence-Man* (chapters 26–27).

[7] Evert A. Duyckinck to George L. Duyckinck, 18 March 1848, in the Duyckinck Collection of the New York Public Library.

[8] Howard P. Vincent, *The Trying-Out of Moby-Dick* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), p. 335. Leo Marx, "The Machine in the Garden," *New England Quarterly* 29 (March 1956): 27–42. The quotation from Marx is from pp. 40–41.

[9] No one is exactly sure what this piece of literature is.

[10] Vincent, *Trying-Out*, p. 47.

[11] Merton M. Sealts, Jr., *Melville's Reading* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), p. 69.

[12] Luther S. Mansfield and Howard P. Vincent, eds., "Introduction" and "Explanatory Notes," *Moby-Dick Or, The Whale* (New York: Hendricks House, 1952), p. 785, and Robert Philip Shulman, "Toward *Moby-Dick*: Melville and Some Baroque Worthies" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1959), p. 198, have pointed out the connection between chapter 86 of *Moby-Dick* and Montaigne, but no one has yet noted that Montaigne also influenced chapter 87.

[13] Harold H. Scudder, "Melville's 'Benito Cereno' and Captain Delano's Voyages," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 43 (June 1928): 502.

[14] Harrison Hayford and Walter Blair, eds., "Editors' Introduction" and "Explanatory Notes," *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas* (New York: Hendricks House, 1969), p. xxviii.

[15] Hayford, *Omoo*, p. 393.

[16] Charles Olson, *Call Me Ishmael* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947), p. 35.

[17] George R. Stewart, "The Two Moby-Dicks," *American Literature* 25 (January 1954): 417–48.

[18] Harrison Hayford, "Unnecessary Duplicates: A Key to the Writing of *Moby-Dick*," in *New Perspectives on Melville*, ed. Faith Pullin, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1978), pp. 128–61.

[19] James Francis Barbour, "The Writing of *Moby Dick*" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1970), *passim*.

[20] Eleanor Melville Metcalf, ed., *Journal of a Visit to London and the Continent by Herman Melville: 1849–1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948), p. 75. See the "Historical Note," written by Walter E. Bezanson, to the Northwestern-Newberry edition of *Israel Potter* (cited above), especially pp. 173–205, for a thorough discussion of the sources and composition of *Israel Potter*. In the forthcoming Northwestern-Newberry edition of Melville's *Journals*, Howard Horsford shows how Melville's 1849 London journal recorded his exploration of seamy areas of London for use in depicting Israel's life of poverty there. I have referred to the *Life and Remarkable Adventures of Israel R. Potter* as "Trumbull" throughout because Henry Trumbull was its ghost-writer as well as printer.

[21] Bezanson, "Historical Note" to *Israel Potter*, p. 192.

[22] William H. Gilman, *Melville's Early Life and Redburn* (New York: New York University Press, and London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 223.

"Unequal Cross-Lights"

Melville's Pictures and the Aesthetics of a Sometime Whaleman

STUART M. FRANK

> Entering that gable-ended Spouter-Inn, you found yourself in a wide, low, straggling entry with old-fashioned wainscots, reminding one of the bulwarks of some old craft. On one side hung a very large oil-painting so thoroughly be-smoked, and every way defaced, that in the unequal cross-lights by which you viewed it, it was only by diligent study and a series of systematic visits to it, and careful inquiry of the neighbors, that you could any way arrive at an understanding of its purpose.
>
> *Moby-Dick*[1]

In all the annals of seafaring, only rarely has a common sailor produced a work of enduring art based upon his own nautical experience and expertise. Given its endless profundity and perplexing tangle of metaphor, it is somewhat surprising that *Moby-Dick* should have become the veritable Holy Scripture of whaling lore and the standard by which all whaling icons are measured. Neglected and largely misunderstood in its own time (it was published in 1851), the book never enjoyed a popular or scholarly following during the author's lifetime, and Herman Melville was never widely considered to be an important writer until, in 1919, a modest centennial celebration of the author's birth led to a "rediscovery" of his work. Since that time, only Shakespeare has attracted a larger volume of literary criticism and scholarship, and Melville has been accorded a place alongside the greatest figures of literature.

Whatever the power of Melville's inspired imagery, "lyric-epic" syntax[2], and luminous metaphysics, *Moby-Dick* is also a ripping good "industrial novel about the oil business,"[3] providing a satisfactorily exotic peep into the gurry-encrusted shipboard life of the American whaleman—which perhaps accounts for at least part of the reason why the book continues to be read by anyone other than college professors and their undergraduate wards. In point of fact, it is its poetic texture, towering symbolism, and compelling metaphors that set the book apart from more pedestrian accounts of the whale hunt. Yet, while the philosophy may be abstruse and the many digressions seemingly distract from "the plot," the story itself is straightforward and easily summarized, and the prose is rich in texture, sometimes filled with humor, sometimes gently sentimental, and often cunning in its irony and forceful in its invective. Perhaps most tellingly, the book is authoritative. There can be no doubt that the author knows something firsthand about the whaling business, that he has ruminated at length on its practical dimensions as well as its transcendental meanings, and that the business-end of a harpoon is as familiar to him as the business-end of a pen. This is neither incidental nor inconsequential to Melville's purpose; rather, it epitomizes one of the main themes of the book and is certainly the

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Sea Monsters, ostensibly based on sailors' firsthand descriptions, were frequently featured as illustrations on Renaissance maps and nautical charts, from which they were imported into the natural-history books. This one seems both to anticipate the plot of *Moby-Dick* and to personify the author's remarks, *"In the vignettes and embellishments of some ancient books you will at times meet with some very curious touches at the whale, where all manner of spouts, jets d'eau, hot springs and cold, Saratoga and Baden-Baden, come bubbling up from his unexhausted brain"* (ch. 55). This and other "monstrous pictures of whales" originated with Swedish cleric and cartographer Olaus Magnus (1490–1558), who anthologized them on his *Carta Marina* map of Scandinavia (1539) and again in his pioneering natural history (1555). Both of these furnished source materials for Swiss naturalist Conrad von Gesner (1516–1565), who incorporated them into his own encyclopedic compendium of natural history. Thus popularized (and probably taken for genuine), they were widely imitated and remained part of the canon for centuries. *Herman Melville's Picture Gallery* #24. (Courtesy the Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon, Massachusetts)

point of Ishmael's interpretation of art as it pertains to whales.

In the course of the revival of interest in his work, Melville's biographers discovered that his romances, even those heretofore interpreted as having been based largely or almost wholly on his own seafaring experiences, are actually much more elaborately embroidered and fictionalized than perviously believed. Even *Moby-Dick*—never seriously mistaken for nonfiction—was found to be greatly indebted not only to the author's profound imagination but also to liberal borrowings from numerous published sources, historical and fictional. Over the past five decades, since Charles Robert Anderson first demonstrated his source-critical methodology in *Melville in the South Seas* (1939),[4] scholars have been unfolding the panorama of Melville's vast (if not particularly systematic) research, isolating threads of literature and lore that influenced his writing or from which he borrowed directly.[5] However, what has largely escaped historians and literary critics until only recently is that some of the most enduring images in *Moby-Dick*, comprising much of the stuff of Melville's artistic vision, are quintessentially pictorial, drawn not only from a professional understanding of the whale hunt itself but also a profound, if amateur, appreciation of other artists' endeavors to immortalize pictorially the drama and romantic grandeur of the quest for the Leviathan. In three middle chapters of *Moby-Dick*, Melville catalogs and critiques these pictorial prototypes, summarizing their flaws as a kind of prolegomenon to the articulation of an aesthetic of his own.

Melville provides an important clue to his theory of pictures in what he says about letters—how literature up to his time failed to capture the true essence of the sperm whale:

> There are only two books in being which at all pretend to put the living whale before you, and at the same time, in the remotest degree succeed in the attempt. Those books are Beale's and Bennett's; both in their time surgeons to English South-Sea whale-ships, and both exact and reliable men. The original matter touching the sperm whale to be found in their volumes is necessarily small; but so far as it goes, it is of excel-

lent quality, though mostly confined to scientific description. As yet, however, the sperm whale, scientific or poetic, lives not complete in any literature. Far above all other hunted whales, his is an unwritten life (chapter 32).

If the whale's life be an *unwritten* life, so, too, is it *unpainted*. Heretofore, pictures of whales, like literary, scientific, and poetic descriptions of whales, have been flawed, inadequate, wrongheaded, even entirely specious. As Melville proclaims at the beginning to chapter 55, he intends "to set the world right in this matter, by proving such pictures of the whale all wrong." Yet he admits at the end of the same chapter that it is no more possible to capture the whale in mere pictures than in mere words: " . . . Any way you may look at it, you must needs conclude that the great Leviathan is that one creature in the world which must remain unpainted to the last. True, one portrait may hit the mark much nearer than another, but none can hit it with any very considerable degree of exactness."

Ishmael's first art lesson occurs early in the book, before the *Pequod* embarks on its existential voyage, in one of the images that readers (and filmgoers) tend to remember most vividly from *Moby-Dick*—the Spouter-Inn passage about the smokey painting, quoted above. Melville's prose, like the (probably imaginary) painting to which he alludes, is ever metaphorical and elusive: "only by diligent study and a series of systematic visits to it, and careful inquiry of the neighbors, [can one] any way arrive at an understanding of its purpose." And like Ishmael's conclusions about the painting, such understanding is necessarily conjectural and imperfect. In this sense, Art, like the true character of the whale, resembles Life itself—complex, elusive, shrouded in doubt, worthy of study, sometimes yielding of conjecture but never of certainty.

Whatever the fortunes of Melville's popularity, the greatness of his vision lies in its complexity and its resonance with the profound unclarity that Melville sees—and perhaps causes us to see—in nature, in human nature, in artifice, and in the dynamic architecture of the universe itself. Ishmael's meditations on Art and Nature recapitulate Melville's irreverent philosophy. It is hardly a conventional Judeo-Christian view, founded upon an inviolate Covenant, merciful Grace, and the promise of Salvation. If the Great White Whale be a symbol of cosmic purpose, or purposelessness—and if Ahab the Seeker and Ishmael the Voyager be more than mere characters, but also players in an archetypal drama having to do with Good and Evil, the nature of consciousness, and the ultimate human condition—they are also palpable, even *realistic* reflections of our tangible world-as-found, reflections of the experiential reality of quintessential unclarity and uncertainty. What Ishmael the Art Critic says of his conclusions about this smokey painting, Melville the Theologian might have said of celestial teleology: " . . . the artist's design *seemed* this: a final *theory* of my own, partly based upon the aggregated *opinions* of many aged persons with whom I conversed upon the subject

Jonah Cast Into the Sea. Bible illustrations depicting Jonah and the Whale epitomize *"monstrous pictures of whales . . . curious imaginary portraits of him which even to the present day confidently challenge the faith of the landsman"* (ch. 55). This example, by celebrated Dutch engravers Caspar Luyken (1649–1712) and Jan Luyken (1672–1708), is one of a series of 251 scenes prepared for an illustrated Bible concordance published in 1708. *Herman Melville's Picture Gallery* #17. (Courtesy the Kendall Whaling Museum)





Perseus Descending. Of this engraving by William Hogarth (1697–1764), produced in 1730 as an illustration for Lewis Theobald's verse drama *Perseus and Andromeda*, Melville says, "*The huge corpulence of that Hogarthian monster undulates on the surface, scarcely drawing one inch of water. It has a sort of howdah on its back, and its distended tusked mouth into which the billows are rolling, might be taken for the Traitors' gate leading from the Thames by water to the Tower.*" *Herman Melville's Picture Gallery* #12. (Courtesy the Forbes Whaling Collection, Hart Nautical Collections, MIT Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts)

> . . . " (italics added). The Artist, the Seeker, the Voyager looks at life, finds the picture murky and equivocal, and is left to formulate his own theories and conclusions about the semblances of reality, based upon ratiocination, inclination, and whatever information he may happen to have at hand or feel impelled to gather from truth-seeking in the world around him. Artistic truth emanates from an intuitive receptivity to the authentic revelations of Nature. Later in the book, the three "pictorial" chapters form a kind of microcosm for this epistemological quest, and it turns out that it is experience that guides the Seeker, in Art as in Life.

This notion of experience can be made clearer when we realize that there is little need to argue that Melville (in his character as narrator) considers himself to be a knowledgeable, firsthand authority on whales and whaling, because he has *been* a professional whaleman, has *thought* a lot about the subject, and has made a particular study of it from the undeniably advantageous perspective of his own participation in the whale hunt. We are perhaps inclined to read *Moby-Dick* in this same light. The exotic appeal of the book, and the romantic fascination with its setting, is not that the author has read up on the subject, but that he has actually stood there, harpoon in hand, poised in the prow of a frail cedar whaleboat, in some remote quarter of the terraqueous globe, staring into the abyss, cheek-by-jowl with the Leviathan—and we haven't. Or, even if we have, this author, in his commanding prose, demonstrates the requisite credentials of intellect, spirit, and autobiography to capture our interest and respect, and perhaps our imagination. While there may be others with similar experience, we would hardly expect anyone who has *not* been on the whaling grounds, nor encountered whales *in the flesh*, to be in any position to speak credibly or authoritatively on the subject, nor to impart profound or enduring insights that bear any necessary relation to natural truth. The three "pictorial" chapters of *Moby-Dick* present in microcosm what is arguably the central theme of the book itself, the essential inscrutability of cosmic purpose, the fundamentally equivocal nature of human perception, the hubristic fallacies of idle fancy and rarefied detachment (whether in thought or deed), and the indispensable value of experience in discerning patterns and meaning among the murky forms on the canvas of life.

In only a very few instances in *Moby-Dick* does Melville address directly the issue of visual art or discuss its value in the interpretation and understanding of life. For the most part, his remarks are concentrated in three middle chapters, numbered 55, 56, and 57—sadly, chapters

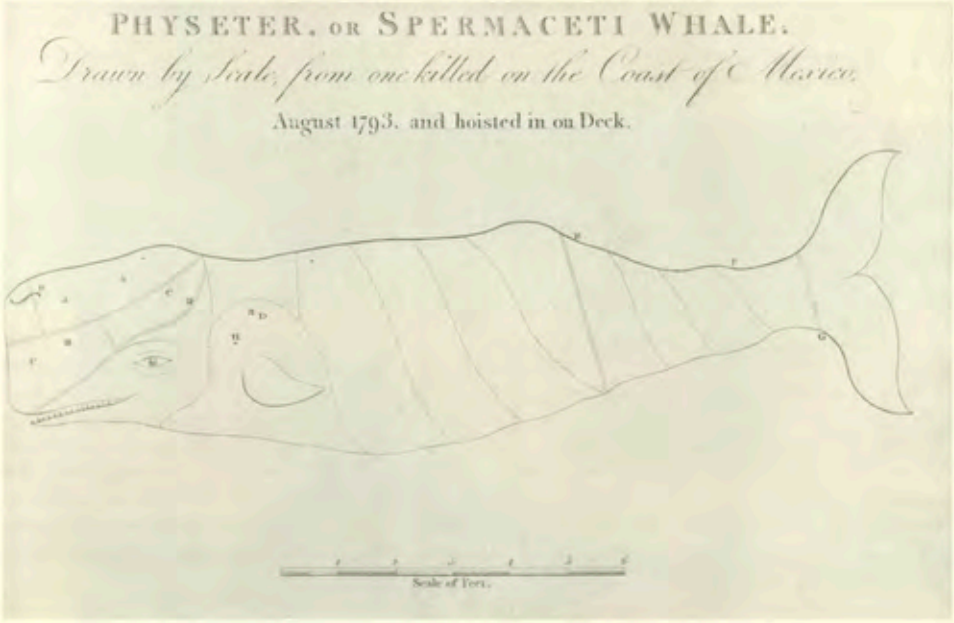
that unsophisticated readers have perpetually disregarded as digressions of the most irrelevant sort, chapters that are usually the first to go in any abridged, "masterplots," or Classic Comic version. However, these three "pictorial" chapters not only comprise a fascinating potpourri of whaling art through the centuries up to Melville's time, they also constitute a sustained essay on the nature of art itself and the relative degrees to which art may be able to reveal truth in the world.

The key to artistic understanding, according to Melville's theory, is a sustained balance between *revery*—the unbridled imaginative, intuitive flights of fancy of which genuine creativity is wrought; and something approaching scientific inquiry or systematic *observation*—the striving for a clear and precise picture of empirical dynamics, that is, of the mechanical operation and interaction of visible phenomena. The two impulses are harmonized and intuitively integrated by virtue of *experience*, which, in having confronted the world head-on, discloses the continuity between Seeker and Object, and leads to an organic oneness with Nature. Only then can one know whereof one speaks.

As I tried to illustrate in *Herman Melville's Picture Gallery*:

> The order of the three "pictorial" chapters is by no means arbitrary. They are arranged as a progression, from error towards truth, from inherited traditions to firsthand experience, from superstition to revelation. With few digressions, the discussion advances from "monstrous pictures of whales" (chapter 55), to "less erroneous pictures of whales" and "true pictures of whaling scenes" (chapter 56), to "whales graven by the fishermen themselves" (chapter 57), at each stage drawing nearer to the "true form of the whale as he actually appears to the whaleman." With each step the narrator moves closer to a metaphysical portrait of the whale as indistinguishable from Nature. The index of the progress is proximity to Nature itself.[6]

Physeter, or Spermaceti Whale. Melville catalogues many of the "prodigious blunders" committed in "sober, scientific delineations" of whales by those who, Melville claims, should have known better. One particularly ironic instance is *"an imposing quarto, written by one Captain Colnett, a Post Captain in the English navy, entitled 'A Voyage round Cape Horn into the South Seas, for the purpose of extending the Spermaceti Whale Fisheries.' In this book is an outline purporting to be a 'Picture of a Physeter or Spermaceti whale, drawn by scale from one killed on the coast of Mexico, August, 1793, and hoisted on deck.' I doubt not the captain had this veracious picture taken for the benefit of his marines. To mention but one thing about it, let me say that it has an eye which applied, according to the accompanying scale, to a full grown sperm whale, would make the eye of that whale a bow-window some five feet long. Ah, my gallant captain, why did ye not give us Jonah looking out of that eye!"* (ch. 55). *Herman Melville's Picture Gallery* #28. (Courtesy the Kendall Whaling Museum)



In the first of these "pictorial" chapters, Melville summons forth centuries of whale images to critique pure, reckless fancy—imagination run amok, as in the "curious imaginary portraits" of whales in Bible illustrations and "in the vignettes and embellishments of some ancient books," as well as in "pictures of leviathan purporting to be sober, scientific delineations, by those who know." These amount to mere delusions, what Melville calls (in the chapter title) "monstrous pictures of whales" which have no couterpart in Nature or in empirical reality, thus yielding a patently false picture of the world. In the ensuing chapter, "Of the Less Erroneous Pictures of Whales, and the True Pictures of Whaling Scenes," Melville debunks the corollary sin of scientific detachment—empirical observation untempered by deeper, intuitive interpolation and experiential understanding—a fallacy that Hawthorne might have called "heartlessness": at best, it can only describe appearances devoid of insight, and the picture it presents is equally distorted.

These fallacies of fancy and empiricism are "unequal cross-lights" like those that play upon the smokey painting at the Spouter-Inn. Each illuminates some facet of the subject but never the whole; each facet contributes to the Seeker's conclusions about the whole without ever disclosing the degree of certainty with which it might be relied upon. Inadequate pictures of whales, whatever be the reasons for their inadequacy, illustrate only that Nature cannot be easily summarized or understood at second hand, removed from the phenomenon itself; for "The living whale, in his full majesty and significance, is only to be seen at sea in unfathomable waters; and afloat the vast bulk of him is out of sight, like a launched line-of-battle ship; and out of that element it is a thing eternally impossible for mortal man to hoist him bodily into the air, so as to preserve all his mighty swells and undulations" (chapter 55).

The third "pictorial" chapter carries Melville's hypothesis to a transcendental conclusion, a canon of earth, sea, and stars, where true Art is wrought directly from Nature itself, guided by an intuitive, experiential understanding of the resonance of empirical reality and creative imagination, signifying a fundamental unity between

Pêche du Cachalot. Among whaling scenes, Melville reserved his greatest praise for a pair of fine aquatints by French artist Ambroise Louis Garneray (1789–1855), published at Paris in 1834 and 1835. Even so, his enthusiasm was not without reservation: "*. . . Taken for all in all, by far the finest, though in some respects not the most correct, presentations of whales and whaling scenes to be anywhere found, are two large French engravings [sic], well executed, and taken from paintings by one Garneray. Respectively, they represent attacks on the Sperm and Right Whale.*" Of the former, he adds an additional disclaimer: "*Serious fault might be found with the anatomical details of this whale, but let that pass; since, for the life of me, I could not draw so good a one*" (ch. 56). *Herman Melville's Picture Gallery* #60. (Courtesy the Kendall Whaling Museum)





"Oriental Repose": Whaleship Taking on Water in the South Seas. Melville also admires two fine French lithographs, neither of them sperm-whaling scenes, by someone he identifies only as "Durand." The first, *"though not precisely adapted to our present purpose, nevertheless deserves mention on other accounts. . . . The effect is very fine, when considered with reference to presenting the hardy fishermen under one of their few aspects of oriental repose."* The artist turns out to be French sea captain/painter Jean-Baptiste Henri Durand-Brager (1814–1879); identified and illustrated for the first time in *Herman Melville's Picture Gallery*, #71–72, and in my article *"Moby-Dick*: The Two 'Missing' Prints by 'H. Durand,'" in *The American Neptune*, 46:4 [Fall 1986], pp. 252–7). (Courtesy the Kendall Whaling Museum)



"In the very heart of the Leviathanic life." The second of Durand-Brager's prints *"is quite a different affair: the ship hove-to upon the open sea, and in the very heart of the Leviathanic life, with a Right Whale alongside; the vessel (in the act of cutting-in) hove over to the monster as if to a quay; and a boat, hurriedly pushing off from this scene of activity, is about giving chase to whales in the distance. The harpoons and lances lie leveled for use; three oarsmen are just setting the mast in its hole; while from a sudden roll of the sea, the little craft stands half-erect out of the water, like a rearing horse. From the ship, the smoke of the torments of the boiling whale is going up like the smoke over a village of smithies; and to windward, a black cloud, rising up with earnest of squalls and rains, seems to quicken the activity of the excited seamen"* (ch. 56). *Herman Melville's Picture Gallery* #72. (Courtesy the Kendall Whaling Museum)



Scrimshaw. As a shipboard pastime of the professional whale-hunters, scrimshaw is the literal manifestation of an experiential genre that arises organically from the Voyagers' venturing-out into Nature in pursuit of the Leviathan. *"Throughout the Pacific, and also in Nantucket, and New Bedford, and Sag Harbor, you will come across lively sketches of whales and whaling-scenes, graven by the fishermen themselves on Sperm Whale-teeth, or lady's busks wrought out of the Right Whalebone, and other like skrimshander articles, as the whalemen call the numerous little ingenious contrivances they elaborately carve out of the rough material, in their hours of ocean leisure"* (ch. 57). This noble specimen of a sperm-whale tooth, depicting the whaleship *Pacific* of Nantucket, is by Nantucket whaleman Edward Burdett (1805–1833), who engraved it at sea on the Pacific whaling grounds, ca. 1825. *Herman Melville's Picture Gallery* #77. (Courtesy the Kendall Whaling Museum)



Tools of the Trade. *"Some of them [the whalemen-artists] have little boxes of dentistical-looking implements, specially intended for the skrimshandering business. But, in general, they toil with their jack-knives alone; and, with that almost omnipotent tool of the sailor, they will turn you out anything you please, in the way of a mariner's fancy"* (ch. 57). *Herman Melville's Picture Gallery* #85. (Courtesy the Kendall Whaling Museum)

Seeker and Object (Nature). Significantly, even the name of this third chapter stands out from the rest. While the two previous chapters are each explicitly about "pictures" of whales and whaling "scenes," the third chapter has "picture" nowhere in its title. In fact, it turns out not to be about "pictures" at all. Even the title, "Of Whales in Paint; in Teeth; in Wood; in Sheet-Iron; in Stone; in Mountains; in Stars," summons forth the visible manifestations of Nature itself, components of the very essence of Creation—the elemental stuff of earth, sea, and sky—which are *seen* (or perhaps *recognized*) as whales, or hammered and carved *into* whales, by the human eye and the human hand. Through all of this, the whale, and perceptions of the whale, provide the sustaining metaphor for the discovery of artistic truth. Whether the medium be paint, or wood, or iron, or stone (or even the teeth and bones of whales themselves); or whether it be purely the insightful vision of whales in the mind's eye—the perception of cetological patterns inhering in the landscape and in the heavens—only to the true whaleman, the sensitive, experienced Seeker of Nature and Truth, who has left his armchair (where pictures can never adequately disclose fundamental truths) and gone to sea, gone out into Nature itself; only to him are these clues about essences revealed.

This is the apotheosis of Art—an art unmediated by the artificial distortions of reckless fancy, Platonistic speculation, or hubristic science, an art that is continuous with and indistinguishable from Nature, or (at least) from human nature. It is a wholly organic formulation, more than incidentally predicated on the notion of Divine Creation as Ultimate Art, where human agency—whether in the mind's eye or the actual molding of elemental clay—recapitulates the original, archetypal act of the Creator. The true Artist is a Seeker in constant creative, intuitive flux; and the artistic act is a striving towards perception of the patterns and forms that inhere in Nature, that is, in Creation itself. As Walter Bezanson put it a generation ago:

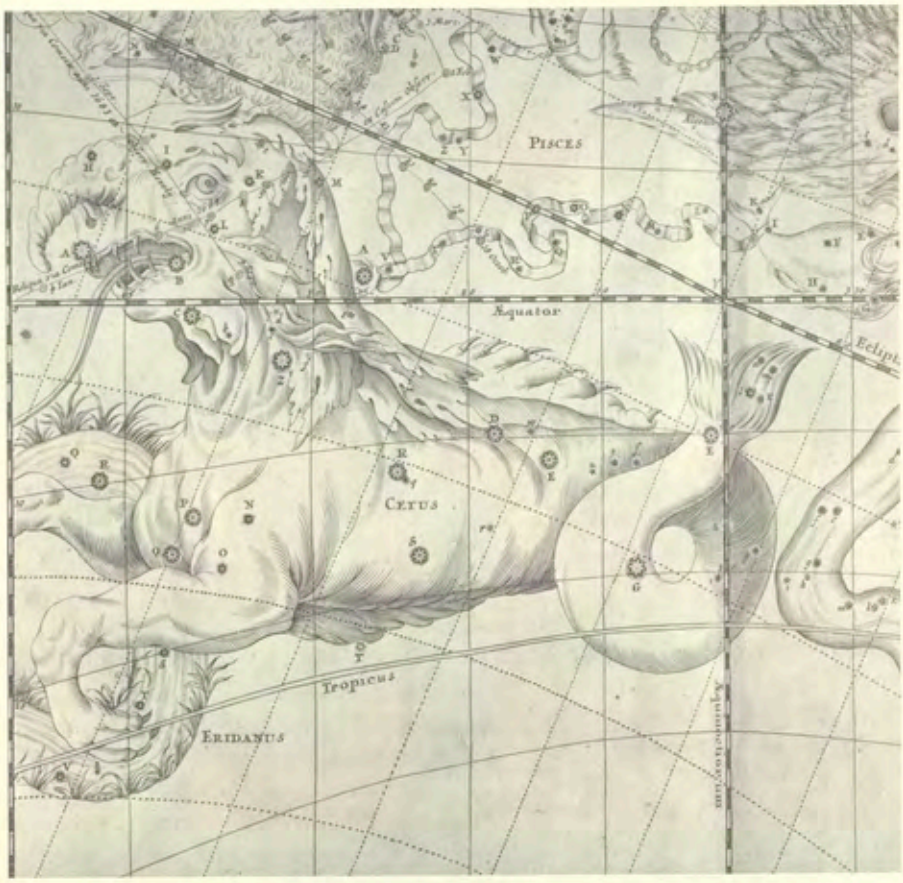
> *Moby-Dick* is [a] move from the Newtonian world-as-machine to the Darwinian world-as-organism. In the older cosmology the key concepts had been law, balance, harmony, reason; in the newer, they became origin, process, development, growth. . . . The matter of *Moby-Dick* is the organic land-sea world where life forms move mysteriously among the elements. The dynamic of the book is the organic mind-world of Ishmael whose sensibility rhythmically agitates the flux of experience. The controlling structure of the book is an organic complex of rhetoric, symbols, and interfused units. . . . In the last analysis, if one must have a prototype, here is an intensively heightened rendition of the logs, journals, and histories of the Anglo-American whaling tradition.[7]

The analogy is well placed, for in chapter 57 it is whalemen's art (such as "skrimshandering"), and the analogous creations of such "savages" as Polynesian Islanders and Albrecht Durer, that epitomize the unbroken continuity between human striving and Nature.

If, in the book as a whole, the white whale symbolizes the dynamics of an unknowable Cosmos, then the "monstrous" and "less erroneous" (but nevertheless erroneous) pictures of whales in the first two "pictorial" chapters may be said to symbolize the fundamental errors of human perception by which the Seeker is led into error regarding the world around him. In the third "pictorial" chapter, a true Art emerges, founded in the conjoined sensibilities of organic oneness with Nature. The ostensible subject matter is whales and whaling, but the ulterior theme is human perception and the fundamental dynamics of Nature and Truth. And in summoning forth the evidence of centuries, Melville is quite specific about both, as his syntax, and the "unequal cross-lights" represented by the pictures themselves, amply demonstrate.

The voyage through the picture gallery ends rapturously at the conclusion of chapter 57:

> Nor when expandingly lifted by your subject, can you fail to trace out great whales in the starry heavens, and boats in pursuit of them; as when long filled with thoughts of war the Eastern nations saw armies locked in battle among the clouds. Thus at the North have I chased Leviathan round and round the Pole with the revolutions of the bright points that first defined him to me. And beneath the effulgent Antarc-



"Starry Cetus." *"Nor when expandingly lifted by your subject, can you fail to trace out great whales in the starry heavens, and boats in pursuit of them; as when long filled with thoughts of war the Eastern nations saw armies locked in battle among the clouds. Thus at the North have I chased Leviathan round and round the Pole with the revolutions of the bright points that first defined him to me. And beneath the effulgent Antarctic skies I have boarded the Argo-Navis, and joined the chase against the starry Cetus far beyond the utmost stretch Hydrus and the Flying Fish. With a frigate's anchors for my bridle-bits and fasces of harpoons for spurs, would I could mount that whale and leap the topmost skies, to see whether the fabled heavens with all their countless tents really lie encamped beyond my mortal sight!"* (ch. 57). Detail of a famous celestial chart by Johann Gabriel Doppelmayer (1671?–1750) and the heirs of Johann Baptist Homann (1664–1724), Nuremburg, ca. 1730. *Herman Melville's Picture Gallery* #97. (Courtesy the Kendall Whaling Museum)

tic skies I have boarded the Argo-Navis, and joined the chase against the starry Cetus far beyond the utmost stretch Hydrus and the Flying Fish. With a frigate's anchors for my bridle-bits and fasces of harpoons for spurs, would I could mount that whale and leap the topmost skies, to see whether the fabled heavens with all their countless tents really lie encamped beyond my mortal sight!

Yet, of course, this brilliant note of hope notwithstanding, the book does not end there; and the crew of the *Pequod*, under the obsessive spell of Ahab, sails through the shadows of unequal cross-lights to ultimate destruction, with only one, Ishmael, "escaped alone to tell thee." Lest we find in Melville's aesthetic a sweet-and-easy formula for the salvation of Everyman, we must

heed the explicit caveat in chapter 42, ". . . In a matter like this, subtlety appeals to subtlety, and without imagination no man can follow another into these halls"; and another in the final passage of chapter 55, only partially quoted earlier:

> Any way you may look at it, you must needs conclude that the great leviathan is that one creature in the world which must remain unpainted to the last. True, one portrait may hit the mark much nearer than another, but none can hit it with any very considerable degree of exactness. So there is no earthly way of finding out precisely what the whale really looks like. And the only mode in which you can derive even a tolerable idea of his living contour, is by going a whaling yourself; but by so doing, you run no small risk of being eternally stove and sunk by him. Wherefore, it seems to me you had best not be too fastidious in your curiosity touching this Leviathan.

The Seeker is impelled to seek, and in doing so is charged to value natural truth. However, the seeking entails certain jeopardy, not only to life and limb, but to any soul who dares to peer into the Abyss.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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NOTES

[1] Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (New York: 1851); the edition quoted and cited throughout is the Norton Critical Edition, edited by Harrison Hayford and Herschel Parker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967).

[2] The characterization is borrowed from Professor David Hirsch of Brown University, to whom Melville's effective marriage of these two Romantic forms in *Moby-Dick* is testimony to Melville's poetic genius and perhaps the most significant and enduring quality of the book.

[3] The quote is from the ironic pedagogy of Professor Edward W. Sloan of Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, who spends his summers teaching in the Munson Institute of American Maritime Studies at Mystic Seaport, and with whom it has been my pleasure to share occasional seminars.

[4] Charles Robert Anderson, *Melville in the South Seas* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939).

[5] Since publication of my *Herman Melville's Picture Gallery* (Fairhaven, Massachusetts: Edward J. Lefkowicz, Inc., 1986), two seminal works have been published that are especially deserving of mention in this connection: Mary K. Bercaw's *Melville's Sources* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1987), and the revised and enlarged edition of Merton M. Sealts, Jr.'s *Melville's Reading* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988).

[6] Frank, *Melville's Picture Gallery*, p. xvii.

[7] Walter E. Bezanson, "*Moby-Dick*: Work of Art," originally published in Tyrus Hillway and Luther S. Mansfield, eds., *Moby-Dick: Centennial Essays* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1953), pp. 31–58; quoted from the Norton Critical Edition of *Moby-Dick*, p. 669.

Whalemen's Perceptions of "The High and Mighty Business of Whaling"

MARY MALLOY

I freely assert, that the cosmopolite philosopher cannot, for his life, point out one single peaceful influence, which within the last sixty years has operated more potentially upon the whole broad world, taken in one aggregate, than the high and mighty business of whaling.

Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*

The transformation of work in the wake of the Industrial Revolution left America's work force disoriented and disordered in the middle of the nineteenth century. The value of a person's work, which had previously defined status within the community and provided a measure of self-worth and identity, was now measured in America's urban areas exclusively in monetary terms. Searching for a psychological anchor in these unsettling times, Americans clung tightly to the "work ethic" that they brought with them from earlier decades and other working situations, dragging it into the factory era and hammering it into a new, more usable shape. As Daniel Rodgers states, "the work ethic belonged to a setting of artisans' shops, farms, and countinghouses";[1] but it was widely applied in the factory setting, and became so pervasive in the middle of the nineteenth century that it began to have an impact on even the isolated communities of sailors at sea.

For Yankee whalemen, the application of this ethic to their work caused a crisis of identity for individuals. Whaling had grown in the eighteenth century on Nantucket, Cape Cod, and Long Island as a communal activity; whalemen shared with farmers and craftsmen a notion that their work was useful and profitable. But whaling changed in the nineteenth century, and it was impossible for the island communities that had led the industry in an earlier day to maintain primacy with the arrival of steam trains. As the whaling business moved from Nantucket to New Bedford in the middle of the nineteenth century it became inextricably tied to the factory system. Whale oil was used to lubricate factory looms and owners of whaleships increasingly invested their profits in textiles. They then applied the factory-owner mentality of labor management to their ships, where the work force was performing exactly the same tasks they had a century before, but doing them less often over a longer period of time.

In the eighteenth century, when Nantucket was the premier whaling port in America, the whale fishery was imbued with a communal work ethic. The technology of the hunt and the guarded locations of the best whaling grounds were passed from fathers to sons, from uncles to nephews, and among trusted neighbors and friends. From an early age, a Nantucket boy was initiated "in the perils and wonders of a vocation almost immemorially the destiny of all his race."[2] Within the close-knit community, work and profits were distributed according to a man's knowledge and experience; whales were plentiful and hunting them was not only profitable, but also bold. No less a personage than Thomas

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Jefferson remarked that the "Spermacetti Whale found by the Nantuckois, is an active, fierce animal, and requires vast address and boldness in the fishermen."[3] And Daniel Webster noted that the population of Nantucket, "a very striking and peculiar portion of the National interest," added "largely every year to the National wealth by the boldest and most persevering industry."[4]

Nantucketers perfected a hand-whaling technology in the eighteenth century that persisted in America with few changes for over two-hundred years. But the communal work ethic of Nantucket did not survive with the technology. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the business of whaling was increasingly influenced by America's industrialization, and New Bedford eclipsed Nantucket as the primary port of the industry. Railroads now brought whale oil to processing plants—a service unavailable to the island of Nantucket—and the numbers of ships and men involved grew. Crews were made up of unrelated strangers and the earlier profit-sharing practice was corrupted into the exploitive "lay" system, wherein each man received a predetermined percentage of the final profits of the voyage. The lay system was disguised to look like profit-sharing, and since, as Daniel Rodgers points out, "labor at the beck and call of another was not among the ideals even of work-obsessed, mid-nineteenth century Northerners,"[5] it gave the impression that each man worked for himself, with his shipmates as partners. After their expenses were deducted, inexperienced "greenhands," who had signed on for as little as a 1/200th percentage or "lay" of the profits, made very little money and could even return from a long voyage owing money to the ship's owners.

The transformation of the whaling industry in the nineteenth century left whalemen, like factory workers of the same period, struggling to maintain a self-identity that was based on the traditions of an earlier century when their work had been seen as brave, skilled, noble, and dangerous. Now, as whaleships left from larger ports, they were increasingly filled with farm laborers recently transplanted to urban areas, ex-prisoners or ex-soldiers, and foreigners, who either signed on in New Bedford or were recruited in the Azores, Cape Verde, or Hawaiian Islands. A song popular among whalemen proclaimed that "They advertised in Boston New York and Buffalo"[6] for whalemen, and Benjamin Franklin Gallup, a whaleman aboard the bark *South America* of New Bedford, described the crew of his ship in an original song entitled "One Year in a Blubber Hunter" in 1855.[7]

Come all ye young and jolly lads, come listen to my song,
T'is of a blubber hunter which in Bedford does belong.
T'was in the year of 55, that she from Bedford went,
And when we had been out a year, we had'ent made a cent.

We had on board a mixed up crew, as ever went to sea,
The nations they did number 10, besides the Pourtigee
Some were white, and some were black, and some to sea were sent
And some had been to great expense, to our Federal Government.

Because the positive values of the work ethic were so often associated with farming, whalemen took to describing their work using pastoral metaphors. "Twas the ploughing of the raging sea was always my delight,"[8] begins one song, but the impact of the mechanized age was pervasive. Melville sent his hero Ishmael out of Nantucket rather than New Bedford to send him back to an earlier time and ethic, but the machine was already on board ship. Captain Ahab, his panbone stump planted in a hole in the quarterdeck, circles around and around, and says that "my one cogged circle fits into all [the crew's] various wheels, and they revolve."[9]

When Herman Melville published *Moby-Dick* in 1851 the New Bedford whaling industry was at its peak, but "had somehow come to be regarded among landsmen as a rather unpoetical and disreputable pursuit."[10] Two hundred and seventy-six Yankee whaleships returned that year with half a million barrels of oil and over four million pounds of baleen.[11] New seas were being explored by American whalemen in the Arctic, Antarctic, and Pacific Oceans, but the expansion of the whaling grounds and the depletion of whale stocks meant that voyages

were getting longer and whales were getting scarcer. By 1851, the average voyage lasted forty-six months; the average catch for such a voyage was forty whales. The resulting lifestyle for the men involved in the business was one that alternated short bursts of intense, dangerous activity with weeks or months of interminable tedium. Whalemen found that the harsh reality of a four-year voyage was far from the noble and profitable voyage of their expectations.

The fact that so much of a voyage was necessarily spent in idleness must have been profoundly disturbing to men raised to think that to be idle was to be sinful. In the 1830s, Lucy Larcom had reflected that in her youth she had been "penetrated through every fibre of thought with the idea that idleness is a disgrace. It was taught with the alphabet and the spelling-book; it was enforced by precept and example, at home and abroad; and it is to be confessed that it did sometimes haunt the childish imagination almost mercilessly."[12]

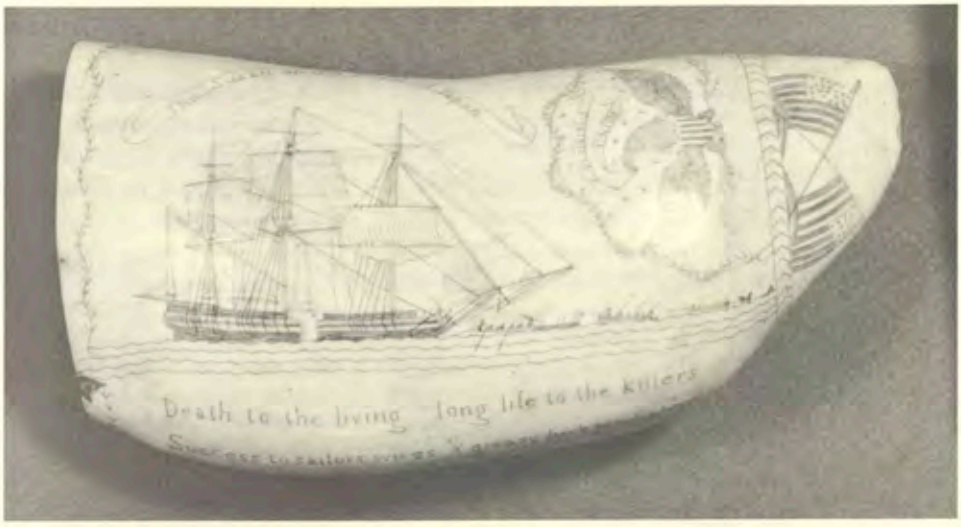
And yet, in their songs, sketches, scrimshaw, and journals, whaling men continued to describe their profession with good humor and with a relentless eye on that small portion of the voyage that defined their industry and themselves—the actual battle with the whale. While they also documented the tedium and exploitation of the business, the hunt itself, with all its attendant dangers, remained the central image of the whaling voyage for American whalemen in the nineteenth century. This working identity was explored and re-explored in all of the leisure activities on shipboard.

The majority of the voyage actually consisted of sailing to, on, between, and from the whaling grounds, which were located in all of the world's oceans. Yankee whaleships regularly hunted in the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, and Arctic Oceans, as well as in the Bering Sea and the Seas of Japan and Okhotsk. If there was a chance of seeing whales, men would be stationed at the mastheads to watch for them to surface for air. Melville noted, without exaggeration, that "in one of those southern whalemen, on a long three or four years' voyage, as often happens, the sum of the various hours you spend at the mast-head would amount to several entire months."[13] Lookouts were posted in extremes of temperature on the voyage, and the job could be boring and hypnotic, but the success of all depended on the sighting of whales. One sailor, aboard the ship *Columbus* of Fairhaven, complained repeatedly in his 1843–44 journal about the lax attitude of Captain Fish that would inevitably end in his own loss.[14]

> Thursday, May 16th 1844 . . . no Second Mate at the mast Head rather a Cold morning a very Bad example to sett the Ships Crew not to be at the mast Head to look out fore Whales I wonder the Capt don't look at such things he must think the men will not cair about looking out when they see that the Officers are so deletarey at looking . . .

When whales were spotted, the call of "She Blows" to the crew below triggered a well-rehearsed flurry of activity. Boats hanging from davits on either side of the ship were lowered. Each boat was manned by a crew of six—an officer, a harpooneer (or "boatsteerer"), and four seamen who rowed or sailed the boat after the whale. Only the officer at the steering oar in the stern of the boat could see the prey, and he would inculcate his men with "the religion of rowing," urging them forward with taunts, threats, or words of encouragement.[15] When he determined that they were close enough to the whale for a harpoon to be thrown with a good chance of sticking, he would call to the harpooneer at the bow oar. The harpooneer would stand up, turn around, brace himself by placing his knee in a notch created for that purpose, pick up the harpoon placed at the ready, and thrust it into the whale with all of his strength. The whale in its agony would then usually swim off, sometimes at extraordinary speeds, towing the boat behind it. When the wounded animal tired from the weight of the boat and loss of blood, the whaleboat's crew would pull themselves up to the whale. The officer would then trade places with the harpooneer and kill the whale with a lance.

This process was well described in several songs popular on whaleships in the nineteenth century. One, "Sperm Whaling Song," was found in three journals at the Kendall Whaling



A "*Susan*'s tooth," carved by Frederick Myrick aboard the Nantucket whaleship *Susan* in 1829, depicts her cutting in near the coast of Japan. (Courtesy Peabody Museum of Salem, photo by Mark Sexton)

Museum by Dr. Stuart M. Frank. One of the versions was recorded by Mrs. John McInnes, wife of the captain of the bark *Josephine* of San Francisco, who accompanied her husband on a whaling voyage in 1891–92. This particular version captures the spirit and action of the hunt, and instills a communal "pride of nation."[16]

Lo as the sun from its ocean bed springing
Bright o're the waters its glittering beams glows
When from the mast head came the joyful cry Ringing
"A whale off the lea beam, a whale there she blows . . .
Now row hardies row, for the pride of you nation,
Row hardies row, give way all you know,
Now if you've blood give it free circulation,
Give way my lads give way all you know . . ."

This portion of the voyage, from the call of the lookout to the killing of the whale, was more often described by whalemen than any other, and it was popular in every medium. The earliest pieces of scrimshaw that entered an American collection were two sperm whale's teeth, carved by whaleman Frederick Myrick aboard the ship *Susan* of Nantucket off the coast of Japan in 1829. These early Nantucket teeth epitomize the early sense of boldness and danger, and the majority of teeth that can be dated to the same period show whaling scenes of a similar nature. While women replaced whaling as the favorite subject of scrimshanders in the later nineteenth century, many whaling scenes survive, and the majority of those showing any whaling activity display some combination of ships, boats, and whales involved in an active hunt.

The most important moments in this furious activity were when the whale was first struck by the harpooneer and when the officer drove in the lance for the kill. The former was the subject of the chorus of one of the most popular of whaling songs.[17]

So, be cheery, my lads! may your hearts never fail!
While the bold harpooneer is striking the whale!

The killing of the whale by the officer was a moment even more dramatic, following as it did the frantic "Nantucket sleighride" when the boat was towed by the whale, and when the crew of the boat was in the greatest danger from the animal's jaw and tail. The journal of R. G. N. Swift, a seaman on the ship *Contest* of New Bedford, contains an extraordinarily poetic description of this battle. Entitled "Wood and Black Skin," this excerpt describes the moment of the kill, when the boat is drawn up almost onto the whale's back. It begins after the whale has been harpooned and has hauled the boat away from the ship. The officer in the boat, in this case the first mate, and the harpooneer have just traded places.[18]

And the mate yelled-WOOD AND BLACK SKIN!
When he stood in the whaleboat's bow
"NOW PULL ME UP TO THAT WHALE!" he said
And he dashed the sweat from his brow
"Just lay me on, and give me a SETT
And I'll make it worth your while
For the whale that's running ahead of us there
Has a hundred barrels of ile

The promise of profit becomes inspiration for hard work, and the crew pulls the boat up to the whale by hauling on the harpoon line embedded in his flank.

"WOOD AND BLACK-SKIN!" The mad crew yelled
As wildly they tagged and hauled
"WE'LL BEACH THE BOAT ON THE WHALE'S BARE BACK!"
And we staggered and strained and bawled. . . .
Shoulder to shoulder we pulled with a will
We lost, we gained, we lost
As the blistering line slipped through our clutch
When the flying boat was tossed . . .

When the boat has been brought virtually onto the whale's back, the mate kills it with repeated stabbings from his long-handled lance. The violent rocking of the boat in the whale's wake makes the job difficult and dangerous.

. . . But at last she ran on an even keel
For one short instant's space
Then the mate stood high and thrust deep down
With an iron look on his face
And as he recovered his twisted lance
He straightened it on the rail
Then steadied himself on his feet again
And thrust it deep in the whale

The mate can tell that he has killed the whale only when the lungs are punctured and the whale exhales blood through the blow hole. On a particularly big whale, like the one described here, the blood would shower out.

Then he suddenly cried—THERE'S TAR! THERE'S TAR!
As the whale's spout reddened and threw
Barrels of thick black blood to the sky
Which rained in a hideous dew
And the great whale LOB-TAILED and smote the sea
With the sound of a cannon shot
While the crimson foam rose up like a wall
And the black spout rained down hot

In its death throes, the whale would thrash around, violently smacking the sea with its flukes, and the thirty-foot whaleboat was in imminent danger. At this point the mate orders them to back away.

STERN ALL! STERN ALL! We backed away
To wait till the whale was dead
While each man sat to his knees in blood
And he saw his comrades red
BAIL OUT! BAIL OUT! We bailed with a will
And through the blood stained air
The sea birds circled and swooped and shrieked
And fought for the blood clots there

One of the particularly moving parts of this poem is the sense of community and comradery that is shared when the whale is dead and the boat's crew is waiting for the ship to pick them up. All of their expectations are fulfilled, and their self-image is firmly established.

When the boat was bailed and washed "SMOKE, OH!"
The soothing pipe was passed
Each man sank and lay where he dropped
For the fight was finished at last
Each sailor felt that his strength was done
Most grateful it was to feel
The fearful tension relaxed at last
And the boat on an even keel . . .

"Wood and Black Skin" is a remarkable description of what whalemen perceived to be the best thing about whaling. This bold and noble encounter with the world's largest creature defines the "high and mighty business of whaling" as a whaleman himself saw it. On the best possible voyage, every lowering of the boats would end with the pipes being passed around in the boat, as the crew waited for the ship to come and collect them and their successful kill.

But whalemen's journals show that the vast majority of lowerings were not so successful. The harpooneer could miss the whale, or the harpoon could draw out; the whale could smash the boat with his tail or crush it in his jaws; or a dead whale could sink while being towed back to the ship or while tied alongside. The ship *Bowditch* of Bristol, Rhode Island, had an extraordinarily successful voyage under Captain Ramsdell in 1836–38, at one point killing so many whales that their cooper could not keep up with the

demand for barrels. But the journal of an unidentified member of the crew shows that they also lost a good number of whales after extremely arduous hunts.[19]

Saturday 8 July 1837:

4 hands Sick A Strong Breeze from the Northward and very Rugged 3 Boats went off to take our Whale in tow but could not find him found Another dead Whale adrift 1 Boat took him in tow it being so Rugged, tore the Stern off her as She came on Board the other 2 Boats went to look for the dead whale and could not find him they fastened to Another Killed him and he sunk one boat . . . sent Another boat off to take the dead whale in tow that we found. the wind shifted and Brought him to leward of the Ship so they left him and came on board for an Anchor finally it being so rugged concluded to let him go took the boat up after wards it Moderated lowerd the Boat to go and Anchor him the after tackle hooked into the stern and tore the stern off of her took her up again Night came on the other Boats came on Board so Ends the Larboard and Waist Boats Stove hard luck saw A great many Whales near the Ship

Wednesday 25 October 1836:

A Strong Breeze and Rugged Saw Whales Lowered and Chased but did not strike came onboard toward Night saw Whales Lowered and struck and he took the Line Came on board and shortened Sail Whales blowing us out of Water at Daylight saw more Whales Lowered and struck one Killed him and he sunk capsized the Boat and lost the Line so ends

Monday 9 July 1837:

First part Fine Pleasant weather saw Whales Lowerd and struck one Killed him and he inclined to sink but by the aid of 4 Boats we got him to the Ship Just at that time it Came on to Blow A severe Gale from SW however we got A Large Fluke Chain on to the Whale and Another on to his Fin and A stout rope on to his Head and made Sail on the Ship to get off Shore at 3PM we wore Ship in order to Cut our Whale to Leward when the head rope parted and the Whale sunk under we were obliged [to] wear Ship again to bring him up in comeing round Parted the Fluke and Fin Chains and the Whale sunk and we saw no more of him Latter part it Moderated So Ends

A more philosophical sailor on the less successful voyage of the ship *Phenix* [*sic*], of New Bedford, reported similar bad luck in 1849.[20] Tuesday 23 March 1849: "lowered for whales but as usal was unsuccessful." 32 [*sic*] March 1849: "lowered for whales. bad luck again."

Monday 16 April 1849:

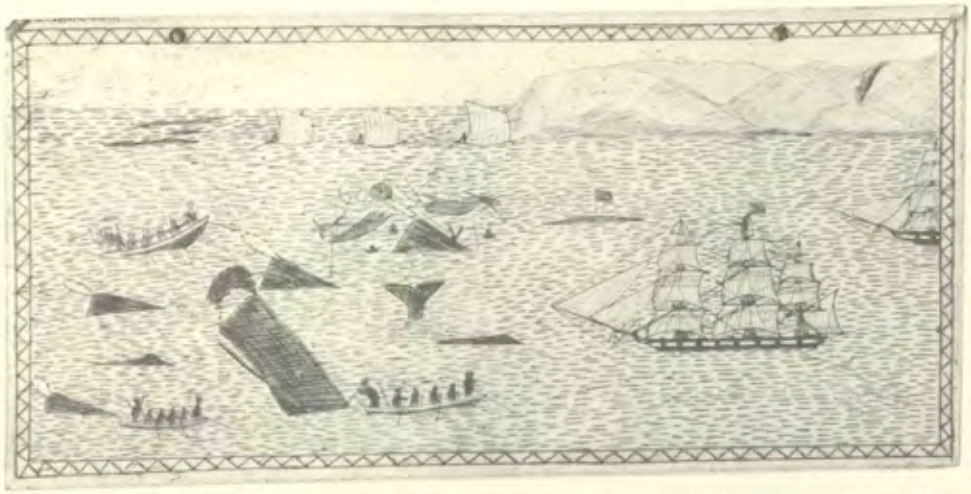
saw whales lowered and struck one . . . he was a real devel. after being fast to him about four hours he went off by taking the line. there was attached to him 12 irons 4 lances two lines and a half 2 drugs one spade and he capsized the starboard boat. success to him I say.

Along with the frustration of losing the whale and valuable equipment, whalemen faced the dangers of being killed, injured, or towed by the whale beyond where their ship could find them. Melville begged his reading public to consider the dangers faced by the whalemen who provided them with light and oil.[21]

Yet I tell you that upon one particular voyage which I made to the Pacific, among many others, we spoke thirty different ships, every one of which had had a death by a whale, some of them more than one, and three that had each lost a boat's crew. For God's sake, be economical with your lamps and candles! not a gallon you burn, but at least one drop of man's blood was spilled for it.

Sperm whales could easily destroy whaleboats with either their powerful tail flukes or their twenty-foot jaws. Whalemen illustrated these disasters in scrimshaw on sperm whale teeth or pieces of the whale's jaw or "panbone," and in their journals and sketchbooks. One such incident happened to a boat's crew from the ship *Phenix* of New Bedford on Monday, 23 September 1850.[22]

First part fine weather and moderate wind saw a lone whale lowerd and struck him in striking him the boatsteerer did not get but one iron in. in the act of throwing the second iron in the whale turned for the boat took her in his Jaw and bit her in two pieces. hurt one man pretty badly. this was the waist boat. the bow boat came and picked us up and the Larboard gave chase. when within a short distance of the whale he turned for her threw his Jaw through her and capsizing her. it was near night and we lost the whale.



This piece of panbone shows a variety of whaling activities. At lower left a whaleboat approaches a sperm whale as the harpooneer prepares to dart his iron. Above left, a boatheader cuts the whale line as a whale drags his boat under. To the right, a sperm whale smashes a whaleboat in two. The whale in the foreground spouts blood as the mate's lance pierces its lungs. At top, three boats under sail tow three whales back to the ship. A dead whale, with a waif (flag) claiming ownership by a vessel, floats at right center. (M.S.M. 81.64.17)

The dangers that whalemen faced were so much a part of their job that sometimes they seemed almost inured to the life-and-death nature of their struggle. When the cooper of the *Columbus* fell from aloft and was killed on Friday, 1 December 1843, one of his shipmates entered it into his journal among the rest of the days sail changing and deck activities. The entry is not without remorse, but is still presented and received as an unavoidable matter-of-fact part of the voyage.[23]

Commencing with strong and Cloudy weather the Carpenter and Cooper variousley Employed the Boat Steerers makeing boats Sails at 9.30 PM Squalley took one reefe in the F Top Sail and double reefed the Mizzen Top Sail. houlled down the Jib and up Main-sail at 10.30 PM Clued down the F Top Sail and went up to take in the second reefe when by sum axcident the Cooper fell from the Starbd Quarter of the F T Sail yard on to the Fore Castle and was Killd on the spot haveing fractured his Scull he died without so much as a grone at 8 AM Shortned Sail and rounded too on the Larbd Tack to Preforme the Melencoly duty of Burieng the Cooper the Capt red the Booriel Servis and at 9 AM his Bodey was commited to the Deep after Laying the usual time we then made sail and persued our course at Noon moderate weather.

If a whale was successfully killed and towed back to the ship without incident, then the messy business of cutting-in and trying-out began. Because the body of a whale was too large to come aboard the deck of a ship, it was flensed alongside, with large strips of blubber winched aboard and cut into smaller pieces. The oil was rendered out of the pieces of blubber in two big iron trypots in the brick tryworks on the ship's deck. Manning the tryworks was definitely the worst part of the voyage. William Abbe, a sailor on board the *Atkins Adams*, described it in his journal on 17 July 1859.[24]

To turn out at midnight & put on clothes soaked in oil—to go on deck & work for Eighteen hours among blubber—slipping—& stumbling on the sloppy decks—till you are covered from crown to heel with oil—Eating with oily hands—oily grub—drinking from oily pots till your mouth & lips have a nauseating oily taste—turning in for a few hours sleep—after wiping off your bare body with oakum to take off the thickest of the oil & then to dream you are under piles of blubber that are heaping & falling upon you till you wake up with a suffocating sense of fear & agony only to hear the eternal clank of the cutting machine & the roar of the fires under the try works—or the wind dismally howling through the rigging—to fall asleep only to dream again till you are called on deck to [c]lean off the raw blubber . . . to stand under the lee of the tryworks—cutting up & carrying to casks

the soaked & dripping case—till your eyes smart with pain & your mouth is filled with suffocating black smoke from the chimneys—that rools out in thick wretching volumes—to slip in pools of raw oil—to handle hot scraps or boil the boiling oil that splutters and splatters on your face & hands till they burn—to be weary—dirty—oily—sleepy—sick—disgusted with yourself & everybody & everything . . . to go through such a scene—I confess the very thought turns my stomach & dizzies my head—yet I am not foolish enough to wish this valuable ship to be idle—I hope she will do well—

Abbe was not alone in hating the work but wishing for more of it. Aboard the *Columbus* of Fairhaven, one man felt that the captain and officers were not asking for enough work from the men, a weakness that the men would pay for in the end with lost profits.[25]

Sunday, June 23d [1844] . . . the works mught have been a light at day light if that he had been attend to his duty and not have been delaying time he seemes to Cair verey little about making a voyage he has Showen it on Several ocasions and I doubte not but the voyage will suffer greatley by the insuficiency of the Officers the Chief Mate has been of[f] Duty ever since that the Sundy that the whale run over the Boate and Drowned a man, and the Third mate had been in his boate ever Since it is not likely that he is able to do much as he never headed a boate before their is a boate Laying idle some may call ourselves only a three boate Ship but Capt Tuk knows best weather they preforme thair Duty to his satisfaction I know this that neather the first nor Second Mate ar able to fullfill the Stations that thay now hold, at Noon No Observation

Manning the tryworks was the worst and most degrading part of a whaleman's job—analogous to the butcher's job ashore, but more dangerous. Captain Robert Brown of the bark *Emerald*, reported on 30 December 1840 that crewman Joseph Jackson fell into a pot of boiling whale oil and lived for twelve painful hours before his death.[26] And it was not unknown for try pots to explode as they did aboard the *Bowditch* on 29 October 1837.[27]

Not surprisingly, far less time was spent depicting the horrible and ignoble work of rendering the whale than was spent showing its capture. There are no tryworks scenes among the illustrated scrimshaw at the Peabody Museum, the Kendall Whaling Museum, or Mystic Seaport Museum. Even in sketchbooks and journals, where sailors had greater flexibility and were often interested in detailing aspects of life on shipboard, depictions of men at the tryworks are rare.

The thrill and danger of the hunt and the oily stench of manning the tryworks were the most

Whalemen seldom depicted the drudgery aboard ship, such as trying out oil from blubber. One who did was an uncommon whaleman aboard the bark *Clara Bell*, 1855–58. He was Robert Weir, son of artist Robert W. Weir and brother of artists John F. and Julian A. Weir. (Log 146, G. W. Blunt White Library)



essential parts of every whaling voyage. They produced the profits for owners and crew, and defined the industry and the men who worked in it as unique. But they took up a small percentage of the time at sea. Melville, who noted that several months of every voyage were spent at the masthead, claimed that in a "South Sea Sperm Whaler" voyage of four years, "filling her hold with oil, does not, perhaps, consume fifty days in the business of boiling out."[28] The daily logs and journals of mid-century voyages bear this out.

As men signed on to a whaling voyage for as long as it took to fill the hold with oil, the lengthening voyages of the nineteenth century took their toll. This was especially true as a sailor realized that a long, unsuccessful voyage could mean that he had "spent four long years of his life, and not earned a single red cent."[29]

Richard Boyenton, aboard the Salem ship *Bengal*, heard in May of 1834 that his voyage would be much longer than planned.[30]

I have heard to day that our capt intends prolonging this voyage 15 (or 16) months longer if that is the case I hope he will be obliged to drive a Snail through the dismal Swamp in dog dayes with hard peas in his shoes and suck a sponge for nourishment he had ought to have the tooth ache for amusement and a bawling child to rock him to sleepe.

On New Year's Day, 1849, a crew member of the New Bedford ship *Phenix*, already out a year and a half, found himself contemplating the possibility of another three years at sea![31]

well here's another year commenced, its to be hoped under more favourable auspices than the last. At anyrate we shall go a much different route this year than we did the last. . . . If we are successful we shall be at "home" by the time we are 40 months out. if not, (O dear; I dread to look past that period;) we shall probably stop until '52 . . . But hang care it killed the cat.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, many journal keepers lamented the long time between whales. The ship *Acushnet* of Fairhaven (on whose previous voyage Melville had served) left its home port on 16 July 1845 and had caught only one whale by 1 July 1846.[32] George H. Folger, mate of the *Para* under Captain Daniel F. Worth, reported a similar dismal tale in his log of their voyage of 1867–71. They took their first whales on 23 April 1868 and then went until 3 December before their next successful strike. On 20 February 1869, they killed a massive 107-barrel bull sperm whale, but were unlucky for the next nine months! Folger frequently made the entry, "Where are the whales?"[33]

This situation left whalemen with a tremendous amount of time on their hands, much of which was spent keeping the ship and equipment in order. "All kinds of work going on at once," noted the keeper of the *Phenix* journal in 1847, "Coopering Carpendering blacksmithing & sailoring." He specifically mentions mending rigging and sails, painting boats, drawing and knotting yarns, "picking over potatoes," and making mats among his jobs.[34] Ishmael and Queequeg also were "mildly employed weaving what is called a sword-mat, for an additional lashing to [their] boat."[35] If right whales were killed, then the processing of their baleen or "whalebone" always consumed some of the sailors' time. On the *Phenix* there were many afternoons of "scraping bone" and "bundling bone."[36]

George Wilbur Piper, a whaleman aboard the *Europa* in 1868–70, described some of the tiresome deck work in the chorus to a song which he titled simply "Whaling Song."[37]

Scraping, scrubbing all the day
Always to work, and never to play
And if you say a word the devil is to pay
When you go a voyage a whaling.

A captain would sometimes try to influence the leisure activities of his crew. Frederick Cady, who shipped on board the *Julian* of New Bedford in June of 1847, mentioned in the first week out that there was fiddling and dancing one fair evening, but "in the morning Capt came on deck with an armfull of Bibles and Testaments to distribute among the men." A week later, the "Captain came into the forecastle and took all the playing cards he could find and threw them overboard," depriving the sailors of one of their favorite activities.[38]

Things became so boring on the *Phenix* that

the men "had quite a spree catching a Rat. Something to stir the blood a little" on the day after Christmas 1847.[39] A few months later another unfortunate rat became the object of a hunt that was described in much greater, and gorier, detail than any whale killed on the voyage.

While whalemen shared many common leisure activities with other sailors, their much longer and more tedious voyages gave them more time to pursue them. The bones and teeth of whales gave whalemen a unique medium for whittling and engraving. The word "scrimshaw" might come from an archaic Dutch word for "wasting time," and that is exactly what it did on shipboard. Sperm whale teeth were scarce at times and plentiful at times, but were never wasted; a man would lavish hours on the preparation and carving of the tooth. Into it he could pour his anxiety and frustrations over the job, and through it he could articulate the unspoken images that were constantly going through his mind. The pictures on whale's teeth are remarkably consistent. The hunt was the aspect of the voyage most often represented, but there were plenty of other nautical scenes as well, including ship portraits and naval battles. By the middle of the nineteenth century, images of women predominated, many of them copied from fashion magazines like *Godey's Ladies Book*. A review of 468 images of 282 pictorial whales' teeth at Mystic Seaport, the Kendall Whaling Museum, and the Peabody Museum of Salem brought the following results: 213 depictions of women; 169 depictions of ships; and 135 whaling scenes, of which the vast majority showed an active hunt. The rest of the images include flora and fauna, portraits of famous persons, sailors, anchors, patriotic themes, and landmarks.

Scrimshanding was an important way of passing the time on many ships. On the 1860–64 voyage of the bark *Kathleen*, two men were singled out in verse as particular masters of the art.[40]

Mr. Harper is our fourth mate a cooper by trade
And if its a keg or a cask you'd have made
A box to be scrimshoned a desk or a swift
Just ask Mr. Sharps and he'll give you a lift
The Carpenter swears if I his name do write
He'll kick, and he'll tear, and he'll somebody fight
But it's useless for him to be taking such paines
He's famous for his boxes, likewise for his canes.

Along with scrimshaw, other activities were developed on whaleships beyond the level of artistry and technical skill generally achieved on other kinds of ships. The keeping of journals and sketchbooks and a highly developed musical culture helped whalemen pass the leisure time on shipboard. Fortunately, they also survive as a record of the prevailing attitudes about the work being done.

Another song from the papers of the bark *Kathleen* epitomizes the changing nature of the whaling business from the Nantucket ethic of the eighteenth century to the industrialized management style of the nineteenth century. In the song "A Voyage on New Holland," the frustration of being in business for someone else's profit is clearly articulated.[41]

For the owners at home a few words I will say
We'll do all the work and they'll get all the pay
You will say to yourself tis a curious note
But don't growl for some day you may chance steer a boat

When you fast to a whale running risk of your life
Your shingling his houses and dressing his wife
Your sending his daughter off to the high school
When your up to your middle in grease you great fool.

A true and honest reflection of the popular attitude of New Bedford whalemen of the late 1850s, this sentiment would never have been shared by the Nantucketers of even a few decades earlier. First Mate Starbuck aboard Melville's *Pequod* spoke for them when he said "This at least is duty; duty and profit hand in hand."[42] The hope of profit continued to inspire whalemen throughout the nineteenth century, carrying them through trying times and bringing them back to earth when nature transported them beyond the whaleship; as in this instance aboard the *Phenix* on 17 May 1848: "A most splended unruffled surface, as far as the eye can reach. there is scarcely any motion to the ship. all this is very beautiful, but it will not carry us to purpose."[43]

What this sailor is so poignantly articulating

is really the internalized struggle between the actual nature of the whaling business by the middle of the century, and the work ethic that dominated American culture at the same time. Rodgers outlines the four basic components of this ethic as the doctrine of usefulness, the fear of idleness, the dream of success, and faith in work as a creative act.[44]

The hoped-for profit seldom materialized outside of the close-knit whaling culture of Nantucket. The lack of a return on a four-year investment of time sent many of the farmers, who ventured into whaling's "rough, tough life of toil and strife," back to the land at the end of a voyage.[45] Back on shore, the reasons for going and the voyage itself would take on a more romantic hue as time passed, and yarns spun about the days on a blubber hunter could inspire a new generation of unsuspecting greenhands to follow their American dream on the deck of a ship.[46]

I WAS ONCE A SAILOR

Yes I was once a sailor lad
I plowed the restless sea
I saw the sky look fair and glad
And I felt proud and free

Experience sad hope's brilliant view
Like mist dissolved away
I found small harvest did accrue
To plowmen of the sea

I found my team would rage and rove
'Twas but the fickle wind
That plowing o'er the rolling sea
No furrow left behind

Days have passed by I'm snug on shore
Safe from the sea's alarms
I have a never failing store
A fifteen acre farm

Oh sweet it is to till the soil
'Neath our New England sky
And sweet when I have eased my toil
To muse on days gone by.

NOTES

[1] Daniel T. Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1974), p. xi.

[2] Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, Norton Critical Edition, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), p. 435.

[3] Thomas Jefferson's Whale Memorial to the French minister in 1778, in *Moby-Dick*, p. 6.

[4] Report of Daniel Webster's Speech in the U.S. Senate, on the application for the erection of a breakwater at Nantucket, 1828, in *Moby-Dick*, pp. 9–10.

[5] Rodgers, *Work Ethic*, p. 30.

[6] Stuart M. Frank, "Ballads and Songs of the Whale Hunters," Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1985, Song #160, from the journal of George Wilbur Piper, ship *Europa* (1868–70) in the Kendall Whaling Museum, Sharon, Massachusetts. Hereafter, songs are cited by their numbers in Frank's dissertation.

[7] Frank #168, from the journal of Benjamin Franklin Gallup, bark *South America* of New Bedford (1855–59), in the Kendall Whaling Museum.

[8] Traditional whaling song.

[9] Melville, *Moby-Dick*, p. 147.

[10] Ibid., p. 98.

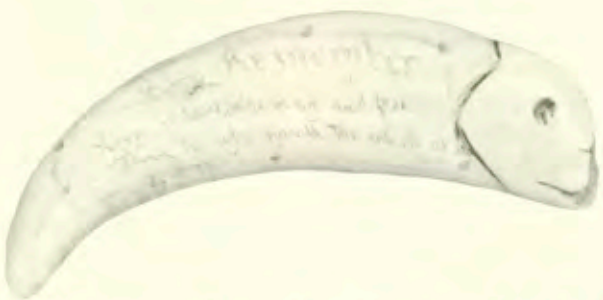
[11] Statistics generated from Alexander Starbuck's *History of the American Whale Fishery*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1876).

[12] Quoted in Rodgers, *Work Ethic*, p. 11.

[13] Melville, *Moby-Dick*, p. 137.

[14] Journal of the ship *Columbus* of Fairhaven on a voyage from New Bedford to the South Pacific Ocean and Northwest Coast of America, in the Peabody Museum of Salem, Massachusetts.

[15] Melville, *Moby-Dick*, p. 188.



"Remember / Never is heart more brave and free / Than he who hunts the whale at sea," reads the whaleman's inscription on this carved tooth. (M.S.M. 47.1381)

[16] Frank #159. Full text of song:

Lo as the sun from its ocean bed springing
Bright o're the waters its glittering beams glows
When from the mast head came the joyful cry Ringing
"A whale off the lea beam, a whale there she blows"

Call up your sleepers then, larboard and starboard men.
Your main yard aback and your boats clear away.
Hard off the lea beam, see the white waters gleam,
Making the foam into garlands of spray.

Lo! the leviathan in vastness is laying.
Making the deep his voluptuous bed.
Waryly around him the sea birds are flying
And foaming billows dash o're his head.

Broad high and sinewy, there goes his "black flukes,"
As slowly and stately he sinks in the main.
Now peak your oars awhile, rest from your watery toil,
Waiting and watching his riseing again.

Now row hardies row, for the pride of your nation,
Row hardies row, give way all you know,
Now if you've blood give it free circulation,
Give way my lads give way all you know

Now see each boat advance, gaily as to the dance
Flitting like shadows across the blue main.
Stand up and give him some send both your irons home.
Cheerily stern all, trim the boat, give him line.

Fins and flukes are now in commotion
Black skin and boats too are clearing the spray.
Loud now and shrill, sounds his pipe on the ocean,
Wounded and sore, he brings too in dismay

Haul line every man, gather in all you can,
Your lance and your spade from your thwarts clear away,
Now take your oars again each now and every man,
Safely and surely we'll hold him in play.

Wounded and sore, yet with strength undiminished,
Madly he lashes the sea in his ire,
Till a lance in his life and his struggle is finished.
Slowly he sinks with his spout hole on fire.

Now hear the joyful shout, free from each seaman stout
Awaking the deep in its turbulent roar.
Now from his spout-hole high see the red signal fly,
Slowly he dies and the conquest is o're.

[17] Melville, *Moby-Dick*, p. 150; see also Frank #161.

[18] Frank #183, from the journal of R. G. N. Swift, seaman on the ship *Contest* of New Bedford (1866–70), in the collection of the Kendall Whaling Museum; quoted in "The Peripatetic Whaling Wiles of R. G. N. Swift, Whaleman-Songwriter: and the Greatest Whaling Poem Ever Composed," 9th Annual Symposium on Traditional Music of the Sea, Mystic Seaport Museum, June 1988.

[19] Journal of the ship *Bowditch* of Bristol, Rhode Island: "Journal of a whaling cruise to the Pacific Ocean, 1836–38, Ramsdell, master," in the Peabody Museum of Salem, Massachusetts.

[20] Journal of the ship *Phenix* of New Bedford, in the Kendall Whaling Museum.

[21] *Melville, Moby-Dick*, p. 178.

[22] Journal of ship *Phenix*.

[23] Journal of ship *Columbus*.

[24] Quoted in Margaret S. Creighton, *Dogwatch and Liberty Days* (Salem: Peabody Museum of Salem, 1982), pp. 26–27.

[25] Journal of ship *Columbus*.

[26] Journal of the bark *Emerald* of New Bedford, in the Peabody Musuem of Salem.

[27] Journal of ship *Bowditch*.

[28] Melville, *Moby-Dick*, p. 344.

[29] "Wings of a Goney," traditional whaling song.

[30] Journal of the ship *Bengal* of Salem, Richard Boyenton, keeper, in the Essex Institute, Salem, Massachusetts; quoted in Creighton, *Dogwatch and Liberty Days*, p. 21.

[31] Journal of ship *Phenix*.

[32] Journal of the ship *Acushnet* of Fairhaven (1845–47), Captain William B. Rodgers, in the Peabody Museum of Salem.

[33] Journal of the ship *Para*, Captain Daniel F. Worth, George H. Folger, mate and keeper (1867–71), in the Peabody Museum of Salem.

[34] Journal of ship *Phenix*.

[35] Melville, *Moby-Dick*, p. 185.

[36] Journal of ship *Phenix*.

[37] Frank #171.

[38] Journal of the ship *Julian* of New Bedford, commenced 20 June 1847 by F. Cady, in the Kendall Whaling Museum.

[39] Journal of ship *Phenix*.

[40] Frank #185, from the papers of Elizabeth Marble, voyage of the bark *Kathleen* (1860–64), in the Kendall Whaling Museum.

[41] Frank #184, from the Marble Family Papers, these verses, of seventy-two, were written by John C. Sullivan, third mate of the bark *Kathleen* (1857–60), Marble Papers, the Kendall Whaling Museum.

[42] Melville, *Moby-Dick*, p. 188.

[43] Journal of ship *Phenix*.

[44] Rodgers, *Work Ethic*, p. 12.

[45] "Rolling Down to Old Mohee," traditional whaling song; see, for example, Frank #163.

[46] Journal of the ship *Florida* of New Bedford, 1843, in the New Bedford Free Public Library; quoted in Gale Huntington, *Songs the Whalemen Sang* (Barre, Massachusetts: Barre Publishers, 1964).

BOOK REVIEW

J. Ross Browne. *Etchings of a Whaling Cruise, with Notes of a Sojourn on the Island of Zanzibar. To which is appended, a Brief History of the Whale Fishery; its Past and Present Condition.* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1846; reprint, Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968. 560 pp., illustrations.

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

Mr. J. Ross Browne's narrative tends still further to impair the charm with which poesy and fiction have invested the sea. It is a book of unvarnished facts; and with some allowances for the general application of an individual example unquestionably presents a faithful picture of the life led by the 20 thousand seamen employed in the 700 whaling vessels which pursue their game under the American flag. Indeed, what Mr. Dana has so admirably done in describing the vicissitudes of the merchant sailor's life, Mr. Browne has very creditably achieved with respect to that of the hardy whaleman's. And the book which possesses this merit deserves much in the way of commendation. The personal narrative interwoven with it, also, can not fail to enlist our sympathies for the adventurous author himself. The scenes presented are always graphically and truthfully sketched, and hence fastidious objections may be made to some of them, on the score of their being too coarsly or harshly drawn. But we take it, that as true unreserved descriptions they are in no respect faulty—and doubtless the author never dreamed of softening down or withholding anything with a view of rendering his sketches the more attractive and pretty. The book is eminently a practical one; and written with the set purpose of accomplishing good by revealing the simple truth. When the brutal tyranny of the Captain of the "Styx" is painted without apology or palliation, it holds up the outrageous abuse to which seamen in our whaling marine are actually subjected, a matter which demands legislation. Mr. Browne himself—it seems, was to some extent, the victim of the tyranny of which he complains, and, upon this ground, the personal bitterness in which he at times indulges may be deemed excusable, though it is rather out of place.

As the book professes to embrace a detailed account of all that is interesting in the business of whaling, and, essentially, possesses this merit, one or two curious errors into which the author has unaccountably fallen may, without captiousness, be pointed out.—We are told, for example, of a whale's *roaring* when wounded by the harpoon. We can imagine the veteran Coffins and Colemans and Maceys of old Nantucket elevating their brows at the bare announcement of such a thing. Now the creature in question is as dumb as a shad, or any other of the finny tribes. And no doubt, if Jonah himself could be summoned to the stand, he would cheerfully testify to his not having heard a single syllable, growl, grunt, or bellow engendered in the ventricle cells of the leviathan, during the irksome period of his incarceration therein.

That in some encounters with the sperm whale a low indistinct sound *apparently* issues from the monster is true enough. But all Nantucket and New Bedford are divided as to the causes which produce the phenomenon. Many suppose, however, that it is produced—not by the creature itself—but by the peculiar motion in the water of the line which is attached to the harpoon. For, if upon being struck, the whale "sounds" (descends) as is usually the case, and remains below the surface for any length of time, the rope frequently becomes as stiff as the cord of a harp and the struggles of the animal keep it continually vibrating.

Considering the disenchanting nature of the revelations of sea life with which we are presented in Mr. Browne's book we are inclined to believe that the shipping agents employed in our various cities by the merchants of New Bedford will have to present additional inducements to "enterprising and industrious young Americans of good moral character" in order to persuade them to embark in the fishery. In particu-

lar the benevolent old gentleman in Front Street (one of the shipping agents of whom our author discourseth) who so politely accosted Browne and his comrade, upon their entering his office for the purpose of seeking further information touching the rate of promotion in the whaling service—this old gentleman, we say, must hereafter infuse into his address still more of the *suaviter in modo*.

As unaffectedly described by Browne the scene alluded to is irresistably comic. The agent's business, be it understood, consists in decoying "green hands" to send on to the different whaling ports. A conspicuous placard without the office announces to the anxious world, that a few choice vacancies remain to be filled in certain crews of whalemen about to sail upon the most delightful voyages imaginable (only four years long)—To secure a place, of course, instant application should be made.

Our author and his friend attracted by the placard, hurry up a ladder to a dark loft above, where the old man lurks like a spider in the midst of his toils.—But a single glance at the gentlemanly dress and white hands of his visitors impresses the wily agent with the idea that notwithstanding their calling upon him, they may very possibly have heard disagreeable accounts of the nature of whaling. So, after making a bow, and offering a few legs of a chair, he proceeds to disabuse their minds of any unfavorable impressions.—Succeeding in this, he then becomes charmingly facetious and complimentary; assuring the youths that they need not be concerned because of their slender waists and silken muscles; for those who employed him were not so particular about weight as beauty. In short the captains of whaling vessels preferred handsome young fellows who dressed well and conversed genteelly—in short, those who would reflect credit upon the business of tarring down rigging and cutting up blubber. Delighted with the agreeable address of the old gentleman and with many pleasant anticipations of sea-life the visitors listen with increased attention. Whereupon the agent waxes eloquent, and enlarges upon his animating theme in the style parliamentary. "A whaler, gentlemen" he observes "is the home of the unfortunate—the asylum of the oppressed &c &c &c."

Duped Browne! Hapless H——! In the end, they enter into an engagement with the old gentleman, who subsequently sends them on to New Bedford consigned to a mercantile house there. From New Bedford the adventurers at length sail in a small whaling barque bound to the Indian ocean. While yet half dead with sea sickness the unfortunate H—— is sent by the brutal captain to the mast-head, to stand there his allotted two hours on the look out for whale-spouts. He receives a stroke of the sun, which, for a time, takes away his reason and endangers his life. He raves of home and friends, and poor Browne watching by his side, upbraids himself for having been concerned in bringing his companion to such a state.—Ere long the vessel touches at the Azores, where H—— being altogether unfit for duty is left to be sent home by the American consul.

He never recovered from the effects of his hardships; for in the sequel Browne relates that after reaching home himself, he visited his old friend in Ohio, and found him still liable to temporary prostrations directly referable to his sufferings at sea.

With a heavy heart our author after leaving the Azores weathers the Cape of Good Hope and enters upon the Indian ocean. The ship's company—composed mostly of ignorant, half-civilized Portuguese from the Western Islands—are incessantly quarrelling and fighting; the provisions are of the most wretched kind;—their success in the fishery is small; and to crown all, the captain himself is the very incarnation of all that is dastardly, mean, and heartless.

We can not follow Browne through all his adventures. Suffice it to say, that heartily disgusted with his situation he at length, with great difficulty, succeeds in leaving the vessel on the coast of Zanzibar. Here he tarries for some months, and his residence in this remote region (the Eastern coast of Africa, near Madagascar) enables him to make sundry curious observations upon men and things, of which the reader of his work has the benefit. From Zanzibar he ultimately sails for home in a merchant brig; and at last arrives in Boston thoroughly out of conceit of the ocean.

Give ear, now, all ye shore-disdaining, ocean-enamored youths, who labor under the lamentable delusion, that the sea—the "glorious sea" is always and in reality "the blue, the fresh, the ever free!" Give ear to Mr. J. Ross Browne, and hearken unto what that experienced young gentleman has to say about the manner in which Barry Cornwall has been humbugging the rising generation on this subject.—Alas! Hereafter we shall never look upon an unsophisticated stripling in flowing "duck" trowsers and a bright blue jacket, loitering away the interval which elapses before sailing on his maiden cruise, without mourning over the hard fate in store for him.—In ship's forecastle, alas, he will find no Psyche glass in which to survey his picturesque attire. And the business of making his toilet will be comprised in trying to keep

as dry and comfortable as the utter absence of umbrellas, wet decks, and leaky forecastles will admit of.—We shudder at all realities of the career they will be entering upon. The long, dark, cold night-watches, which, month after month, they must battle out the best way they can,—the ship pitching and thumping against the bullying waves—every plank dripping—every jacket soaked—and the Captain not at all bland in issuing his orders for the poor fellows to mount aloft in the icy sleet and howling tempest.—"Bless me, Captain, go way up there this excessively disagreeable night?"—"Aye up with you, you lubber—*bare*, I say, or look out for squalls" a figurative expression, conveying a remote allusion to the hasty application of a sea-bludgeon to the head.

Then the whaling part of the business.—My young friends, just fancy yourselves, for the first time in an open boat (so slight that three men might walk off with it) some 12 or 15 miles from your ship and about a hundred times as far from the nearest land, giving chase to one of the oleaginous monsters. "Pull, Pull, you lubberly *hay-makers!*" cries the boat-header jumping up and down in the stern-sheets in a frenzy of professional excitement, while the gasping admirers of Captain Marryat and the sea, tug with might and main at the buckling oars—"Pull, Pull, I say; Break your lazy backs!" Presently the whale is within "darting distance" and you hear the roar of the waters in his wake.—How palpitating the hearts of the frightened oarsmen at this interesting juncture! My young friends, just turn round and snatch a look at that whale—. There he goes, surging through the brine, which ripples about his vast head as if it were the bow of a ship. Believe me, it's quite as terrible as going into battle to a raw recruit.

"Stand up and give it to him!" shrieks the boat-header at the steering-oar to the harpooneer in the bow. The latter drops his oar and snatches his "iron". It flies from his hands—and where are we then, my lovelies? It's all a mist, a crash,—a horrible blending of sounds and sights, as the agonized whale lashes the water around him into suds and vapor—dashes the boat aside, and at last rushes, madly, through the water towing after him the half-filled craft which rocks from side to side while the disordered crew, clutch at the gunwale to avoid being tossed out. Meanwhile all sorts of horrific edged tools—lances, harpoons and spades—are slipping about; and the imminent line itself—smoking round the logger-head and passing along the entire length of the boat—is almost death to handle, though it grazes your person.

But all this is nothing to what follows. As yet you have but simply *fastened* to the whale: he must be fought and killed. But let imagination supply the rest:—the monster staving the boat with a single sweep of his ponderous flukes;—taking its bows between his jaws (as is frequently the case) and playing with it, as a cat with a mouse. Sometimes he bites it in twain; sometimes crunches it into chips, and strews the sea with them.

—But we forbear. Enough has been said to convince the uninitiated what sort of a vocation whaling in truth is. If further information is desired, Mr. Browne's book is purchasable in which they will find the whole matter described in all its interesting details.

Herman Melville
Literary World, 6 March 1847

Frozen in time and place, the newly-launched pilot schooner *Telegram* lies in the ice at the Charles Mallory & Sons shipyard, December 1875. The Mallory yard (located on the site now occupied by the Seaport's shipyard) and the *Telegram* are both featured in *Mystic Built*. Photo by E. A. Scholfield. (M.S.M. 65.859.6)



Mystic Seaport Museum Publications

Announcing our latest title:

"Mystic Built"
Ships and Shipyards of the
Mystic River, Connecticut
1784–1919
by William N. Peterson

"Ship-building is indigenous to the Mystic Valley," wrote William Allen Wilbur in 1899. For 135 years, from 1784 to 1919, yards along the six-mile tidal stretch of Connecticut's Mystic River launched well over 1,400 vessels. The shipyards of Mystic and Noank employed hundreds of men and provided the economic mainstay of the communities, even as they produced the bottoms that floated the commerce of the national economy.

Mystic has long been renowned for the twenty-one clipper ships built there in the 1850s, but equally significant were the more than fifty steamers—nearly 5 percent of Northern production—launched during the Civil War. Fishing smacks and steamers, coasting sloops and schooners, deep-water merchant brigs, ships, and barks, as well as yachts, were also built in profusion.

Drawing on more than twelve years worth of research in manuscript archives, period newspapers, and historic photograph collections, William Peterson describes the individual shipyards and shipbuilders, places them in their local and national contexts, and details the activities of 563 vessels built at Mystic.

Featured promintently are:

- the three Greenman brothers, who introduced large-scale shipbuilding to Mystic and established the Seventh Day Baptist community of Greenmanville, which produced ninety-seven vessels;
- Charles Mallory, who came to town as an itinerant sailmaker and prospered to build ships and manage whalers and shipping lines;
- Mallory's progressive sons Charles Henry, who was a renowned yachtsman, and David D., who built steam engines and tried to introduce iron shipbuilding at Mystic;
- Mason Crary Hill, an orphan who became a master ship carpenter, modeling some of the fastest and most distinguished clipper ships of the 1850s;
- D. O. Richmond, who specialized in yacht construction for more than fifty years.

In an introductory chapter, Peterson outlines the importance of shipbuilding to Mystic and the place of Mystic-built ships in American maritime history. Following chapters on the various yards, he discusses the life of the shipwrights who labored in the yards and in supporting trades, such as blacksmithing, mast making, and shipcarving, that contributed to the shipbuilding industry. Noank's shipbuilding history is outlined in a separate chapter.

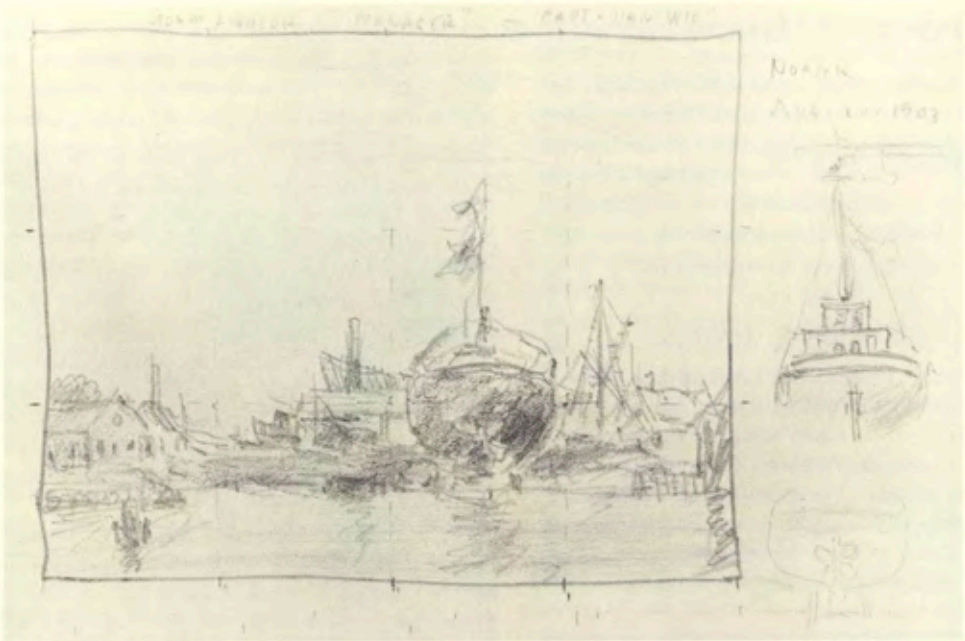
For convenient reference, appendices contain chronological lists of the vessels built at each Mystic shipyard and all the known vessels built at Noank. The second part of the book is composed of thumbnail biographies of the 563 known vessels built at Mystic between 1784 and 1919.

William N. Peterson, a native of Mystic, is Associate Curator for Collections at Mystic Seaport Museum and Curator of the Mystic River Historical Society. He graduated in 1972 from Eastern Connecticut State College where, with some guidance and much inspiration from Professor David Roth, he began to focus on Connecticut's maritime story. He has written many articles and presented numerous papers on various aspects of regional maritime history. His previous book, *Historic Buildings at Mystic Seaport Museum*, written with Peter M. Coope, was published by the Museum in 1985.

This lavish 270-page book contains 201 illustrations, including portraits and photographs of 78 vessels that were Mystic built. It is available bound in cloth for $45.00.

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All Mystic Seaport Museum publications, and other books, are available at a 10 percent discount for members only at the Mystic Seaport Museum Bookstore. (Add $2.00 for shipping and handling. For Connecticut delivery, add 8 percent sales tax.)



ACQUISITION

During the early decades of the twentieth century, Mystic became a Connecticut mecca second only to Lyme for the impressionist school of American art.

Among the most prolific of these artists was Reynolds Beal (1867–1951), an accomplished impressionist recognized by the National Academy. Beal has a special significance for Mystic Seaport's collections because he concentrated so strongly upon maritime subjects. Beal's surviving work includes numerous sketches of the Mystic, Noank, and New London areas, some of which he later developed into his impressionistic paintings. His sketches contain many useful notations concerning vessel colors, rigging details, and deck layouts, which are impossible to find elsewhere. Consequently, his work has a strong documentary as well as artistic appeal.

The sketch shown here, which was recently acquired by the Museum, depicts the 325-ton steam lighter (barge) *Manager* on the launching ways of the Robert Palmer & Son Ship Building & Marine Railway Co. at Noank in 1903. It is a preliminary drawing for a finished oil painting (40.407), which has been in the Seaport's collection since 1940. 4⅞" x 7⅜" [89.13.2]

CORRECTION

A corrected and expanded list of journals and letters of women who went whaling, first published in Joan Druett's "Those Female Journals," winter 1989 *Log*, is available from the editor, *The Log of Mystic Seaport*, Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, CT 06355–0990.



PLANNED GIVING PROGRAM AT MYSTIC SEAPORT MUSEUM

The development of the Museum—the buildings, ships, and wharves, the exhibits, books, and manuscripts—gives eloquent testimony to the generosity of countless contributors. This personal and generous commitment on the part of our donors fulfills and sustains the legacy and vision handed down by the Museum's founders.

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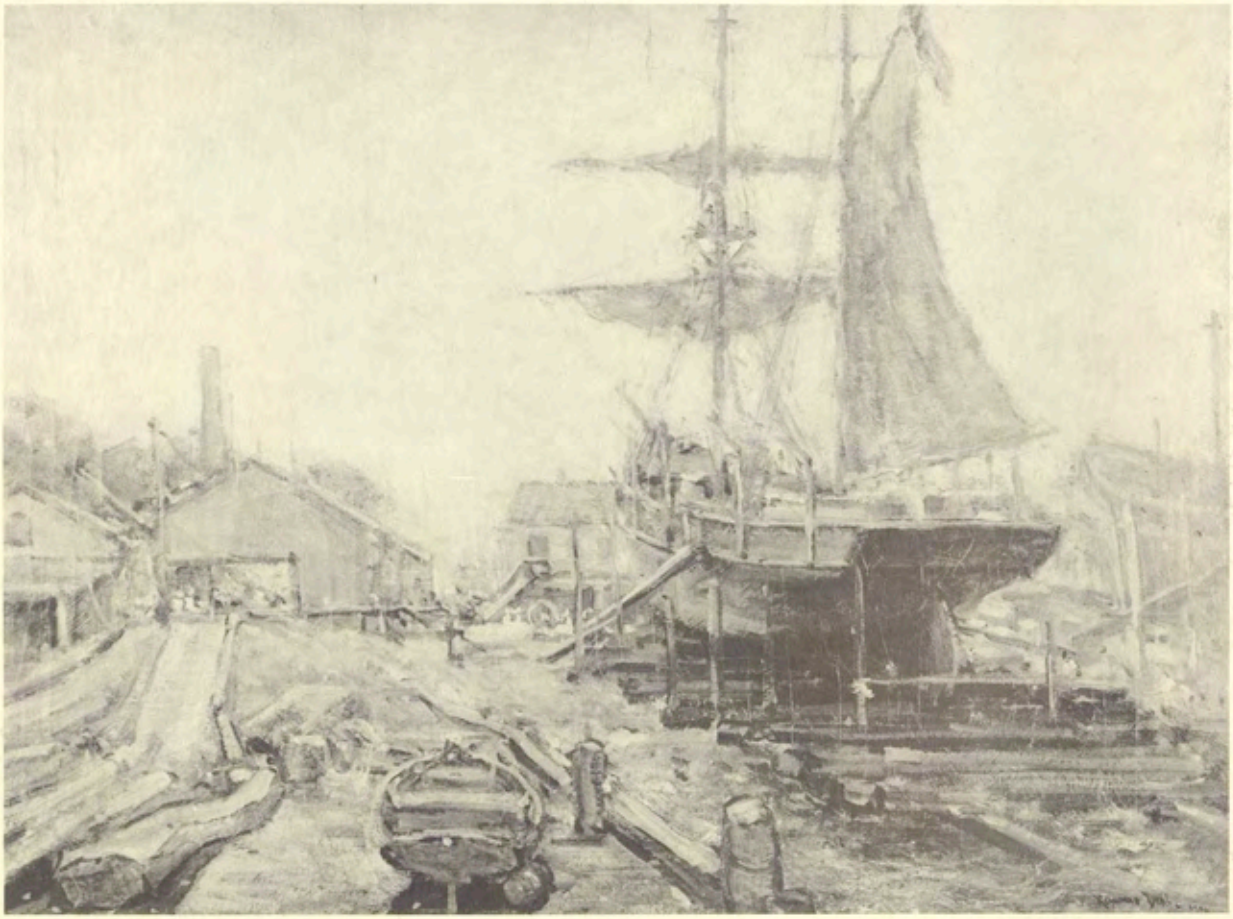
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Members and friends of Mystic Seaport are urged to consider the opportunities of Planned Giving as a way of assisting the Museum in a meaningful and tax-wise manner.

For further information about how Planned Giving can help you assure the future of Mystic Seaport Museum, please call the

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