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Herman Melville's attitude toward the darker races

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HERMAN MELVILLE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE DARKER RACES

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE LITERARY TREATMENT OF THE DARKER RACES</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MELVILLE AND THE NATIVES OF THE PACIFIC</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MELVILLE AND THE NEGRO</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Until very recent years, Herman Melville, a novelist of the
nineteenth century, held a very obscure place in American literature; for,
according to Lewis Mumford, when he died in 1891, the literary journal of
the day, The Critic, did not even know who he was. Recently, however,
the true worth of Melville's works has been discovered and he no longer
maintains his former inconspicuousness; but instead, according to most
authorities, he is considered one of the greatest writers of his day. As
a result of this rapidly growing appreciation for and recognition of
Melville as a novelist, numerous studies have been made during the last
decade of various phases of his art and life.

In a recent study by Willard Thorp, the following statement
appears:

...Melville's hatred of man's inhumanity
to man originated in the savage thoughts
which coursed through his mind as he
explored Launcelott's Hey and the water-
front of the Sodom-like city in the days
of the Chartists.  

With this statement as a starting point, and with the realization that
Melville is regarded by most authorities as a humanitarian, the present
study is an endeavor to determine whether or not Melville's humanitarian-
ism led him away from the American concept of the darker races and into
a more realistic and understanding portrayal of character.

In order to do this, a thorough study of his novels containing
Negro and native characters is made, with special care being taken to
observe his fictional treatment of both races.

1 Lewis Mumford, Herman Melville, New York, 1929, Prologue, p. 3.
2 Willard Thorp, Herman Melville, New York, 1938, intro., p. xv.
As a background of this study, a brief statement concerning white supremacy and black subjugation is given to show how this social and historical fact has affected American literature. In addition to this, a very brief review is given of the Negro in American fiction from about 1840 until Melville's death, 1891, with the purpose of making a comparative study of Melville's creations with those of other nineteenth century American authors.

Because of the little importance attached to Melville's works in previous years, the only complete edition of his works is the Constable edition; and since this edition was unavailable for this study, two different compilations of his novels were used in an effort to secure those having Negro characters. The Confidence-Man, however, which contains one Negro character, is out of print and was unaccessible; consequently, it is not included in this study. The Romances of Herman Melville, published by the Tudor Publishing Company, was used for the longer works; namely, Typee, Moby Dick, Omoo, White Jacket, Redburn, and Israel Potter. The Shorter Novels of Melville, edited by Raymond M. Weaver, was used for Benito Cereno.
CHAPTER I.
THE LITERARY TREATMENT OF THE DARKER RACES

One of the most lasting and important conflicts in the history of mankind is that between the races for supremacy; but, according to one authority, white supremacy and black subjugation has been accepted so long in the social order that it is no longer questioned and has been accepted as one of the social mores. Not only is white supremacy an inter-racial recognition, but, as the same authority states, among the darker races themselves it is to some extent an intra-racial recognition; or it has been found that, among all darker races, individuals who have acquired certain Nordic characteristics, through intermarriage, are prone to feel that because of their possession of a few drops of white blood they are superior to their blacker brother. Thus, it is true that as a result of this superior feeling on the part of the white races toward the darker ones, the darker races have naturally been subjected to inferior treatment in every aspect of life.

The natives of the South Seas, being members of the darker races, have been subjected to the same treatment as any minority group; and since they are treated as inferiors in actual life, it is only natural that they have been, accordingly, assigned inferior fictional roles in literature,

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
and have become the literary subjects of biased, prejudiced authors.¹

These natives first became a literary subject in the records of great discoverers who gave many accounts of their relationships with them, many years before the barbaristic patterns of the savages and red-men had been drawn by Cooper, Aphra Behn or Voltaire. But it is impossible to find anywhere among these discoverers' records anything that would classify the Christian and native in the same order of nature. At best, these people have been regarded as "contemptible counterfeits of God's image"; and their usual role in literature has been associated with treachery, cruelty and profligacy.

Among the authors who wrote on the savage, Montaigne was probably the first to attach any superior virtues to his already debauched picture. Montaigne did what the discoverers failed to do and that was to classify the christian and native in the same order; he makes the following comment on them:

"...We may call them barbarous in regard to reasons rules', he said, 'but not in respect to us that exceed them in all kinds of barbarisme.

Their warres are noble and generous, and have as much excuse and beautie, as this humane infirmite may admit: they ayme at nought so much, and have no other foundation amongst them, but the meere jealousy of virtue.²³

¹Raymond M. Weaver, Herman Melville Mariner and Mystic, New York, 1921, p. 203.
²Ibid.
³Ibid., pp. 203, 204.
⁴Ibid., quoting Montaigne.
Following Montaigne was Rousseau, who is noted for his creation of the Noble Savage. Rousseau's savage was attached to no particular place, obeyed no one, had no other law than his own and was more a picture of the paradise of childhood than a finding of ethnology.

Chateaubriand, likewise, wrote of natives and savages; but it appears that he was more successful in depicting the beauty and loveliness of the country than he was in contacting and writing about the individual characteristics of the natives themselves. His first savage was pictured under a shed, "be powdered and be frizzled" taking dancing lessons from a Frenchman.

Thus it may be seen that the natives of the South Seas have been subjected to two modes of literary treatment: (1) one of inferiority and ridicule, and (2) another of sentimentality, which was advanced by Rousseau in his creation of the "Noble Savage".

Possibly, both the sentimental treatment of the natives advanced by Rousseau, and the inferior treatment initiated by other European writers had a direct bearing and influence on the sentimental and inferior treatment of the Negro character in American literature; for both races are members of the minority group, and both have suffered the consequences of race prejudice. As far as the natives are concerned, they have suffered, primarily, at the hands of sea roving, adventurous European writers; while the Negro has suffered at the hands of American writers, who drew their prejudices from their own environment and standardized in literature the caricatures of a folk classed as inferiors.

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., p. 205.
Politically, socially and economically, the Negro in the United States has been subject to subservient treatment from the time of his enslavement in the early seventeenth century until the present era. \(^1\) It is only natural, therefore, that in literature, which is the reflection of any national life, he should be presented in the same inferior manner. \(^2\)

By 1840, the Negro was well established as a character in American literature, as a type, unfortunately, rather than as an individual. \(^3\) To the average writer of the nineteenth century, the Negro was merely a means of adding verisimilitude to southern society and was chiefly portrayed as a faithful servant, or a happy, carefree type with the following characteristics: (1) irresponsibility, (2) whimsicality, (3) intense superstition, (4) lack of resentment, and (5) comicalness. \(^4\) Beyond these superficial characteristics, the Negro as a human being was not known; for his discovery as a serious human being was yet unheard of. \(^5\) And no author thought of taking his Negro characters seriously.

An example of the Negro character in early nineteenth century literature may be found in James Fenimore Cooper's The Spy. Caesar Thompson, the loyal faithful slave of "Massa Harris", is described in such a manner as to present humor and comedy, which is typical of this early period:


\(^4\) Ibid., p. 23.

\(^5\) Ibid.
... But it was in his legs that nature had indulged her most capricious humor. There was an abundance of material injudiciously used. The calves were neither before nor behind, but rather on, the outer side of the limb inclining forward, and so close to the knee as to render the free use of that joint a subject of doubt....the leg was placed so near the center, as to make it sometimes a matter of dispute whether he was not walking backwards.  

Edgar Allen Poe, likewise, makes use of the traditional Negro character in his works; for Toby in The Journal of Julius Rodman, which was written in 1840, is also an attempt to produce a comedy by ridiculing the personal appearance of the Negro. Toby is described

...as ugly an old gentleman as ever spoke, having... swollen lips, large white protruding eyes, flat nose, long ears, double head, pot belly and bow legs.

Jupiter in Poe's The Gold Bug is a typical representation of the faithful, loyal slave.  

Although a few authors like Simms and Cooper attempted to present the Negro with a note of sympathy and dignity, serious realism was still far off; and the Negro in early nineteenth century literature held his place chiefly as the fable, the loyal servant, the buffoon, the loyal devoted, simple, dependent slave, the tragic octoroon or the noble

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1 James Fenimore Cooper, The Spy, New York, [n. d], p. 42.  
savage, with few references being made to the rebellious Negro.¹

During the period which immediately preceded the Civil War, the Negro character in fiction became merely a mechanism of attack around which the two opposing parties - the antislavery writers and the proslavery writers - centered their appeal; and as a result, the Negro, for the most part, lost his identity as a human being.² To the antislavery writers, whose purpose was, from the beginning, to make a moral appeal, the Negro became a sentimental, religious, good, faithful servant who was being subjected to the heartless treatment of the brutal southern slave owners.⁴ Thus in trying to create a sentimental and pathetic picture to arouse the sympathy of the public toward the slave, the antislavery writer permitted the pendulum of sympathy to sway too far; and instead of individualistic creations, there is once again the stereotype treatment of the Negro.

Probably the first antislavery novel was published in 1836 as the Slave Memoirs or Memoirs of Archy Moore which later became enlarged as The White Slave and was reclaimed by Richard Hildreth, the historian.⁶

In this novel, for the most part, the Negroes are presented as being

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¹ Sterling Brown, op. cit., p. 15.
² John Herbert Nelson, op. cit., p. 73.
⁴ John Herbert Nelson, op. cit., p. 73.
⁶ Sterling Brown, op. cit., p. 32.
humble, faithful and sometimes sullen, vindictive and cunning. Although
this was probably the first antislavery novel published, Harriet Beecher
Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) was the first novel to awaken and arouse
the interest of the public.1

Harriet Beecher Stowe, being a typical example of the writers
of this period, achieved her purpose of arousing the sympathy of her pub-
lic in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; but in doing so she stamped the Negro as a sim-
ple, humble, faithful type, a conception which has been unequalled in its
hold upon the popular imagination to this day.2 *Uncle Tom* is an example
of the faithful humble servant; *Topsy* is a representation of the comical
character whose comicalness bears a note of pathos; while *Eliza* repre-

Later Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote another novel, *Dred*, in 1856,
which, although lacking the sweep of the earlier work, was nevertheless
received with ample enthusiasm. In this novel, George, the "white
slave", expresses the desire to be a "good, honest, black nigger like
Uncle Pomp".3 Typical of the sentimental loyal slave of the antislave
period are *Old Hundred*, the coachman, and *Tiff*, who in their love for
their little white charges are similar to *Uncle Tom*. Like other writ-
ers, Mrs. Stowe was unable to free herself from the bonds of the comic-

1 Ibid.
4 Ibid., pp. 255-270.
al Negro character, and in Dred, she produced Jim, the clownish house-
servant, who wanted to be free chiefly to be able to have a wife of his
own.

In 1856 the most gruesome antislavery novel was written, The
Planter's Victim, in which the Negroes were pictured as undergoing unbe-
lievable torture at the hands of their masters. The sentimental and pa-
thetic character in this story is George, who is so humble and abject
that he is artificial.  

About 1861, Mrs. M. V. Victor published her Maum Guineas Chil-
dren, in which she presents both the gloomy and bright side of slavery,
with the gloomy side so overpowering and overshadowing the happy care-
free side that there is no doubt as to where she stands. Mrs. Victor
does present the rebellious Negro, but usually her rebels are found only
in the mixed bloods, while the full blood African Negro assumes the role
of the docile "Uncle Tom" type. In general Mrs. Victor's Negroes are
superstitious, excitable, imaginative, given to exaggeration, easily
frightened, improvident and dependent.  

In 1863 J. T. Trowbridge wrote a stirring novel entitled
Cudjo's Cave in which he relates the conflicts between the confederates
in East Tennessee during the early years of the war. Three Negroes play

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1 Ibid., pp. 175-176, 200.
2 Sterling Brown, op. cit., p. 41.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
prominent roles: Toby, the traditional faithful servant; Cudjo, ape-like in appearance, but cunning, powerful and vindictive; Pomp, the dignified house slave.

Stories in which the tragic octoroon type is presented are:

Clotel or the President's Daughter written in 1853 by William Wells Brown, and Adela the Octoroon written by H. L. Hosmer.

In the same manner that the antislavery writer used the Negro as a means of creating sympathy to procure the abolition of slavery, the proslavery writer used the Negro character as a means of counteracting the argument presented by the antislavery writers; and while the plea of the antislavery writers was on a moral basis, the plea of the proslavery writer was on a social basis. Lawyer O'connor, a prominent lawyer in New York, expresses the average sentiment of the southern writer:

Now Gentlemen, nature itself has assigned his condition of servitude to the Negro. He has strength and is fit to work; but nature which gave him this strength denied him both the intelligence to rule and the will to work. Both are denied him, and the same nature which denied him the will to work gave him a master who should enforce this will and make a useful servant of him in a climate to which he is well adapted. ...I assert that it is no injustice to leave the Negro in the position into which nature placed him.

Therefore, the proslavery writer, in trying to show that the Negro was

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1 Sterling Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
3 Sterling Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
naturally ignorant and lazy, and that he was contented and happy in his state of benevolent servitude, produced the jolly carefree, clownish type of Negro. ¹ They glorified the picturesque beauty of the southern plantation and centered their novels around this familiar setting:

The old plantation; a great mansion; exquisitely gowned ladies and courtly gentlemen moving with easy grace upon the broad veranda behind stalwart columns; surrounding the yard an almost illimitable stretch of white cotton; darkies singingly at work in the fields; Negro quarters, off on one side, around which little pickaninnies tumbled in gay frolic.²

In addition to this, the proslavery writers played up very vividly the dependent simple Negro in order to convince the public that the Negro was incapable of maintaining an independent livelihood, and that he was in dire need of succor from the white race. Throughout Thomas Nelson Page's book, The Negro: The Southerner's Problem, reference is made to the irresponsibility and shiftlessness of the Negro.³

J. B. Kennedy's Swallow Barn, which appeared in 1832, was the first of these proslavery writings; and it is a typical representation of the literature of this faction, in that it emphasized the Negro's incapability of caring for himself, and in addition, showed how the benevolent institution of slavery aided him in his transitional period from savagery to Christendom.⁴ Littleton, a northerner, visits the South to

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¹ John Herbert Nelson, op. cit., p. 73.
² Sterling Brown, op. cit., p. 17.
³ Thomas Nelson Page, op. cit.
⁴ Sterling Brown, op. cit., p. 18.
see just what slavery was like; but on seeing it, instead of being utterly and sorely disgusted, as he thought he would be, he was very much pleased and praised the entire institution. Kennedy also puts the theme of his books concerning the Negro into the mouths of his southern white aristocrats, who admit that they have no love for the institution of slavery itself, but that they approve it, because it is a benefactor of the Negro race. One of his aristocrats says:

...I am quite sure they could never become a happier people than I find them here.... No tribe of people have ever passed from barbarism to civilization whose progress has been more secure from harm, more genial to their character, or better supplied.

Conforming to the typical proslavery setting, the Negro children are pictured lolling on the cabin floor, basking in the sun; while the old Negroes were merrily singing at their tasks. Although not a very good example of the proslavery writers, T. H. Haliburton voices the general theme of the proslavery writers when he permits Sam Slick, a comic character in Yankee Soldiers, to say that he objects to enslaving white men for debts, but

...those thick-skulled crooked shanked, flat-footed, long heeled, woolly headed gentlemen don't seem fit for much else but slavery.

Typical also of these sentimental romantic proslavery writers is Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth, all of whose characters are the happy-
go-lucky type, with the exception of Henry of Retribution (1849), who suffers because of the jealousy of a young mistress. 

Following the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin in 1852, about fourteen proslavery novels and numerous pamphlets rose up to refute the antislavery representation of slavery as given by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Most striking, however, was W. L. G. Smith's Life At the South or Uncle Tom's Cabin As it is which was a direct blow at Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. In this novel, Uncle Tom, in addition to being jealous of certain favoritisms shown Hector by his master, is primarily jealous of Hector's youth and strength and allows himself to be persuaded by the tempting plea of an abolitionist to make his escape into free land. After running away to Canada and Buffalo and witnessing the suffering of the Negroes, he concluded that the Negroes in southern servitude were better off than the wretched freedmen of the north. Disappointed and disillusioned, poor old Uncle Tom turns pleadingly to his old master and begs to be returned home.

Mrs. Eastman's greatest contribution to the cause for which the proslavery writers fought was Phyliss, in which the typical glorified South is pictured; and Aunt Phyliss is one of the first black mammies, while Bacchus represents the customary happy-go-lucky type of Negro character which is peculiar to the proslavery writers creations.

... He will seize the smallest excuse for getting drunk, he is naturally happy-go-lucky and carefree; he is most dignified after receiving a new lot of his masters cast off clothes;

1 John Herbert Nelson, op. cit., p. 29.
2 Sterling Brown, op. cit., p. 21.
3 Ibid., p. 22.
when dressed gaudily he can pray or
speak in church with the greatest
unction; he is master at making
excuses and begging for favors;
He is musical to a fault and plays
the banjo as only a Negro can. He
thinks his master the greatest man
in anything.  

In John W. Page's Uncle Robin, which was published in 1853, the
leading Negro character, Uncle Robin, is portrayed as a happy, carefree
Negro; and when he is questioned concerning slavery he says:

Massar, I tell you de plain
truth when I say yes [that
I should rather be slave than free]
Dis sir, is no country for free Black
men: Africa de only place {for}
he, sir.

So happy, carefree and contented with his present state is this Negro
character that he reprimands the vindictive dissatisfied Negro and suggests
that he return to the wilds of Africa where he can have his savage-like
freedom.

Mrs. Caroline Lee Hentz, who was a northerner married to a
Southerner, produced some very stirring novels and especially in Linda
does she glorify the Black Mammy:

Aunt Judy's African blood has not
been corrupted by the base mingling
of a paler strain; Black as ebony
was her smooth shining skin on
which the dazzling ivory of her
teeth threw gleams bright as the
moon.

In Mrs. Hentz's novel, The Planters Northern Bride, published in 1854,
the northern bride comes down South expecting to be the eyewitness of a
pathetic situation; but instead she is won over by the congeniality of

1 Ibid., quoting Mrs. M.H. Eastman's, Phyliss.
2 Sterling Brown, op. cit., p. 23, quoting John W. Page, Uncle Robin.
3 Ibid., quoting Caroline Lee Hentz, Linda.
the slaves who make her the recipient of love and admiration; and in her praise of slavery she says:

Oh! my husband! I never dreamed
that slavery could present an aspect as tender and affectionate. 1

Happy over her change of opinion, her husband readily assures her that he is not half as good to his slaves as the majority of slaveholders are. His slaves are presented as being robust, unusually "fat", "sleek" and "good-natured"; and on Sunday they are fashionably attired in the cast-off finery of their master and mistress. Crissy, one of Mr. Hentz's slaves, is persuaded by the abolitionists to run away; and, like all Negro characters who were persuaded by the abolitionists to make their escape, Crissy sees only the wretchedness and miserableness of the freedman, and begs to be returned to the home of her good "mas'r" and mistress down South. 2

In Mrs. M. J. McIntosh's novel, The Lofty and the Lowly or Good in All and None All Good (1854), Mrs. Cato's faithful slave, who has been freed and sent to the North, remains loyal to the South and its cause and becomes highly insulted when a Northern abolitionist speaks degradingly of slavery and offers him succor in shaking off the shackles of this inhuman institution.

Make me free! how can I free any more? Dem da nonsense, People, and what dem want take me from Miss Alice for?... I wonder if I been sick and couldn't do anything, of dem would nuss me and take care o' me liken Miss Alice... I tink dem crazy 'bout free. Free bery good

1 Ibid., quoting Caroline Lee Hentz, The Planter's Northern Bride.
2 Ibid., p. 25.
ting, but free ent all; when you 
sick, free won't make you well, 
free won't gib you clo's, no hom'ny, 
let 'lone meat."

All of Miss Alice's slaves are pictured being contented and happy like 
this faithful Negro.

Following in the trend of previous proslavery creations, Moses, 
the Negro character in the Yankee Slave Dealer refuses to be swayed by the 
abolitionist because his religion would not permit him to do such an un-
gracious deed to his master. In reply to Justus, Moses says:

Well, heah's sumpn' else, mastuh: 
we read in the book of Leviticus 
dat de childin of Isr'l was told dey 
should buy slaves, I marked de place 
and I'll jes read it to you, doe I 
s'pose you's seed it many a time. 
It's in de twenty-fif' chapter, de 
fifty-fif' and sixt' verse.

Thus it is easily seen that the proslavery writers, frightened by the in-
terest taken in Mrs. Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, immediately began work 
to counteract any propaganda that the antislavery writers might have es-
tablished. In doing so they created an ideal Utopian South, picturing the 
contented, clownish, childish, shiftless, happy slaves merrily performing 
their light tasks and expressing their dislike for those troublesome abo-
lationists, who wanted to take them away from their masters and mistresses. 
The relations between masters and slave were pictured as being ideal. The 
proslavery writer maintains the stereotype Negro - the contented slave, the

1 Ibid., quoting Mrs. M. J. McIntosh, The Lofty and the Lowly or Good in 
All and None All Good. 
2 Ibid. 
3 Ibid., p. 27, quoting Mrs. M. J. McIntosh, Yankee Slave Dealer.
clown and the wretched freedman.¹

Both the antislavery writers and the proslavery writers were guilty of ignoring the Negro’s real characteristics, the latter more than the former. In their hands, the Negro characters were merely dressed up white men with the words of the two opposing factors thrust into their mouths.² However, it cannot be denied that the antislavery writer recognized the human qualities of the Negro more than the proslavery writer; and evidence of this may be seen in the treatment of grief-stricken mothers whose children were snatched from their bosoms and sold before their eyes. They were not grief-stricken because of any racial characteristic, but because it was human. With the exception of this one quality on the part of the antislavery writers, the two factions were on equal basis as far as the "type" treatment of the Negro is concerned.³

Following the antebellum stereotype literature, the reconstruction period brought about very little change, if any, in the portrayal of the Negro as a literary figure; it was more or less a continuation of the preceding period with special emphasis being placed on the childish-ly happy Negro of the proslavery writer's creation.⁴ Like the preceding period, with its two opposing writers — the proslavery writers and antislavery writers — the reconstruction period, likewise, produced two distinct types of writers: (1) those who glorified the good old days, and (2) those who did not. Those who glorified the South were merely the posterity of the antebellum proslavery writers, who realized that the cause for which their ancestors had fought had been lost, and that the reconstruction era was the opportune time to reemphasize the childish,

¹Ibid., p. 28.
³Ibid.
⁴William Stanley Braithwaite, op. cit., p. 31.
happy-go-lucky Negro, who was unable to adjust himself to his new environment and who was continually reflecting on the good old days.  

Probably the most persuasive writer in creating a golden glow over the antebellum South was Thomas Nelson Page, whose Negro characters were the traditional devoted type of slaves, who felt that no risk was too great to take to render service to their masters.

In Ole Virginia is a typical representation of the types of novels presented during the reconstruction era; and of this volume, the three best known stories are "Marse Chan", "Meh Lady" and "Unc' Edinburg's Drowndin". These stories begin in the usual way with a garrulous old Negro praising the good old days, giving a picturesque setting of handsome men and lovely ladies, with special emphasis being placed on the close relationship existing between slave and master. Marse Chan, the kind master, loves his slave so dearly that he loses his sight in an effort to rescue him from a fire. Unc' Edinburg's master saves him from drowning; while at the same time, he risks his own life. Uncle Billy saves his master from the brutal attacks of the Yankees and even supports him after the war. Sam, one of the Negro characters, says:

(Dem wuz good ole times, marster, --
de bes' Sam ever see! Dey wuz in fac'! Nigers didn' hed nothin' 'tall
to do--- ... Dyar warn' no trouble nor nothin'.

1 Sterling Brown, op. cit., p. 49.
2 Ibid., p. 51.
3 John Herbert Nelson, op. cit., p. 106.
8 Ibid., p. 10.
Uncle Edinburg says:

... 'Twuz Christmas den, sho' 'nough',
he added, the fires of memory smoulder-
ing, and then, as they blazed inte
sudden flame, he asserted, positively:
'Dese Heah free-issue niggers don' know
what Christmas is.'

Uncle Billy says:

... I wuz settin' in de do' wid
meh pipe, an' I heah meh kerridge-
horses stompin' in de stalls, an' 
de place all cleared up ag'in, an'
fence all round' de paahsture, an'
I smell de wet clover-blossoms
right good, an' marse Phil and meh
Lady done come back,...

The manner in which Page regarded the Negro may be determined by his re-
action to a rebellious, candid Negro in No Haid Pawn, who lacked the
usual docile, amiable, superstitious traits usually attributed to the
Negro. Page says of him: "He was the most brutal Negro I ever saw".
Negroes who are despisers of Northern interlopers and who are contented
and docile, Page treats sympathetically; but any Negro who openly re-
bels against his servitude and in any way reacts to his enslavement as
any other human being in the clutches of slavery, Page, immediately, pro-
claims to be the most inhuman Negro that he has ever seen. Such abject,
humble Negroes as Mammy Kendra, Waverley, Tarquin, and Jerry, who openly
express their antipathy for the abolitionists, are good Negroes accord-
ing to Page's estimation; while Moses, a mulatto, who openly states that
he is equally as good as a white person and further expresses his inten-
tion of marrying a white girl and having the white people to wait up-

3 Thomas Nelson Page, "No Haid Pawn", Ibid.
on him is likened unto a "hyena in a cage", "a reptile", a species of worm" and a "wild beast". To further impress the public with the risk that they are taking in allowing a Negro, who is nothing more than a rebellious savage, remain in their midst, he makes this insolent Negro attempt to assault the heroines of the play, knowing that Southern society will gasp in horror at the very thought of such a thing.

According to William Stanley Braithwaite, the first writer to humanize the Negro character was Joel Chandler Harris, who as a boy was shy and timid and found more happiness in the humble slave quarters than at home. During these escapades, he met Uncle Terrel, the original Uncle Remus, and around this venerable, pampered Negro who was gifted with a poetical and philosophizing speech, Joel Chandler Harris created one of the best characters in American literature. However, it must be borne in mind that Harris was not so much a creator as a reproducer, for the Negro was his own artist, but he lacked the learning to record these tales.

Although Joel Chandler Harris did present a few varied types of Negro characters, the devoted slave type was still predominant over the rebellious; and although his works do not contain as much propaganda as some of his contemporaries', there are still traces of it to be found scattered through his works and especially his later ones. In his later presentation of Uncle Remus, the old Negro was used as a mouthpiece to express the Southern attitude toward the Negro, making him glorify and praise the South, admire the white folk, and condemn education for Negroes. On one occasion, Uncle Remus chanced to meet a young Negro boy

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1 Sterling Brown, op. cit., p. 52.
2 Ibid.
3 William Stanley Braithwaite, op. cit., p. 32.
4 Benjamin Brawley, op. cit., p. 184.
5 Joel Chandler Harris, Uncle Remus, New York, 1925, pp. 255-257.
coming from school with his books under his arms, and the two became engaged in a heated argument. After the boy had gone, the policeman asked Uncle Remus whether or not he was a supporter of Negro education, and he replied:

...Dey better be home picking up chips. W'at a nigger givin' ter ler' outen books? I kin take a bar'l stave and fling mo' sense ter a nigger in one minnit dan all de schoolhouses betwixt dis en de state er Midgigin. Don't talk honey! Wid one bar'l stave I kin fa'ry' lif' de vail er ignume.'

Later during the same conversation, Uncle Remus says:

'Hits de ruinashun er dis country. Look at my gal. De ole 'oman sонт 'er ter school las' year, an' now we dassent hardly ak 'er fer ter kyar de washin' home.... Put a spellin'-book in a nigger's han's, en right den, en dar' you loozes a plow-hand.'

Harris' faithful, loyal Negroes are Aunt Fountain, Mingo and Balaam. In the story Aunt Fountain's Prisoner, the old aunt saves a Yankee and maneuvers his love affair with a Southern girl. Mingo is the story of a slave of unbelievable humility, who is described as being "a cut above" the Negroes who rebelled and sought their freedom; while in Balaam and His Master, Balaam, the faithful servant, rendered assistance to his master in tavery brawls and even dug into his cell to be with him in imprisonment. Ananias, another devoted slave, whose master had been

1 Ibid., pp. 255-256.
2 Ibid., p. 256.
3 Sterling Brown, op. cit., p. 55.
4 Ibid.
ruined financially by the war, remains loyal and true to him until the end.¹

Although it cannot be denied that Joel Chandler Harris did portray more than the usual comical or faithful, devoted Negro; and although Free Joe and Mom Bi, found in the two stories bearing the same titles as these two characters, were rebellious, candid and outspoken, the fact remains that Harris was a Southerner, and no matter how he might try to present an unbiased picture of the Negro, he was subjected to his own prejudiced environment. Thus, one finds him clinging to the stereotype, ²

Among the minor contemporaries of Harris who glorified the antebellum Negro, F. Hopkinson Smith's Chad in Colonel Carter of Cartersville;³ (1891) James Lane Allen's Peter Cotton in Two Gentlemen of Kentucky,⁴ the loyal Negro woman in King Solomon (1891); and Maurice Thompson's Negroes are all continuations of the faithful, loyal, devoted, comical character,⁵

Thus one may see that the Negro in American literature remained unchanged in his portrayal, during Melville's life. By these antebellum glorifiers, he was used merely as a means of vivifying their novels, and was still treated as a loyal, devoted servant who dearly loved his master or as a childishly happy, simple, comical type who was too happy to rebel against his servitude.⁶

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., p. 57.
³Ernest Erwin Leisy, American Literature, New York, 1929, p. 186.
⁴Sterling Brown, op. cit., p. 60.
⁵Ibid., p. 62.
⁶Ibid., p. 62.
As Page was the most persuasive of the antebellum glorifiers in casting a golden glow over the South, so were George Washington Cable and Mark Twain the most persuasive anti-antebellum glorifiers. Realizing that the public was rapidly accepting the philosophy of the prejudiced proslavery writers, who presented only the optimistic side of the slave’s life, these writers began emphasizing both sides. In their works which treat of slavery and the Negro, the Negro definitely becomes more humanized, even though they still portray some of his previously assigned characteristics. In Cable’s Grandissimes (1880) Clemence, an old ignorant, superstitious woman, who is about to be hung for participating in an insurrection, says:

'You mus’n' b'lieve all disyeh nonsense 'bout insurrectionin'; all fool nigga talk. W'at we want to be insurrectionin' faw? We de hoppigs' people in de God's worl'!!'

Yet despite her ignorance and superstitions, Clemence was not afraid to say what she thought even in the face of death; for even when they had her in the woods and were preparing to hang her, she says:

...ah! no, mawsteh, you cyan do dat! It's ag' in' de law! I's 'bleeged to have my trial yit. Oh, no, no! Oh, good God, no! Even if I is a nigga! You cyan' jes' murdeh me hysh in de woods! Mo dis la size! I tell de judge on you! You ain' got no mo biznis to do me so 'an if I was a white 'oman! You dagsent tek a white 'oman out'n de'Pa'sh Frisi'n an' do 'er so!

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1 Ibid., p. 65–64.
2 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
Still another rebelling Negro in this same novel of Cable's was Bras-Coupe, a huge Negro who was formerly the king of the jaloff. Bras openly expresses his natural antipathy for the white man and refuses to do any work, and when forced to do so he strikes his master. Like Grace King, Cable spends much of his time in showing the sad and unhappy state of the octoroon, whom he dislikes. Cable, therefore, is more noted for his tragic mulatto stereotype; but despite this fault, he is still considered the most outstanding creator of Negro character in the nineteenth century.

Mark Twain, like Cable, was of Southern birth, though he openly declared that he was not swayed by the local social prejudices of his day. In *Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Twain treats Jim in much the same manner that he treats his other characters, with one exception and that is he makes him highly superstitious. Throughout the journey he blamed whatever misfortune befell them on a snake skin that they had encountered on the way. Rebellious and resentful toward being sold down the River, Jim runs away from his Mistress Watson and with the aid of Huck, he makes his escape to Cairo.

Although Jim possessed his share of the Negro's superstitiousness, he was not the simple, happy-go-lucky, abject type who was satisfied with his servitude; he was ambitious and rebellious and always clung to a hope of freedom.

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4 Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*, New York, 1912, p. 129.
In later year Northern writers as well as Southern writers turned their attention toward the Negro as a literary figure; but for the most part, they had seen nothing of the South and were ignorant of the exact situation; hence, their presentations of Negro characters were chiefly reproductions of the works of prejudiced Southern writers, and especially of the proslavery ones.

Contrary to the usual secondary reproductions of northern writers were the works of Tourgee, who fought in the Civil War on the Union side and actually observed the status of the Negro; consequently, when he returned home he tried to present as real a picture of the South as possible, giving due consideration to both sides. In doing so, he did not make the Negro the simple, childish dependent type that both his contemporaries had done; instead he pictured Negroes who had the ability to think and to reason for themselves.

Jerry, a Negro character in A Fool's Errand, is a true representative of Tourgee's creations. He was religious, like most slaves, and devoted to his master; but his devotion was not so much the usual abject loyalty of slave to master, as it was his gratitude for and appreciation of his master's plea for the slaves' freedom. When the white people were ridiculing Jerry's religion, he courageously and frankly replies:

An' when you all laughs at us, we can' help tinkin' dat we mout a done better if we hadn't been kep slaves all our lives by you uns.

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1 Sterling Brown, op. cit., p. 70.
2 Ibid., p. 72.
3 Ibid., p. 73.
4 Ibid., quoting Albion Tourgee's A Fool's Errand.
In *Bricks Without Straw* (1880), Tourgee almost goes the limit in refuting previous conceptions of the Negro. Nimbus, the outstanding Negro character though ignorant, is courageous, industrious and thrifty. Because of his good management, he is able to maintain a livelihood far superior to the whites of his community; and he becomes the object of hate and envy in the sight of the less fortunate whites.\(^1\) Not only does he maintain a superior financial status, but he openly declares that his wife shall work for no one without recompense. Jealous and defiant of his candidness, as well as his prosperity, the whites attempt to frighten him away by having the Klu Klux Klan pay him several visits; however, Nimbus, with the aid of his wife, outwits them but finally decides to leave this community for his own safekeeping.\(^2\)

During the latter half of the nineteenth century Negroes themselves began to take up the pen in behalf of their race; but, unfortunately, most of them feared the rising poor whites; therefore, they idealized the ex-planter class and treated the Negro character in the usual manner.\(^3\)

Thus, in summing up the discussion of the Negro in American Literature from about 1840 up to 1891, one sees that the Negro has made very little progress toward attaining humanized treatment. For the most part, he has been, merely, a portion of the scenery to be shifted at the author's will. In early colonial literature, he was used merely as a means of adding verisimilitude to Southern society; in antebellum literature he became the mouthpiece through which the two opposing writers—the antislavery and proslavery—made their arguments more effective. In reality; he was no longer a Negro, but a white man attired in a Negro's outward apparel, with his traditional characteristics thrown in to

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\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 255, 273, 281.

\(^3\) J. Saunders Redding, op. cit., p. 25.
give life and zest. To the writers of the reconstructive era, he was still the mouthpiece of two opposing writers - the antebellum glorifiers, and those who were not, with his traditional characteristics of irresponsibility, carefree ness, profound happiness, humbleness, simpleness and intensely religious thrown in. However, it cannot be denied that the latter group of writers came nearer toward individualizing the Negro than any. Frequently, many of their authors varied their characters from the abject, obsequious Negro, and developed the rebellious Negro with human ideas.

Yet, despite these certain slight variations made by Joel Chandler Harris, George Washington Cable, Mark Twain and Tourgee in their Negro characters, most of their Negro creations maintain the same stereotype characteristics that had been assigned earlier to the Negro by such writers as Cooper, Poe, Stowe and Page, and the Negro maintained his position in literature as a type rather than as a human being.
CHAPTER II.
MELVILLE AND THE NATIVES OF THE PACIFIC

Melville was, undoubtedly, the first literary artist to write largely from first-hand experience on the South Sea natives. During his day and time, it was an unusual feat for a man to leave his comfortable home to penetrate the heart of Polynesia. Few men did; and those few who did take such an adventure merely touched the surfaces, and never penetrated the heart as Melville; and as a result, a continuous flow of reports came back to the white man's country glorifying the accomplishments of Christian missionaries and giving a hideous picture of heathendom; while, on the other hand, Melville actually lived with these people, enjoyed their hospitality, and in many cases shared in their festivities. Naturally, his reports were, for the most part, the results of actual observations.

Since Melville had been held captive in Typee Valley, and had been the eye-witness of some of its most hideous festivals, he would have been amply justified in falling in line with his precursors and contemporaries who built up a biased picture of the native and who presented only the darker side of his character; but instead of doing so

1 Recent investigations have shown that not all of Melville's reports on the South Sea islands were taken wholly from his own observations, but that many were reproductions of sea stories related by other adventurers. See Thomas Russel, "Yarn for Melville's Typee", Philological Quarterly, XVI (January, 1930), pp. 18-29, "Melville's Use of Some Source in the Encantadas", American Literature, III (January, 1932), pp. 432-456. And cf. E. H. Scudder, "Melville's Benito Cereno and Captain Delano's Voyages", Publications of Modern Language Association, XLIII (June, 1928), pp. 502-532.
2 Raymond M. Weaver, op. cit., p. 205.
he made a complete investigation of every phase of their lives and reported what he saw.

Probably, one of the most important phases of the social life of the natives was their religious life, which Melville accurately portrays. Their religion consists of two distinct parts—pagan and Christian. Unlike most writers, Melville observed their idolatrous rites just as carefully as their Christian worship, seeing both with the same unprejudiced eye. He admits that many of their pagan religious ceremonies were withheld from him; and out of respect for and appreciation of their reverence of his religion, he did not pry into theirs:

...As the islanders always maintained a discreet reserve with regard to my own peculiar views on religion, I thought it would be excessively ill-bred in me to pry into theirs.

However, he was greatly impressed by one of their pagan beliefs and gave an accurate account of it. He described how the effigy of a dead warrior had been placed in a canoe and stationed in a secluded section of the valley, as symbolic of a warrior taking his journey to the unknown. When Melville questioned Kory-Kory, his faithful servant, on the meaning, Kory-Kory replied:

...the chief was paddling his way to the realms of bliss, and breadfruit—the Polynesian heaven—where every moment the breadfruit trees dropped their ripened spheres to the ground, and where there was no end to the coconuts and bananas; there they repose through the livelong eternity upon mats much finer than those of Typee; and every day bathed their glowing limbs in rivers of coco-nut oil.

1Herman Melville, "Typee", Romances of Herman Melville, New York, Tudor Publishing Company, 1931, p. 122. For this study the same edition was used for Mardi, Omoo, White Jacket, Redburn, Israel Potter and Moby Dick.

2Ibid., p. 123.
As crude and uncivilized as this symbol may have appeared to most spectators, it held a certain charm and appeal that demanded respect; and instead of laughing at their simple pagan attempts to symbolize man and the hereafter, Melville observed it with reverent, sympathetic comprehension. For he says himself that he never passed this spot without paying a silent tribute to this dead warrior and saying:

...'God speed, and a pleasant voyage,'
Aye, paddle away, brave chieftain, to the land of spirits! To the material eye thou makest but little progress; but with the eye of faith, I see thy canoe cleaving the bright waves, which die away on those dimly looming shores of paradise.

Although Melville never learned completely the exact significance of the feast of the calabash, he concluded that it was principally, if not wholly, of a religious character. In the description of this festival, Melville related how the natives had been made the victims of numerous lies told by so-called explorers. From their reports, one would ordinarily believe that human bodies were offered as burnt sacrifices to their gods, and that the ruling body of their pagan church consisted of so many bishops, primates, archdeacons, prebendaries, and other inferior ecclesiastics that the poor natives were more priest-ridden than the inhabitants of the papal state. These reports were, moreover, those obtained not by first-hand experience, but from hearsay, as Melville says:

...The fact is, that there is a vast deal of unintentional humbuggery in some of the accounts we have from scientific men concerning the religious institutions of Polynesia.

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., p. 120.
3 Ibid., p. 121.
These learned tourists generally obtain the greater part of their information from the retired old South Sea rovers, who have domesticated themselves among the barbarous tribes of the Pacific.

In addition to this, Melville explained how these retired tars sought to gain popularity in the eyes of scientific men by repeating hideous 'yarns of the savages' barbarity. Many of the stories told by these seamen were untrue, and were told primarily for the sake of arousing the interest of their visitors. Thinking that they had heard the truth, and believing that it was unnecessary for them to further risk their lives among these blood-thirsty cannibals by lingering longer in the wilderness, these scientific men jotted down a few haphazard notes and returned to their countries to boast of their contact with the natives. Contrary to the majority of accusations made by these men, Melville states:

Now, all I can say is, that in all my excursions through the valley of Typee, I never saw any of these alleged enormities. If any of them are practiced upon the Marquesas Islands they must certainly have come to my knowledge while living for months with a tribe of savages, wholly unchanged from their original primitive condition, and reputed the most ferocious in the South Seas.2

After having made several futile attempts to satisfy his curiosity on the theology and religion of the valley, Melville concluded that he was baffled. Either these people were too lazy or too sensible to waste time trying to solve the abstract points of religion, or else they were unconcerned; but he did discover that religious toleration was in order.3

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 126.
Frequently Melville saw these people become impatient with their wooden idols, and in their anger or disgust, they would kick them over or use them for fuel. Religion to them was just another taboo.¹

Having seen the pagan side, Melville then turned to observe the savages who had been Christianized. One of the first things that disappointed him was the aloof manner in which the missionaries held themselves, not only from the natives but from any forlorn human being with whom they came in contact. As illustration of this breach existing between the natives and the missionaries, Melville describes a typical Tahitian evening:

Of a fine evening in Tahiti -- but they are all fine evenings there -- you may see a bevy of silk bonnets and parasols passing along the Broom Road: Perhaps a band of pale, little white urchins -- sickly exotics -- and, oftener still, sedate, elderly gentlemen, with canes; at whose appearance the natives, here and there, slink into their huts.²

Later, Melville relates how, on one occasion, the missionaries became almost hysterical when he, a lowly sailor whom they considered beneath their station in life, greeted them with a pleasant good-evening.

'Good-evening, ladies', exclaimed I, at last, advancing winningly; 'a delightful air from the sea, ladies.'

Hysterics and hartshorn! who would have thought it? The young lady screamed, and the old one came near fainting. As for myself, I retreated, in double quick time; and scarcely drew breath until safely housed in the calabooza.³

¹ Ibid.
² "Omoo", op. cit., p. 283.
³ Ibid.
According to Melville, every effort was made to keep the natives and the missionaries separated in social activities. Even in schools the natives were segregated from the children of the missionaries to prevent the white children from being morally contaminated with the wicked little savages:

...the two races are kept as far as possible from associating; the avowed reason being, to preserve the young whites from moral contamination. The better to insure this end, every effort is made to prevent them from acquiring the native language.

They went even further at the Sandwich Islands; where, a few years ago, a playground for the children of the missionaries was enclosed with a fence many feet high, the more effectually to exclude the wicked little Hawaiians.  

Melville points out that if the natives were guilty of any immoralities such as the missionaries had accused them of, it was due, primarily, to their contact with the white man's civilization:

...Alas for the poor savages when exposed to the influence of these polluting examples! Unsophisticated and confiding, they are easily led into every vice, and humanity weeps over the ruin thus remorselessly inflicted upon them by European civilizers. Thrice happy are they who, inhabiting some yet undiscovered island in the midst of the ocean, have never been brought into contaminating contact with the white man.

1bid., p. 295.
3Typo, op. cit., p. 19.
Yet these missionaries, whose duty it was to enlighten these people and to convert these so-called savages into Christianity, were so conscious of their moral superiority as well as racial superiority that they wanted to segregate themselves and to live apart.

As the novelist points out, not only did these spiritual messengers segregate themselves but they made it obvious that they felt themselves to be the natives' superiors, and that these people should practically become their slaves in appreciation for the spiritual service that they were rendering them. Melville describes a situation that is almost unbelievable. One of the wives of a missionary had hitched two natives — an old man and a young one — to her cart, just as she would have done any ordinary horses; and when they came to hills where the ascension was difficult and slow she would yell louder for them to pull with all of the strength available. By being younger and shrewder than the elderly man, the young man evaded much of the work and frequently many of the blows that were inflicted on his companion's bare head. This same woman had very willingly gone for the cows back home in New England, but over here she assumed the dominating role of a white person; consequently, she went to the extreme in exhibiting her superiority. Nothing astonished Melville any more than this single act. Here were human beings harnessed to a cart like so many dumb brutes. ¹

¹ Melville, likewise, attacked the unscrupulous means used by the missionaries in converting the native. It seems that many of the missionaries, being fully aware of the existing destitute condition on the islands, and being equally cognizant of the native's natural superstitious nature, were seeking to frighten these people into believing that

their poverty-stricken condition was due to the anger of the white God, who was seeking vengeance on their wicked souls. Being naturally of an emotional temperament, these natives were so frightened that they hastily denied all relationship with pagan worship and fell into the ranks of the Christians without actually knowing what they were doing.¹

At one island, the natives were so determined to impress the missionaries that they were moved by the Holy Spirit, that they rolled their eyes, foamed at the mouth, and fell into strange fits and had to be carried home. Yet, according to Melville, the missionaries could not see through their hypocrisy; or else they did not want to see through it. Their primary purpose was not to aid the natives and to guide them to an enlightened Christianity by reasoning with them as human beings, but it was to convert them regardless of how it should be done. Melville describes the hypocrisy in the island:

> The hypocrisy in matters of religion, so apparent in all Polynesian converts, is most injudiciously nourished in Tahiti, by a zealous and in many cases, coercive superintendence over their spiritual well-being.²

In his final estimate of the work of the missionaries among the natives, Melville concludes that they deserved credit for translating the Bible into the native tongue and for building churches and schools for both children and adults; but, he asserts that, as far as the abolition of the entire system of idolatry, together with many barbarous practices, is concerned, not so much credit is due them as is due

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² Ibid., p. 289.
to the civilizing effects of the natives' actual contacts with the white man over a period of years.\(^1\)

In the same accurate manner that Melville observed the religious phase of these natives' lives, he investigated their social life, paying particular attention to their mode of marriage, their form of government, their feasts and festivals, their social relations with one another, their economic conditions, their taboos, and their general conduct.

As a race of people, these Polynesians were better disciplined and conducted themselves more orderly, without being forced by laws, and officers of the law, than the majority of civilized countries. From all appearances, Melville concluded that there were no legal provisions for the protection of their citizens other than each man's own honesty and virtue. They had an unusual amount of respect for each other's personal property and to infringe upon their neighbors' estate without his permission was unheard of. At night these honest people slept peacefully without the least fear of anyone's disturbing them or entering their unlocked doors to take anything from them; while in the so-called civilized countries, the inhabitants are scarcely safe under the protection of padlock and key.\(^2\) Such a contrast naturally led Melville to reflect:

...These islanders were heathens! savages! Ay, cannibals! and how came they, without the aid of established law, to exhibit, in so eminent a degree, that social order which is the greatest blessing and highest pride of the social state?\(^3\)

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1. Ibid., p. 293. See also Raymond M. Weaver, op. cit., p. 222.
2. "Typee", op. cit., p. 141. Cf. Willard Thorp, op. cit., intro., p.c.: "The invincible process by which the ordered life of the Typees was regulated had convinced Melville that a tacit common-sense law had graven its precepts as virtue and honor on every heart."
3. Ibid.
Later he concludes:

Civilization does not engross all the virtues of humanity; she had not even her full share of them. They flourish in greater abundance and attain greater strength among many barbarous people. The hospitality of the wild Arab, the courage of the North American Indian and the faithful friendships of some of the Polynesian nations, far surpass anything of a similar kind among the polished communities of Europe. If truth and justice, and the better principles of our nature, cannot exist unless enforced by the statute-book, how are we to account for the social conditions of the Typees? ... I will frankly declare, that after passing a few weeks in this valley of the Marquesas, I formed a higher estimate of human nature than I had ever before entertained.

Probably their good social conduct was partly due to their love for one another, which Melville noted. Day in and day out, they worked, played and lived together without the least trouble. In fact, one of the outstanding characteristics which Melville admired was the unanimity of feeling exhibited in all of their actions:

...They showed this spirit of unanimity in every action of life; everything was done in concert and good fellowship.

As they went about their work or play, they sang and laughed like so many children:

During my whole stay on the island I never witnessed a single quarrel, nor anything that in the slightest degree approached even to a dispute. The natives appeared to form one household,

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1 Ibid., p. 142.
2 Ibid.
whose members were bound together
by the ties of strong affection.
The love of kindred I did not so
much perceive, for it seemed blended
in the general love; and where all
were treated as brothers and sisters,
it was hard to tell who were actually
related to each other by blood.1

Melville seems determined to impress this fact upon his readers;
and not only does he glorify the harmonious life of the native, but he
justifies them in any warfare in which they may have engaged to protect
their internal happiness. Likewise, he justifies and explains their
hostile treatment of the white man, on the grounds that the natives were
taught from birth upward that the white man was to be regarded in ab-
horrence. Naturally they were going to protect themselves from anything
that they believed to be dangerous to their well-being:

Let it not be supposed that I have
overdrawn this picture. I have not
done so. Nor let it be urged, that
the hostility of this tribe to for-
eigners, and the hereditary feuds
they carry on against their fellow-island-
ers beyond the mountains, are facts.
Not so: these apparent discrepancies
are easily reconciled. By many a legend-
ary tale of violence and wrong, as well
as by events which have passed before
their eyes, these people have been
taught to look upon white men with
abhorrence.2

Not only is the native taught to fear the white man, but in the majority
of cases where the natives actually molested the white man, the white man
had usually been the aggressor.3

1 Ibid., p. 143.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 27.
As further evidence of the superiority, in some instances, of the natives over civilized nations, Melville contrasts their ability to maintain internal peace with the inability of many civilized countries.

... In many polished countries civil contentions, as well as domestic enmities, are prevalent at the same time that the most atrocious foreign wars are waged. How much less guilty, then, are our islanders, who of these three sins are only chargeable with one, and that the least criminal?

In government, Melville tells us that the organization of these natives was simple, yet orderly. The king, as anywhere else, was head chief and his orders were usually accepted as final. However, one must not mistake the meaning of this to be that the king exercised the policies of the theory of the "Divine Rights of Kings". No one seemed to exert any superior influence; it was just that the people respected his authority and did his simple requests without any comments. It was at a festival that Melville noticed in particular the ranks or classes of people and their respect for authority:

...No one appeared to assume any arrogant pretensions. There was little more than a slight difference in costume to distinguish the chiefs from the other natives. All appeared to mix together freely, and without any reserve; although I noticed that the wishes of a chief, even when delivered in the mildest tone, received the same immediate obedience which elsewhere would have been only accorded to a peremptory command.

1 Ibid., p. 144.
2 Ibid., p. 131.
Although they respected their king they were never made to fear him.\(^1\)

In their marriage rites and customs, Melville respected the natives equally as much as he had in the other phases of their social activities, even though many were, indeed, strange. Melville describes in detail how their marriages were conducted. When the girl is very young she is wooed and wed by some young lad residing in the same abode; and there they remain until both reach maturity. After reaching this maturer state, the girl is wooed and married by a man, who, when he marries her, marries her childhood husband also; and all three live happily together in the same house, both men being, legally, the husbands of the girl. As strange as this may seem, the marriages usually turned out successfully:

...Infidelity on either side is very rare. No man has more than one wife, and no wife of mature years has less than two husbands -- sometimes she has three, but such instances are not frequent:\(^2\)

Usually, the families of these marriages were very small and it was very rare to see a string of children trailing behind a woman.\(^3\)

Probably much of the success in the married life of the natives was due, primarily, to the high esteem that the men had for the women. Hard labor and ill-treatment that confront many women of uncivilized countries was unknown on these islands, and the tasks that these women performed were slight and did not require the loss of much energy, such as polishing drinking vessels or platting mats.

\(^1\) Ibid.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 135.
\(^3\) Ibid.
...Nowhere are the ladies more assiduously courted; nowhere are they better appreciated as the contributors to our highest enjoyments; and nowhere are they more sensible of their power.  

Noticeable here, also, is the fact that Melville, out of respect for these people, refers to the native women as ladies, as he would have done in the case of white women, a title which few, if any, of the other American writers have used in reference to women of the darker races.

To Melville, the funeral and burial rites were equally as peculiar, if not more so, than the marriage rites. Evidently, their cemeteries were kept in secluded places to prevent the inhabitants from being constantly reminded of that unknown journey to the land of coconuts and breadfruit; for Melville never remembered seeing one in the city proper. Whenever a person was to be buried, the inhabitants of that particular vicinity where the person lived, feasted and made merry in practically the same hilarious manner as was done at weddings.

In industry, for the most part, these people were far behind civilized countries; for they would rather spend their time dozing in the sun than to engage in any form of work. According to Melville, this is due to the introduction of a white man's civilization into a native environment. For many years, the native's chief occupation was tappa making, a slow hand process in which they were able to engage without expending much energy; but with the introduction of the white man's improved machinery and modernized implements, the poor native became the victim of social maladjustment. Consequently, the entire island was taken over by the white man, leaving the maladjusted native to his own indolent fate:

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1Ibid., p. 143.
2Cf. Robert S. Forsythe, op. cit., pp. 87-88, quoting Charles R. Anderson: ...'Omoo was an implicit sermon on the evil effects of civilizing the "Noble Savage", with Rousseau's Discourse as a text:...'.
The fact is, that the mechanical and agricultural employments of civilized life, require a kind of exertion altogether too steady and sustained to agree with an indolent people like the Polynesiand. Calculated for a state of nature, in a climate providentially adapted to it, they are unfit for any other. Nay, as a race, they cannot otherwise long exist.

Yet, in speaking of the innate indolence of these people, Melville, unlike most writers, took the position of an unprejudiced observer, who merely states the facts without censuring, satirizing or ridiculing them in any way.

Not only were these people indolent, but they were happy-go-lucky and lived for today only. Free from the cares that infested the inhabitants of civilized countries, these people lived almost carefree.

To illustrate this, Melville describes the native life:

...In my various wanderings through the vale, and as I became better acquainted with the character of its inhabitants, I was more struck with the light-hearted joyousness that everywhere prevailed. The minds of these simple savages, unoccupied by matters of graver moment, were capable of deriving the utmost delight from circumstances which would have passed unnoticed in more intelligent communities.

Later, Melville re-emphasizes this observation:

Nothing can be more uniform and undiversified than the life of the Typees; one tranquil day of ease and happiness follows another in quiet succession.

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1 'Omoo', op. cit., p. 297.
3 Ibid., p. 108.
It is very probable that this tranquil happiness so prevalent in these islands was due to the absence of many modern inventions, as Melville says:

There were none of those thousand sources of irritation that the ingenuity of civilized man has created to mar his own felicity. There were no foreclosures of mortgages, no protested notes, no bills payable, no debts of honour in Typee; no unreasonable tailors and shoemakers, perversely bent on being paid; no duns of any description; no assault and battery attorneys, to foment discord...., or to sum up all in one word -- no Money! "The root of all evil" was not to be found in the valley.

Every one lived more harmoniously there than the people of civilized countries -- the children and youth included.

Here you would see a parcel of children frolicking together the livelong day, and no quarrelling, no contention, among them. The same number in our own land could not have played together for the space of an hour without biting or scratching one another. There you might have seen a throng of young females, not filled with envyings of each other's charms, nor displaying the ridiculous affectations of gentility, nor yet moving in whale-bone corsets, like so many automatons, but free, artificially happy, and unconstrained.

Like most uncivilized people, the South Sea natives indulged in many festivals and celebrations, each of which was symbolic of some outstanding happening in their country. Many of these festivals were foolish and even simple to Melville, but whenever he was invited to partici-

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2 Ibid., p. 146.
pate in any, he entered in whole-heartedly with the deepest respect and sympathy. At one of these gala affairs, Melville donned the natives' costume and became the beau of the celebration. On another occasion, Melville participated in the eating of raw fish with the natives. Wisely, Melville says:

When at Rome do as the Romans do, I held to be so good a proverb, that being in Typee I made a point of doing as the Typees did.¹

However, there was one celebration in which neither Melville nor any other white man could have participated, and that was the practice of eating human flesh. Out of his sense of fairness, Melville does something in his explanation that few, if any of the others, have done; and that is to explain fully all sides of this custom. Dissatisfied with previous reports made on cannibalism, Melville sought to find the truth of the whole affair. He first suspected that these happy carefree natives of Typee valley engaged in cannibalism when he saw three moderate sized packages about the shape of a human skull, swinging above his head; and his suspicion was verified when he accidentally stumbled into a group of savages, who were busily engaged in unwrapping one of these packages which, when opened, proved to be a human skull. But even then, he did not content himself with previous reports and remarks on cannibalism:²

The reader will ere long have reason to suspect that the Typees are not free from the guilt of cannibalism; and he will then, perhaps, charge me with admiring a people against whom so odious a crime is chargeable. But this only enormity in their character is not half so horrible as it is usually described.... for cannibalism to a certain moderate extent is practiced

¹Ibid., p. 146.
²Ibid., p. 163.
among several of the primitive tribes in the Pacific, but it is upon the bodies of slain enemies alone; and horrible and fearful as the custom is, immeasurably as it is to be abhorred and condemned, still I assert that those who indulge in it are in other respects humane and virtuous.

It is almost unbelievable that an American white man could have uttered the last statement in view of the contemporary opinion of cannibalism; and yet this was not the only time that he made such a statement; for one day the following conversation took place between Toby and Melville:

"Why, they are cannibals!" said Toby on one occasion when I eulogized the tribe. "Granted," I replied, "but a more humane gentlemanly and amiable set of epicures do not probably exist in the Pacific".

In addition to saying that they are "humane and virtuous" despite the indulgence of such a practice as cannibalism, Melville goes even further to show that civilized countries engage in practices which are equally as bad, if not worse. To illustrate this, Melville gives an example of a brutal practice in which England engaged:

...and I ask whether the mere eating of human flesh so very far exceeds in barbarity that custom which only a few years since was practiced in enlightened England -- a convicted traitor, perhaps a man found guilty of honesty, patriotism, and such-like heinous crimes, had his head lopped off with a huge ax, his bowels dragged out and thrown into a fire; while his body, carved into four quarters, was with his head, exposed upon pikes, and permitted to rot and fester among the public haunts of men.

1 Ibid., p. 144.  
2 Ibid., p. 73.  
3 Ibid., p. 91.
Still further, says Melville, what can be more ghastly than war in which civilized countries so frequently engage? War where men are maimed for life - limbs torn from the body, bodies mangled. And yet, says Melville, these were the civilized people who shuddered at the horribleness of cannibalism.  

After having made a thorough observation of every phase of the natives' lives in general, Melville could not feel that he was doing justice to the natives unless he paid some strict attention to certain outstanding individuals of the valley. Probably, the man closest to Melville and dearest to him was Kory-Kory, his faithful bodyguard. In appearance Kory-Kory was almost hideous to behold: 

... Kory-Kory, though the most devoted and best-natured serving-man in the world, was, alas! a hideous object to look upon. He was some twenty-five years of age, and about six feet in height, robust and well-made, and of the most extraordinary aspect. His head was carefully shaven, with the exception of two circular spots, about the size of a dollar, near the top of the cranium, where the hair, permitted to grow of an amazing length, was twisted up in two prominent knots, that gave him the appearance of being decorated with a pair of horns.

In addition to this hideous facial appearance, Melville says that he was tattooed with horizontal stripes. However, in describing Kory-Kory's ugliness and hideousness, Melville once again assumes the position of an unprejudiced onlooker; and instead of attempting to produce comedy and ridicule, as was done in James Fenimore Cooper's description of Caesar Thompson, he merely gives an accurate picture of Kory-Kory as he actually was. There is a note of genuine tenderness in his feeling

1Ibid.
2Ibid., p. 64.
for Kory-Kory:

But it seems really heartless in me to write thus of the poor islander, when I owe perhaps to his unremitting attentions the very existence I now enjoy. Kory-Kory, I mean thee no harm in what I say in regard to thy outward adornings; but they were a little curious to my unaccustomed sight, and therefore I dilate upon them. But to underrate or forget thy faithful services is something I could never be guilty of, even in the giddiest moment of my life.¹

In describing Kory-Kory's father, Melville tells of his gigantic frame, in addition to his possession of certain native idiosyncracies:

But despite his eccentricities, Marheyo was a most paternal and warm-hearted old fellow, and in this particular not a little resembled his son Kory-Kory.²

Tinor, the mother of Kory-Kory, was considered by Melville as being one of the most industrious persons in Typee valley, whether male or female. She was constantly engaged in domestic duties against which the average native woman would have rebelled:

Never suppose that she was a termagant or a shrew for all this; she had the kindliest heart in the world, and acted towards me in particular in a truly maternal manner, occasionally putting some little morsel of choice food into my hand, some outlandish kind of savage sweetmeat or pastry, like a doting mother petting a sickly urchin with tarts and sugar-plums. Warm indeed are my remembrance of the dear, good, affectionate old Tinor.³

¹Ibid., p. 64.
²Ibid., p. 65.
³Ibid.,
One of Melville's most affable companions of the female sex during his captivity on the island was Fayaway, a beautiful, young native girl, who frequently came to visit Melville and to comfort him. During these visits, he grew to like her not only for her beauty, but also for her intellect:

This gentle being had early attracted my regard, not only from her extraordinary beauty, but from the attractive cast of her countenance, singularly expressive of intelligence and humanity.  

She was probably the only native who seemed actually to comprehend the unfortunate state of Melville and his companion, Toby; she seemed to realize that these two men were torn from their friends and kindred and probably would never be returned again.

...Whenever she entered the house, the expression of her face indicated the liveliest sympathy...  

Of the men of importance that Melville encountered while being held captive, Marnoo, the taboo man, was probably the best liked. Since he was a taboo man, which in our country would be termed an ambassador, he was privileged to travel wherever he pleased from village to village without fear of molestation. As he approached Typee village, Melville observed his appearance:

...The stranger could not have been more than twenty-five years of age, and was a little above the ordinary height; had he been a single hair's breadth taller, the matchless symmetry of his form would have been destroyed. His unclad limbs were beautifully

1 Ibid., p. 80.  
2 Ibid., p. 81.
formed; whilst the elegant outline of his figure together with his beardless cheeks, might have entitled him to the distinction of standing for the statue of the Polynesian Apollo; and indeed the oval of his countenance and the regularity of every feature reminded me of an antique bust.¹

Through his striking personality, as well as the authority that he possessed, Marnoo was able to gain the attention and admiration of everyone — Melville included:

Never, certainly, had I beheld so powerful an exhibition of natural eloquence as Marnoo displayed during the course of his oration. The grace of the attitudes into which he threw his flexible figure, the striking gestures of his naked arms, and above all, the fire which shot from his brilliant eyes, imparted an effect to the continually changing accents of his voice, of which the most accomplished orator might have been proud.²

From all appearance, Melville admired Marnoo for more than one thing; and later this versatile man aided him in making his escape from the island.

Melville was very appreciative of what the natives did for him while he was being held captive; and he never failed to give them credit for anything that they did to make his stay pleasant. Stranded on this island, many miles from home, with no means of ever sending a message home, Melville probably had many horrible thoughts as to what would be his fate. As he himself states, he had many a silent shudder when he reflected on his condition; nevertheless, he never allowed this to overshadow his gratefulness to them for their kindness toward him. Regard-

¹Ibid., p. 98.
²Ibid., p. 100.
ing his treatment, he states:

All the inhabitants of the valley treated me with great kindness; but as to the household of Marheyo, with whom I was now permanently domiciled, nothing could surpass their efforts to minister to my comfort.

So anxious was Marheyo to please his guest that he would inconvenience himself to obtain certain food that Melville liked.

Again and again Melville refers to their hospitality in the same grateful tone.

In looking back to this period, and calling to remembrance the numberless proofs of kindness and respect which I received from the natives of the valley, I can scarcely understand how it was that in the midst of so many consolatory circumstances, my mind should still have been consumed by the most dismal forebodings, and have remained a prey to the profoundest melancholy.

Hence, from all evidence of Melville's reports on his stay in the South Seas, it is evident that he judged what he saw with impartial eyes. Like other writers who entered into these islands, Melville had heard conventional reports and opinions concerning the ignorance and inhuman qualities which characterized these people; for he says himself that he felt uneasy even when he was warmly welcomed into the village.

...But what dependence could be placed upon the fickle passions which sway the bosom of a savage. His constancy and treachery are proverbial.

1 Ibid., p. 84.
2 Ibid., p. 87.
4 "Typee", op. cit., p. 59.
Still he was not content to bring back reports concerning these people without making a thorough study of every phase of their existence. Beginning with their religious activities, he made a complete investigation of their social, political and economic existence, never failing to give the virtues as well as the vices of every practice. He presented the pagan side of their religion as well as their Christianized side; he explained many of their customs such as the marriage rites, and cannibalism. In addition he gave the reason for their hostility to the white man, and explained their indolence. After having stated the actual facts, without satirizing, censuring or ridiculing, he went even further to show how, in certain respects, such as their incessant happiness, freedom, loyalty, honesty, and respect for authority, they were the white man's superior, and pointed out that most of the crime and vice that these people have acquired has been obtained through contact with the white man's civilization.

In describing certain individuals of the village, Melville was equally as accurate as he was in describing the native life. As Raymond Weaver states, Melville did not fail to see the loyalty in his servant, Kory-Kory, because he was a native; Tinor to him was just as warmhearted and industrious as any white woman. No one could have been more congenial and obliging than Mar beyo; Marnoo, with his versatile personality was a true friend. Melville expressed more than mere gratitude to these people for their kindness to him; he expressed a deep feeling of love. Behind those twisted knots of hair; behind those peculiar pagan rites, marriage rites; behind all of their idiosyncrasies,

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1 Raymond M. Weaver, op. cit., p. 209.
Melville saw what most writers failed to see — the man; and from all evidence it appears that he was sincere when he said:

It is too often the case, that civilized beings sojourning among savages soon come to regard them with disdain and contempt. But though in many cases this feeling is almost natural it is not defensible; and it is wholly wrong. Why should we condemn them? Because we are better than they? Assuredly not; ...We are all of us Anglo-Saxons, Dyaks, and Indians — sprung from one head, and made in one image. And if we regret this brotherhood now, we shall be forced to join hands hereafter. A misfortune is not a fault; and good luck is not meritorious. The savage is born savage; and the civilized being but inherits his civilization, nothing more.

Let us not disdain them but pity. And whenever we recognize the image of God, let us reverence it, though it hung from the gallows.

CHAPTER III

MELVILLE AND THE NEGRO

After noting to what extent Melville was influenced by contemporary opinion in his treatment of the South Sea islands, and being aware of the superficial manner in which the Negro, as well as the South Sea natives, has been depicted in American literature from 1840 until the present time, one would naturally be interested in noting to what extent Melville's Negro characters were similar to or different from the general portrayal of the Negro as a literary figure.

In Melville's novels dealing with the South Sea natives, the entire plot is centered around the natives and their customs; consequently, Melville not only portrays individual personalities of certain characters, but he also gives a detailed discussion of their social customs. While in novels containing Negro characters, the main plot is centered around the adventures of sea-faring men, and the Negro is merely a part of the crew. For this reason, Melville does not enter into a detailed portrayal of Negro life, but he merely gives character sketches of Negroes on board the various ships. Whether or not Herman Melville was influenced by the American prejudice toward the Negro can only be determined by observing the Negro character in his works, and by noting whether or not he clung to the traditional "type" Negro or created realistic characters.

Since Omoo was Melville's earliest novel in which the Negro is portrayed, it will be used as a starting point of a study of all of his works in which Negro characters appear. The first Negro to make his appearance in this novel is Baltimore, the black cook, whose name was derived from the place of his birth. Baltimore represents the typical
good-natured Negro of ante-bellum and post-bellum days. In fact, says Melville, he was too docile:

Baltimore’s tribulations were indeed sore; there was no peace for him day nor night. Poor fellow! he was altogether too good-natured. Say what they will about easy-tempered people, it is far better, on some accounts, to have the temper of a wolf.

Black Dan, on the other hand, was the antithesis of Baltimore. Contrary to the typical portrayal of the Negro character in American literature, he was rebellious, gruff and outspoken, speaking what he thought regardless of person, place or time, without fear of any serious consequences; and as a result, Melville says:

...Whoever thought of taking liberties with gruff Black Dan?

An illustration of Black Dan’s gruffness may be found in one of his morning outbursts with one of the sailors. Flash Jack, the ex-baker, was very soft-hearted and frequently took up much time with the poor mistreated land-lubber Ropey, who, because of his clumsiness as a sailor, was subjected to the rebuffs of his fellow sailors. On this particular morning, Flash Jack was conversing with Ropey on the hard fare that they had to endure on board the ship and he began to question Ropey in regard to what he would be eating were he at home at that moment. So enraptured was poor Ropey on reflecting on such a pleasant thought as eating a decent meal at home, that he forgot how loudly he was talking and failed to notice that he was attracting the attention of the other

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1 "Omoo", op. cit., p. 214.
2 Ibid.
members of the crew. On hearing the mention of good food, Black Dan, who was seated near, became so disgusted that he angrily interrupted Hopy's discourse:

'A shark-steak, and be hanged to you!' roared Black Dan, with an oath.

Still another instance of Black Dan's gruffness may be found in the brusque manner in which he spoke to Wilson, one of the officers. The men on board the ship had had some disturbance among themselves and, as punishment, they had been placed in chains and brought before Wilson and other officers. After having thoroughly eyed every one of the men, Wilson turned to make his departure, but before he left, Black Dan, who had become infuriated over the manner in which they were treated, allowed his anger to overpower his sense of respect:

'Oh! Get along with your gamin, counsellor,' exclaimed Black Dan, absolutely indignant that his understanding should be thus insulted.

On another occasion, Black Dan voiced the sentiments of the entire crew in one of his usual outbursts. It was the day that they were carried before the captain, and consul for trial concerning their disturbance on board the ship. Many papers which bore legal evidence against every one of them were presented, among which was a petition drawn up to depose the captain. To make his case more substantial, the consul held up the paper and questioned the accused as to whether or not the signatures were genuine. But when it came Black Dan's time to testi-

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1 Ibid., p. 222.
2 Ibid., p. 253.
fy to his own signature, he refused to answer:

"What's the use of asking that?"
said Black Dan; "Captain Guy there, knows as well as we who they are."¹

Showing more courage and independence than the white members of the crew, he spoke up when the others hesitated to do so.

The very fact that Melville admits that Baltimore was too docile and further states that he admired Black Dan's gruffness reveals that he was unlike the average American writer of the nineteenth century, who exalted the docile "Uncle Tom" type and denounced the rebellious Negro. For instance, Thomas Nelson Page in his No Haid Pawn has a rebellious Negro whom he called the most brutal Negro that he ever saw. This seems to be Page's general attitude toward all Negroes who in any way are defiant of the white man; on the other hand, he exalts such docile Negroes as Mammy Kendra, and Tarquin.²

Mention is made of another Negro, Billy Loon; and although he is not as fully characterized as the other two, his description is typical of the flashy, showy, jolly type of Negro.

Billy Loon, a jolly little Negro, tricked out in a soiled blue jacket, studded all over with rusty bell-buttons, and garnished with shabby gold lace, is the royal drummer and pounder of the tambourine.³

In 1848, Redburn was published and in it are two Negroes who

¹ Ibid., p. 268.
³ Ibid., p. 326.
are fully characterized, and another, like Billy Loon, of whom merely mention is made. The two fully developed characters are: Thompson, the cook, and Lavender, the steward.

Thompson represents the typical religious, lazy, shiftless, sloven Negro character who spends much of his time poring over a greasy Bible reading aloud while the pots are boiling. Melville describes him in the following manner:

Now, our doctor was a serious old fellow, much given to metaphysics, and used to talk about original sin.

Frequently, Thompson would call upon members of the crew to interpret certain passages for him; and when they were unable to do so and would try to convince him that there was no exact interpretation, he would merely shake his greasy head, and try to puzzle out the situation for himself.

Since Thompson was such a devout religious Negro, on board the ship, it was only natural that Melville should conclude that he was a member in some Negro church in New York; and the frequent visits of his friends on board the ship aided in verifying Melville's thoughts; for he says:

...For when we lay at the wharf, I remembered that a committee of three reverend looking old darkies, who, besides their natural canons, wore quaker-cut black coats, and broad-brimmed black hats and white neck-clothes; these colored gentlemen called upon him, and remained conversing with him at his cook-house door.

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1 "Redburn", op. cit., p. 1518.
for more than an hour; and before they went away they stepped inside, and the sliding doors were closed; and then we heard some one reading aloud and preaching; and after that a psalm was sung and a benediction given;...

As far as Thompson's cleanliness was concerned, Melville had his doubts, for he says:

...It was well for him that he was a black cook, for I have no doubt his color kept us from seeing his dirty face: I never saw him wash but once, and that was at one of his own soup pots one dark night when he thought no one saw him.

But despite his unkempt person, Thompson was very fond of his cook house; and to add to its dignified appearance, he placed a mat before the door and wrote his name on the door in red chalk.

Friendly and chummy with Thompson was a handsome, flashy, sentimental Negro steward, known as Lavender, who is a replica of the usual presentation of the showy Negro "dude".

Mr. Thompson was a great crony of the steward's, who, being a handsome, dandy mulatto, that had once been a barber in West-Broadway, went by the name of Lavender. I have mentioned the gorgeous turban he wore when Mr. Jones and I visited the captain in the cabin. He never wore that turban at sea, though; but sported an uncommon head of frizzled hair, just like the large, round brush, used for washing windows, called a Pope's Head.

He kept it well perfumed with Cologne water of which he had a large supply,

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1 Ibid., pp. 1516-1519.
2 Ibid., p. 1496.
the relics of his West-Broadway trade. His clothes, being mostly cast-off suits of the captain of a London liner, whom he had sailed with upon many previous voyages, were all in the height of the exploded fashions and of every kind of color and cut. He had claret-colored suits, and snuff-colored suits, and red velvet vests, and buff and brimstone pantaloons, and several full suits of black.

In addition to his already flashy costume, he always wore an "uncommon pursy" ring on his forefinger with a stone in it that he called a diamond, but which in reality looked more like a piece of glass than anything else.

Besides being flashy, he was, as Melville says:

...a sentimental sort of darky, and reads the "Three Spaniards", and "Charlotte Temple", and carried a lock of frizzled hair in his pocket, which he frequently volunteered to show to people with his handkerchief to his eyes."

Here Melville deviates slightly from the general portrayal of the Negro in American literature and creates a Negro, who, despite his possessing the usual flashy, showy characteristics frequently assigned to the Negro, was a sentimental person who spent much of his time reading such books as "Three Spaniards" and "Charlotte Temple". Noticeable also is the fact that Melville makes use of the term "darky" in reference to Lavender. Whether he meant it in derision is difficult to say. It is significant that this term appears in his works only twice. Among

1 Ibid., p. 1519.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
Southern writers it was a commonly used appellation with a connotation of banter.

Every evening these two old cronies, Thompson and Lavender, would sit on the porch of the cook house and gossip on the events that occurred in the cabin during the day; and then Thompson would proceed to give one of his lectures.

And sometimes Mr. Thompson would take down his Bible, and read a chapter for the edification of Lavender, whom he knew to be a sad profligate and gay deceiver ashore; addicted to every youthful indiscretion. He would read over to him the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife and hold Joseph up to him as a young man of excellent principles whom he ought to imitate, and not be guilty of his indiscretions anymore. And Lavender would look serious, and say that he knew that it was all true—he was a wicked youth, he knew it, he had broken a good many hearts, and many eyes were weeping for him even in New York, and Liverpool, and London and Havre.1

But being as conceited as he was, Lavender blamed his profligacy on his handsome face and fine head of hair, plus his graceful figure, which of course, he was not to blame for possessing.

In addition to these two Negroes, Thompson and Lavender, Melville makes mention of a superstitious Negro fortune-teller known as DeSquauck, whose house the sailors frequented while in Liverpool to have their dreams interpreted. Speaking of one sailor, Melville says:

And he frequently related his interviews in Liverpool with a fortune-teller, an old negro woman by the name of DeSquauck, whose house was much frequented by sailors; and how she had two black cats, with remarkably green eyes, and nightcaps on their

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1Ibid., p. 1820.
2Ibid.
heads, solemnly seated on a claw-footed table near the old goblin; when she felt his pulse, to tell what was going to befall him. 1

DeSquak might very easily be classified with the superstitious Negro who believes in charms and signs; and whose role in American literature has been very important.

Following Redburn was White Jacket, published in 1850, which contained fine Negro characters -- Coffee, Sunshine, May-day, Rose-water, and an officer on board whose name Melville failed to give. Typical of the usual comical, happy, carefree Negroes are Coffee, the head cook, Rose-water, May-day and Sunshine, his assistants, who sang while performing their chores.

Old Coffee, the head cook, is described in the following manner:

...In our frigate, this personage was a dignified coloured gentlemen, whom the men dubbed "Old Coffee". 2

Melville explains in the beginning that the work of a ship's cook required very little skill, as his most important task was

...to keep bright and clean the three huge coppers, or caldrons, in which many hundred pounds of beef were daily boiled. 3

And yet this dignified old cook, Coffee, always assured the crew that he had completed a course in cooking under the strict observance of the celebrated Coleman and Stetson at the New York Astor House. His assistants, Rose-water, May-day and Sunshine performed their chores to the...

1 Ibid., p. 1522.
2 Ibid., 1143.
3 Ibid.
tune of some song, usually led by Sunshine who was known as the bard of the trio.

...To this end, Rose-water, Sunshine, and May-day every morning sprang into their respective apartments, stripped to the waist, and well provided with bits of soap-stone and sand. By exercising these in a very vigorous manner, they threw themselves into a violent perspiration, and put a fine polish upon the interior of the copper,

Sunshine was the bard of the trio; and while all three would be busily employed clattering their soap-stones against the metal, he would exhort them with some remarkable St. Domingo melodies;...

Noticeable is the fact that the songs that these Negroes sang were not the typical gig or minstrel songs so frequently found in American literature, but were St. Domingo melodies; and Melville not only recognized their work songs and spirituals, but he appreciated them. Here is an early literary tribute to the "remarkable melodies" of the Negro.

Opposed to these happy, carefree Negro servants who, in some respects, represent the "type" Negro, was a Negro officer on board the ship, whose name Melville failed to give. As the main duty of the crew on board a man-of-war is to fight, it is highly essential for the men to be well-trained; and as a means of giving the men the best training and supervision available, those on board this ship were divided into groups known as "guns" with a captain at the head of each group. Melville describes his carronade:

The carronade at which I was stationed was known as "Gun No. 5", on
the first lieutenant's quarter-bell.
Among our gun's crew, however, it
was known as "Black Bet". This
name was bestowed by the captain
of the gun -- a fine negro -- in
honour of his sweetheart, a 1
coloured lady of Philadelphia...

After the mention of this captain being a Negro, no further reference is
made to his race; and as one reads the novel one would forget that this
officer is a Negro as he is treated with the same respect as any other
officer, and performed his duties equally as well and accurately as
any other captain on board. Melville describes one of their practice
skirmishes in which this Negro captain is displaying his capabilities as
a leader:

Such a sea-martinet was our
captain, that sometimes we were
roused from our hammocks at night;
when a scene would ensue that it is not
in the power of pen and ink to describe.
Five hundred men spring to their feet,
dress themselves, take up their bedding,
and run to the nettings and stow it;
then hie to their stations -- each man
jostling his neighbour -- some slow,
some aloft; some this way, some that;
and in less than five minutes the frigate
is ready for action, and as still as
the grave, almost every man precisely
where he would be were an enemy actually
about to be engaged.2

In 1850, **Moby Dick**, Melville's most widely known and best
appreciated novel, was published. In it four Negroes play comparative-
ly outstanding roles -- Queequeg, Daggoo, Fleece and Black Pip.

As the story opens, Ishmael, the narrator, is telling how

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1 Ibid., p. 1149.
2 Ibid.
difficult it was on that particular day for him to secure a boarding place; and when he finally secured one it was lacking in many of the necessary facilities -- the most important one being an insufficient amount of rooms, which naturally forced some patrons to occupy the same quarters. Unfortunately, it fell Ishmael's lot to occupy a room with an African harpooner who was still out. Being very weary from his hard day's search for an abode, Ishmael retired very early, only to be awakened and frightened by the entrance of this gigantic, hideous looking African. As he lay there, undetected by the African, eyes this strange person, watching his peculiar nocturnal preparations, and hearing his peculiar prayer, cold shivers were racing up and down his spinal column; yet he maintained presence of mind enough to try to calm his fear by philosophizing in the following manner:

...And what is it, thought I, after all? It's only his outside; a man, can be honest in any sort of skin.'

Just as he had mustered enough strength to make some sort of noise so as to let Queequeq know that he was in the bed, Queequeq plunged into bed beside him, tomahawk and all. Frightened and terrified beyond his wits, Ishmael made some sort of noise and rolled over toward the wall; whereupon Queequeq seized his tomahawk and began to flash it violently saying that if whoever was in the bed did not speak he would kill him. Too frightened to do anything else, Ishmael called for the landlord, and when he came, he explained to Queequeq that Ishmael was his roommate and meant him no harm; with this explanation, Ishmael and Queequeq became stanch bed mates and both slept peacefully all night.

2 Ibid., p. 771.
3 Ibid., p. 773.
On awakening the following morning, Ishmael discovered that Queequeg's arms were entwined around him in a most loving manner; but this was too much for Ishmael; so he awoke him and told him that such a position made sleeping difficult. Queequeg removed his arms and proceeded to dress himself for the day, and just as Ishmael had watched him perform his somewhat peculiar nocturnal duties, he, likewise, did the same thing in regard to Queequeg's morning duties. In fact, he was almost rude in his constant staring, while Queequeg treated him with the utmost respect and decency, for he says:

...Thinks I, Queequeg, under the circumstances, this is a very civilized overture; but, the truth is, these savages have an innate sense of delicacy, say what you will; it is marvellous how essentially polite they are. I pay this particular compliment to Queequeg, because he treated me with so much civility and consideration, while I was guilty of great rudeness; staring at him from the bed, and watching all his toilette motions; for the time my curiosity getting the better of my breeding. Nevertheless, a man like Queequeg you don't see every day, and he and his ways were well worth unusual regarding.

Finally, after much deliberation on the matter, Ishmael concluded that Queequeg was not nearly so horrible looking as he appeared to him at first, and after all he was a human being just as any one else:

...For all his tattoos he was on the whole a clean, comely looking cannibal. What's all this fuss I have been making about, thought I to myself, the man's a human being just as I am: he has just as much reason to fear me, as I have to be afraid of him. Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian."
After becoming reconciled to Queequeg as a bed mate, Ishmael began to study him and to try to understand what type of heart lurked behind those tattoo marks. One day when he returned to the Spouter-Inn, he found Queequeg alone, idly whittling away at the nose of his little black idol god and whistling a heathenish tune; it was at this particular time that he began his analysis, for he says:

With much interest I sat watching him. Savage though he was, and hideously marred about the face—at least to my taste—his countenance yet had a something in it which was by no means disagreeable. You cannot hide the soul. Through all his unearthly tattooings, I thought I saw the traces of a simple honest heart; and in his large, deep eyes, fiery black and bold, there seemed tokens of a spirit that would dare a thousand devils. And besides all this, there was a certain lofty bearing about the Pagan, which even his uncouthness could not altogether mar.

In addition, there was something about his face and head which made Ishmael believe that Queequeg had never had a creditor. And as he sat regarding this African, not as a savage, but as a human being, he began to reflect upon Queequeg's condition. Here was a man thousands of miles away from his native land, thrown in with people who were equally as strange and peculiar to him as he was to them; and yet he appeared to be entirely at ease, preserving the utmost serenity, satisfied with himself as a companion, and as Melville says: "Always equal to himself." Such serenity caused Melville to reflect:

...Surely this was a touch of fine philosophy; though no doubt, he had

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1 Ibid., p. 788.
2 Ibid., p. 789.
never heard there was such a thing
as that. But, perhaps, to be true
philosophers, we mortals should not
be conscious of so living or so
striving."

Still studying this native, Ishmael seemed to feel a change coming over
his whole being, for he says:

As I sat there in that now
lonely room; the fire burning low,
in that mild stage when, after its
first intensity has warmed the air,
it then only glows to be looked at;
the evening shades and phantoms
gathering round the casements, and
peering in upon us silent, solitary
twain; the storm booming without in
solemn swells; I began to be sensible
of strange feelings. I felt a melt-
ing in me. No more my splintered
heart and maddened hand were turned
against the wolfish world. This
soothing savage had redeemed it.
There he sat, his very indifference
speaking a nature in which there
lurked no civilised hypocricies and
bland deceits...

As wild and uncivilised as Queequeg may have appeared to many other spec-
tators, there was something magnetic about him which drew Ishmael closer
to him; for he lacked those hypocricies so frequently found in civilised
man. Without any formalities Ishmael drew his chair before Queequeg's
and the two began to converse in very friendly, intimate tones; and from
that time on, Ishmael and Queequeg became bosom friends. The significant
fact behind all of this is that it reveals once more how Melville had
seen beneath the surface of superficial things and had found the intrin-
sic value beneath. This friendship existing between Queequeg and Ishmael
was different from the usual bond between the devoted slave and kind

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
master, such as is found in the novels of Melville's contemporaries. The
former was on a fraternal basis; while the latter was more of a sort of
paternalism, with the white man looking down tolerantly on his Negroes.
Mrs. Stowe's Uncle Tom was a lovable devoted slave, and was well liked by
his master, Mr. Shelby; but the love that Mr. Shelby had for him was not
so much the love of man for another as it was a master's love for his
slave, whom he considered his inferior. The friendship existing be-
tween Sam and his Marse Chan, and Uncle Edinburg and his master was on
the same paternalistic basis.

Melville treated Queequeg as a very sensible human being with
a logical mode of reasoning; for when Ishmael questioned him on the re-
action of the public to his carrying a wheelbarrow on his shoulder like
a basket instead of pushing it, Queequeg replied that they laughed just
as his people had laughed at a certain white sea captain when he mis-
took the bowl of coconut juice, which was used for blessing the newly-
weds, for a finger-bowl, and proceeded to wash his hands. After Queequeg had related this story concerning the sea cap-
tain and the bowl of coconut juice, he and Ishmael boarded the schooner,
upon which they were to make their voyage, and stood breathing the air
together. While they were thus engaged, Ishmael suddenly became aware
that he and Queequeg were the central attractions of the jeering glances

1 In Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin.
2 In Thomas Nelson Page, "Marse Chan", op. cit.
3 In Thomas Nelson Page, "Unc' Edinburgh' Drowndin", op. cit.
4 "Moby Dick", op. cit., p. 794.
of the passengers, who were evidently bewildered over the companionship of Ishmael, a white man, and Queequeg an African:

...So full of this reeling scene were we, as we stood by the plunging bowsprit, that for some time we did not notice the jeering glances of the passengers, a lubber-like assembly, who marvelled that two fellow beings should be so companionable; as though a white man were anything more dignified than a white-washed negro.

Such evidence as this shows that Melville was fundamentally and basically unprejudiced toward the Negro; for he puts him on equal basis with the white man, and says that the difference between the two races lies only in external appearances.

Unfortunately for one of the jeering spectators, Queequeg saw him staring and seized him in his gigantic arms and flung him bodily into the air; whereupon, the captain reprimanded Queequeg and told him that he would kill him if he did not cease molesting the passengers. In the meantime, while all of this excitement was taking place between the captain and Queequeg, the puny onlooker that had been tossed into the air, had been swept overboard by a huge wave, and the entire ship was in an uproar. On seeing this, Queequeg with his usual calmness and complacency, ran into the wind, dashed into the briny water and rescued the poor little man. With the same serenity and calmness with which he plunged into the water, he came back on deck and laid his victim calmly down before a host of admiring eyes. Ishmael says:

Was there ever such unconsciousness? He did not seem to think that he at all deserved a medal from the humane and Magnanimous Societies. He only asked for water - fresh water - something to

Ibid., p. 795.
wipe the brine off; that done, he
put on dry clothes, lighted his pipe,
and leaning against the bulwarks,
and mildly eyeing those around him,
seemed to be saying to himself — 'It's
a mutal, joint-stack world, in all
meridians. We cannibals must help
these Christians.'

Just as Ishmael had respected Queequeg for his calmness, serenity, intelligence and ability to adjust himself to his new environment, he respected his religion, even though it was very peculiar. Like most African natives, Queequeg was a pagan worshipper and paid homage to his little black idol known as "yo-o". When Queequeg invited Ishmael to share in his religious rites of worshipping the little idol, Ishmael, at first, hesitated; but upon reflecting he concluded:

...But what is worship? thought I?
... — to do the will of God? — that
is worship. And what is the will of
God? — to do to my fellow man what
I would have my fellow man to do to me —
that is the will of God. Now, Queequeg
is my fellow man. And what do I wish
that this Queequeg would do to me?
Why unite with me in my particular
Presbyterian form of worship. Conse-
quently, I must then unite with him
in his; ergo, I must turn idolator.

Later, when Ishmael saw Queequeg observing Ramadan, a pagan custom which required prolonged fasting and abject humiliation, he did not mock and ridicule him in anyway as most white men would have done; for he says:

I say, we good Presbyterian Christians
should be charitable in these things,
and not fancy ourselves so vastly superior
to other mortals, pagans and what not,
because of their half-crazy conceits on these subjects. There was Queequeg, now, certainly entertaining the most absurd notions about yojo and his Ramadan; -- but what of that? Queequeg thought he knew what he was about, I suppose; he seemed to be content; and there let him rest."

On board this same schooner, was another African harpooner, known as Daggoo, who represents the "Noble savage" of Rousseau's creation. Third among the harpooners was Daggoo, a gigantic, coal-black negro-savage with a lion-like tread en Ahasuerus to behold. Suspended from his ears were two golden hoops, so large that the sailors called them ring-bolts, and would talk of securing the topsail halyards to them.

At a very early age, Daggoo had voluntarily shipped on board a whale-o, but having been nowhere except Africa, Nantucket and the pagan harbors most frequented by whale-men, he still retained all of his barbaric "virtues":

"...and erect as a giraffe, moved about the decks in all the pomp of six feet five in his spicks. There was a corporeal humility in looking up at him; and a white man standing before him seemed a white flag come to beg truce of a fortress. Curious to tell, this imperial negro, Ahasuerus Daggoo, was the Squire of little Flash, who looked like a chess-man beside him."

In his position as harpooner, Daggoo was regarded and treated as any

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1 Ibid., p. 808.
2 Ibid., pp. 830-831.
3 Ibid., p. 831.
other harpooner on board, regardless of race; no special distinction is made between him and the other members of the crew. He performs his duty with equally as much skill as the others, and comparatively speaking, plays an important role in the discovery of the white whale.1

In contrast to the individualized treatment of Queequeg and Daggoo, and typical of the traditional treatment of the Negro, is Fleece, the old, comical black cook aboard the ship. He is simple, lazy, sullen and stubborn, and possesses the same peculiar ideas concerning his ascension into heaven as the Negroes in the works of Melville's contemporaries.

As the sailors were eating their shark steak, they suddenly discovered that it was unusually tough and difficult to chew and they called in the cook to reprimand him for his failure to perfect the culinary art, and at the same time to have a little fun at his expense. Having been summoned Fleece stumbled reluctantly off to see what they desired of him. Melville describes him thus:

The old black, not in any very high glee at having been previously roused from his warm hammock, at a most unreasonable hour, came shambling along from his galley, for, like many old blacks, there was something the matter with his knee-pans, which he did not keep well assured like his other pans; this old Fleece, as they called him, came shuffling and limping along, assisting his step with his tongs, which, after a clumsy fashion, were made of straightened iron hoops;....2

This old Negro presents a typical example of the caricature found in American literature:

1 Ibid., p. 937.
2 Ibid.
...this old Ebony floundered along, and in obedience to the word of command, came to a dead stop on the opposite side of Stubb's sideboard; when, with both hands folded before him, and resting on his two-legged cane, he bowed his arched back still further over, at the same time sideways inclining his head, so as to bring his best ear into play.

After he had entered the room, one of the seamen spoke up and ordered him to speak to those sharks and to tell them in a very dignified, religious manner to stop making so much noise, as it was quite annoying. Sullenly taking the old lantern, Fleee limped slowly to the deck and began to preach his famous sermon to the sharks:

"Fellow-critters: I'se ordered here to say dat you must stop dat dam noise dare, you hear? Massa Stubb say dat you can fill your dam bellies up to de hatchings but by Gor! you must stop dat dam racket!"

Stubb, who had been observing the proceedings, and who wished to heighten the humor, slapped the old cook on the shoulder and reprimanded him for using such obscene language while preaching:

"Cook! why, damn your eyes, you mustn't swear that way when you're preaching. That's no way to convert sinners, Cook!"

Still gazing at Stubb's very sullenly, Fleec replied,

"Who dat? Den preach to him yourself."

---Ibid.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., p. 737.
But as he was turning to go, Stubb, desiring more fun at the Negro's expense, bade him to continue as he pleased; and with this command, Fleece continued his sermon:

'Do you is all sharks, and by natur wery voracious, yet I say to you, fellow-critters, dat dat voraciousness- 'top dat dam slappin' ob de tail! How you tink to hear, 'spose you keep up such a dam slapping and bitin' dare?'

When, Stubb, still laughing, collared Fleece, and told him that he would not stand for such swearing, and that he must talk more gentlemanly to them. Fleece continued his sermon; but finally they both decided that the whales were too dumb to know what he was saying, so they ordered Fleece to pronounce the benediction and to leave the sharks alone.

Having had all of the fun that they desired on the sermon to the sharks, the crew began to chide the cook about the tough steak and had a hearty laugh at the ignorance and stubbornness of this old Negro. Stubb, who had taken the initiative in teasing Fleece about his un-gentlemanly sermon to the sharks, also took the initiative in this conversation; and to show Fleece how tough the steak actually was, he made him eat a piece of it. Still maintaining his former stubbornness, Fleece smacked his lips down on a piece and said: "Best cooked 'teak I eber taste; joosy, berry joosy."  

Seeing that all of their previous methods of making Fleece relent had failed, the crew then began to make use of what they thought to be a more practical stratagem; they began to appeal to his religion:

'Cook! said Stubb, squaring himself once more; 'do you belong to the church?"
'Passed one once in Cape-Down!', said the old man sullenly. 'And yet you come here, and tell me such a dreadful lie as you did just now, eh?' said Stubb. 'Where do you expect to go to cook?'

Fleece replied that he was going to bed very soon; but Stubb explained that he meant where did he expect to go when he died. To this Fleece replied:

'When dis old brack man dies', said the negro slowly, changing his whole air and demeanor, 'he hisself won't go nowhere; but some bressed angel will come and fetch him.'

After they had teased Fleece, the crew finally decided to dismiss him with the instructions that he must learn how to cook a whale steak and to prepare a different dish for the next meal. But old Fleece was still dissatisfied with their teasing and limped away grumbling to himself:

'Wish, by gor! Whale eat him, 'stead of him eat whale. I'm bressed if he ain't more of shark dan massa shark hisself.'

Despite this Negro's sullenness, stubbornness and laziness, there was nothing of the humble Uncle Tom about him; he spoke what he thought in just as biting a tone as the members of the crew spoke to him.

Equally as interesting as any person on board the ship, whether white or Negro, was little Pip, a Negro boy from Alabama who is introduced in the novel as follows:

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
...Black Little Pip — he never did — oh, no! he went before. Poor Alabama boy! On the grim Pequod's forecastle, ye shall ere long see him, beating his tambourine; prelusive of the eternal time, when sent for, to the great quarter-deck on high, he was bid strike in with angels, and beat his tambourine in glory; called a coward here, hailed a hero there!

Typical of the usual portrayal of the Negro, Pip is pictured as being an easily frightened, cowardly Negro, who spent much of his time furnishing music on his tambourine for the crew. His most outstanding characteristic, however, seems to be his profound cowardice, which is emphasized throughout the novel. When the squall arose, the other members of the crew were equally as frightened and terror-stricken as Pip; but Pip revealed his fear more than the others. For, like most Negro characters in American literature, he was intensely religious; consequently, in his fear he knelt in prayer to his Maker and said:

...But there they go, all cursing, and here I don't. Fine prospects to 'em; they're on the road to heaven.... Oh, thou big white God aloft there somewhere in your darkness, have mercy on this small black boy down here; preserve him from all men that have no bowels to feel fear!"

Still another time when Pip's cowardice was revealed was when he was placed in the boat to assist Stubb to capture a whale. Frightened to his wit's end, poor little Pip plunged into the water and became entangled in the whale line, which, of course, meant that if little Pip were freed the whale would be lost. Cursing and swearing, old Stubb freed poor Black Pip, and told him never to perform such an act again; for if he did, he was going to keep the whale in preference to

\[1\] Ibid., p. 831.
\[2\] Ibid., p. 866.
freeing him the next time. But on another day, Pip did the identical thing, and Stubb, true to his promise, allowed him to remain in the water, unnoticed by the other members of the crew, for such a prolonged time that Little Pip was almost drowned.

In addition to his other characteristics, Pip was a very harry-go-lucky type who sang and played on his tambourine; yet Melville never failed to give him credit for having a good mind, even surpassing that of a white boy on board the same ship; for in his description of him he says:

In outer aspects, Pip and Dough-Boy made a match, like a black pony and a white one, of equal development, though of dissimilar color, driven in one eccentric span. But while hapless Dough-Boy was by nature dull and torpid in his intellects, Pip, though over tender-hearted, was at bottom very bright, with that pleasant, genial, jolly brightness peculiar to his tribe; a tribe, which ever enjoys all holidays and festivities with finer, freer relish than any other race. For blacks, the year's calendar should show naught but these hundred and sixty-five Fourth of July's and New Year's Days. Nor smile so, while I write that this little black was brilliant, for even blueness has its brilliancy; behold you lustrous ebony, panelled in king's cabinets. But Pip loved life, and all life's peaceable securities.  

Pip's care-free spirit, his cowardice and his faithfulness to Ahab, had gained the love and sympathy of this old sea captain, who, when Pip was left in the water by Stubb and when everyone had given him up for lost, was very worried; and when Pip was finally rescued, he grasped his hand and said:

1Ibid., pp. 1008-1009.

2Ibid., p. 1007.

3Ibid., ....

4Ibid., ...
...Oh, ye frozen heavens! Look down here. Ye did beget this luckless child, and have abandoned him, ye creative libertines. Here, boy; Ahab's cabin shall be Pip's home henceforth, while Ahab lives. Thou touchest my inmost centre, boy; thou art tied to me by cords, woven of my heart-strings. Come, lets down',... Come! I feel prouder leading thee by thy black hand, than though I grasped an Emperor's.1

And truly did Black Pip merit the love of old Ahab, for he remained faithful to him throughout the journey; and on one occasion he pleaded with Ahab to allow him to accompany him, but Ahab replied:

'Iad, lad, I tell thee thou must not follow Ahab now. The hour is coming when Ahab would not scare thee from him, yet would not have thee by him. There is that in thee, poor lad, which I feel too curing to my malady. Like curing like; and for this hunt, my malady becomes my most desired health. Do thou abide below here, where they shall serve thee, as if thou wert the captain?...'

Little Pip replies:

'No, no, no! Ye have not a whole body, sir; do ye but use poor me for your one lost leg; only tread upon me, sir; I ask no more, so I remain a part of ye.'4

Ahab answers:

'Oh! spite of million villains, this makes me a bigot in the fadeless fidelity of man! and a black! and crazy! - but

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., p. 1077.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
methinks like—cures—like applies to him too; he grows so sane again.\textsuperscript{1}

Still protesting and pleading, Pip tells Ahab that he will never leave him. Ahab still refuses:

..."True art thou, lad, as the circumference to its centre. So: God for ever bless thee; and if it came to that -- God for ever save thee, let what will befall."\textsuperscript{2}

Yet, despite Pip's cowardice, his intense religiousness, his faithful, happy-go-lucky, carefree spirit, there was something about him that distinguished him from the usual portrayal of the Negro in literature. He had a bright mind, and in his faithfulness to Ahab, there is much more than the mere love of a white captain for an inferior black cabin boy. When Ahab became extremely moody and would seek seclusion, the only person that he would take with him was this little black boy, who remained loyally by his side. Like the friendship existing between Queequeg and Ishmael, the bond between Ahab and Black Pip was on a fraternalistic basis rather than a paternalistic one.

It also appears that Pip's place in this novel was as significant as that of Stubb, Starbuck, Ahab or the white whale; for he, too, had a place in the symbolism of the story.

Of Melville's novels, Benito Cereno, one of his shorter novels, is the only one whose main plot is centered around Negroes. The setting of this novel is laid in St. Maria, a small deserted uninhabited island near the southern extremity of the coast of Chile, where captain Amsa Delano of Duxbury, Massachusetts, discovers a Spanish merchantman carrying Negro slaves. Of the slaves on board, the two most outstanding Ne-

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
groes are Babo, the supposed bodyguard of the Spaniard, Don Benito; and Atufal, the Negro in chains.

On entering the vessel, Captain Delano was impressed by the Negroes on board the ship; and especially was he impressed with Babo, the seemingly faithful, bodyguard of Don Benito who because of his physical in capability was forced to lean upon someone for support:

Marking the noisy indolence of the blacks in general, as well as what seemed the sullen inefficiency of the whites, it was not without humane satisfaction that Captain Delano witnessed the steady good conduct of Babo.
But the good conduct of Babo, hardly more than the ill-behavior of others, seemed to withdraw the half-lunatic Don Benito from his cloudy languor.¹

Frequently Don Benito was seized with severe coughing attacks and when he was, Babo always remained loyally by his side until he was sure that his master was safe from relapse. Don Benito never failed to let it be known that he owed much to Babo for assisting him physically and for calming the vindictive Negroes on board who were willing to rise up against Don Benito and kill him.²

Still believing that Babo was the faithful, loyal servant, as both Don Benito and Babo had inferred, Captain Delano continued to shower his praises and admiration for such a Black, and on one occasion he offered to purchase Babo from Don Benito. But before Don Benito could make any sort of reply to this request, Babo, who was standing by, answered that his master would not part from him for a thousand doubloons;

¹ Herman Melville, "Benito Cereno" in Shorter Novels of Herman Melville, ed. Raymond M. Weaver, New York, 1932, p. 16.
² Ibid., p. 16.
naturally Captain Anasa Delano, being an American white man, could not understand why it was that Don Benito, a white man, would stand peaceably by and tolerate this impertinent initiative on the part of a black.

The existing condition on board the "San Dominick" became even more complex, and even though Captain Delano had seen many things which led him to doubt some of the suspicious, unbelievable stories that Don Benito told him, he still thought Babo to be a typical, humble, docile, "Uncle Tom" Negro of America, and never once suspected that he was the intelligent, rebellious Negro that he actually was. It was not until he was about to make his departure that Captain Delano became aware of what was actually taking place on the "San Dominick". As he was leaving, Don Benito accompanied him to his boat, and before he knew what was happening, this poor, weak, Spaniard threw himself in the boat at the feet of Captain Delano, calling toward his ship in a frenzied tone.

Humbled by Don Benito's strange behavior, and thinking that probably he was making it appear that Captain Delano was attempting to kidnap him, Delano ordered his men to row away. But in the meantime the blacks on board the "San Dominick" had armed themselves and were rowing out to the "American", and on reaching it, Babo raised his dagger, and to Captain Delano's surprise he aimed his dagger at Don Benito. It was then that Delano realized that it was Don Benito who was the slave and not the Negroes.

When the matter was investigated, it was found that Don Benito Cereno had set sail with a cargo of Negro slaves belonging to Don Alejandro Granda, a gentleman of the Mendoza. Among these slaves there was Babo, "a smart Negro", and Atufal, "a powerful Negro", the latter being

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Ibid., pp. 76-77.
formerly a chief in Africa. On the seventh day of their journey, the Negroes, under the command of Babo, rose up against the Spaniards, and took control of the boat, ordering the deponent to steer toward Senegal, a Negro island, stating that if he hesitated one moment in doing so, they would see that all white persons on board were killed. This situation continued for many days, during which time, Babo, who appeared first in the role of an humble, obedient servant, was the actual leader. He paid for his bold stroke for freedom with his life:

...As for the black—whose brain, not body had schemed and led the revolt, ... he was dragged to his death.2

Cooperating with this Negro, Babo, was Atufal, who was equally as clever as the former; but unlike Babo, who was a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Atufal was a rebellious Negro from his initial appearance in the story. As one first sees Atufal, he is being brought before Don Benito in chains for the sole purpose of having him beg Benito's pardon for some misdemeanor; but when Don Benito requested him to ask his forgiveness, Atufal stood motionless and unmoved and replied that he would never beg his pardon, as he was perfectly contented in his present state of chains. This powerful, stalwart, unrelenting Negro worked hand in hand with Babo and together, these two conducted a craftily planned,

1 Ibid., p. 98.
2 Ibid., p. 105. In 1839 a similar revolt actually occurred on board a Spanish ship loaded with Negro slaves who were being taken from Sierra Leone to the United States. It is very probably that Melville may have used this same incident for the plot of his novel. For an accurate account of this mutiny see Susan, E. W. Jocelyn, "The Story of the Amistad", Crisis VII-IX (January, 1915), pp. 139-140. See also Carter Godwin Woodson, The Negro in Our History (Washington, 1926), p. 346.
3 "Benito Cereno", op. cit., pp. 66-74.
Before concluding this story of a rebellious black folk against the white crew, Melville gives a good description of the Negroes and an excellent analysis of how the American Captain Delano reacted to and thought about Negroes in general, which shows that Melville's travels had not prevented him from knowing the main stream of thought on the Negro question in America. As he boarded the ship, "San Dominick", Captain Delano was particularly impressed by the picture that these Negroes presented:

...especially the conspicuous figures of four elderly grizzled negroes, their heads like black doddered willow tops, who in venerable contrast to the tumult below them, were couched sphynx-like on the starboard cat-head. Another on the larboard, and the remaining pair face to face on the opposite bulwark above the main-chains. They each had bits of unstranded old junk in their hands, and with a sort of stoical self content were picking the junk into oakum, a small heap which lay by their sides. They accompanied the task with a continuous low monotonous chant; droning and drooling away like so many grey-headed bag pipers playing a funeral march.

While on board the ship, Captain Delano made many noteworthy remarks concerning the Negro, among which was one concerning the superiority of the white races. Francesco, the steward, was a very handsome looking mulatto with all of the characteristics of a European; and as he approached, Captain Delano imagined that he saw a tinge of jealousy in the eyes of black Isho as he looked upon this mulatto, which, of

Ibid., p. 8.
course, he attributed to the hostile feeling entertained by the full-blooded African for the adulterated Negro. When Francesco left, Captain Delano told Don Benito that he was very happy to see this handsome mulatto possessing such cultured and refined manners; for he had always been told that such a Negro was always a devil. Whereupon Don Benito replied that Francesco was truly a refined, cultured Negro. Fully assured that Francesco was good as well as handsome, the American said:

'Ah, I thought so. For it were strange, indeed, and not very creditable to us white-skins, if a little of our blood mixed with the Africans', should, far from improving the latter's quality, have the sad effect of pouring vitriolic acid into black broth; improving the hue, but not the wholesomeness.'

Later, Captain Delano made a statement concerning the natural abilities of the two races, which reveals again the age-old Anglo-Saxon conception of the Negro. As has been stated before, Captain Delano was baffled by the actions of the Negroes and frequently doubted the reliability of some of the stories related by Don Benito. On one particular day, Captain Delano saw a Spaniard start out as if he were going somewhere, suddenly stop and cautiously look around, and then disappear as if he had heard an advancing step. This peculiar action of the sailor set Delano thinking, and his mind ran back to his earlier conversations with Don Benito. At first, he began to believe that Benito's pleas of indisposition were all a pretense and that in reality, Don Benito was engaged in maturing some plot with the blacks:

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1 Ibid., p. 45.
The whites, too, by nature were the shrewder. But if the whites had dark secrets concerning Don Benito, could then, Don Benito be in any way in complicity with the blacks? But they were too stupid. Besides, who ever heard of a white so far a renegade as to apostatize from his very species, by leaguing in against it with Negroes? Later, in the scene where Bako is shaving his master, Delano stands looking on, and the following thoughts come to him:

There is something in the Negro, which, in a peculiar way, fits him for expositions about one's person. Most Negroes are natural valets and hair dressers, taking to the comb and brush genially as to the castanets, and flourishing them apparently with almost equal satisfaction. ...and above all is the great gift of good humor. Not the mere grin or laugh is here meant. Those were unsuitable. But a certain cheerfulness harmonious in every glance and gesture; as though God had put the whole Negro to some pleasant tune.

Often, when at home, Delano used to amuse himself by watching some freed coloured men at his work or play; and while at sea, he enjoyed listening to some garrulous Negro, who was chatty with him. Melville describes his attitude:

...In fact, like most men of a good, blithe, heart, Captain Delano took to Negroes, not philanthropically, but genially, just as other men to New Foundland dogs.

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1 Ibid., pp. 44-48.
2 Ibid., p. 59.
3 Ibid., p. 57.
Among other things, Delano was definitely impressed by the bright colored flag which Babo used as a shaving towel; for it gave him a chance to remark about the general belief that Negroes love bright and gaudy colors. While shaving Don Benito, Babo produced a bright-colored Spanish flag and flung it over his master. Captain Delano, who was standing near by, remarked that it was a good thing that Charles V. did not see them using a Spanish flag in such a degrading manner.

...'but'—turning toward the black,—

"it's all one, I suppose, so the colours be gay',....."

In the several conversations of Captain Delano, four outstanding racial attitudes are manifested: (1) that a drop of white blood in a Negro's veins elevates him both physically and morally; (2) that the white race is naturally shrewder than the Negro race; (3) that Negroes have an ardent love for bright colors; and (4) that the white man regards the Negro not so much as a man as he regards him as something to fondle and pet, whose main purpose is either to serve the white man or to amuse him.

Captain Delano's reaction to the Negro represents the typical American attitude. He would not have consented to enter upon such a friendly and intimate basis with Queeqqquq, an African savage, as Ishmael did in Moby Dick; neither would he have entertained the same feeling for Pip as did Ahab. Melville in his portrayal of the Negro is, perhaps, doing what he attempted with the native of the South Sea Island. In presenting the two extreme attitudes -- the American way and the Christian way -- he makes very clear which one he prefers. And, consequently, Captain Delano stands as a rebuke to the prejudice of his countrymen.

\[\text{Ibid., p. 59.}\]
CHAPTER IV.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing chapters have dealt with the following phases of the study: (1) The Darker Races in Literature, (2) Melville and the Natives of the Pacific, and (3) Melville and the Negro, in an attempt, as was stated in the preface, to discover to what extent Melville was influenced by contemporary opinion in his treatment of the Negro and native of the South Seas as literary material.

It is very evident that Melville judged what he saw in the South Seas with impartial eyes, and as far as possible presented an accurate account of the existing conditions on the islands. Unlike most writers, he did not attempt to ridicule or censure the natives for their peculiar customs which were beyond the white man's comprehension; he merely presented the facts as an unprejudiced spectator. He regarded their customs and festivities with a sympathetic understanding; and this understanding was not that which a man manifests for something he considers his inferior, but one that a man has for an underprivileged brother.

In his treatment of the Negro, Melville evinced evidence of being far more influenced by contemporary opinion than in his treatment of the natives of the Pacific; yet, he was far less prejudiced than the majority of American writers of his time. For the seventeen Negro characters found in Melville's works may be divided into three groups: (1) the "type" Negroes who maintain their superficial role assigned to them by earlier writers; (2) the Negroes who maintain some superficial characteristics, but, in some respects, are individualized personalities; and (3) the individualized Negroes.

The first group of Negroes consists of Baltimore, Billy Loon
Fleece, Sunshine, Rose-water, May-day, Thompson, Coffee and De Squak.

Even the appellations assigned to these Negroes are, for the most part, typical of those previously given the Negro in stories.

The second group of Negroes consists of Pip and Lavender. Pip is much more than the usual portrayal of a little black cabin boy, and his place in the novel is as significant as that of the outstanding white men; and Lavender is different from the usual ignorant, flashily-dressed Negro in some respects.

Melville, like many other writers of the nineteenth century, was a northerner and much of his knowledge of the Negro came from secondary sources; yet, unlike many of the other northern writers, who merely presented the Negro in his usual superficial role, Melville varied his Negroes and gave a somewhat representative assortment. In addition, it must be remembered that it is highly possible and probably that Melville actually saw such Negroes as Coffee and Fleece on board the ships; and that he, as in the case of the South Sea natives, was merely presenting a realistic situation.

Credit should also be given Melville for the diminution of humble Negroes in his works. Out of these nine "type" Negroes, Baltimore was the only docile "Uncle Tom" creation, and Melville admits that of the two - Black Dan and Baltimore - he admires the former much more than the latter. This is a decided step forward toward the acceptance of the Negro as a human being in American literature.

Contrasted to the other two groups of Negroes, are Queequeg, Dagoo, the American captain, Babo, Atual, and Black Dan, who represent the more realistic creations.

Noticeable is the fact that four out of these six individual-
ized Negroes are native-born Africans; while only two are Americans, a fact which makes it appear that Melville was capable of seeing the remote African Negro with less prejudiced eyes than the American Negro. Unusual also is the fact that every one of these individualized Negroes is black and not mulatto, which is quite different from the general belief of most Americans; for in the works of the majority of American writers, the black Negro has been assigned the role of the humble "Uncle Tom"; while the mulatto, because of his possession of a few drops of white blood, has been considered the rebellious, "dangerous" Negro.

In conclusion, it may be stated that Melville's later works reveal a more humanized and individualized Negro character than his earlier ones. The Negroes in Omoo and Redburn assume, for the most part, their usual superficial roles; while in White Jacket, Moby Dick and Benito Cereno they become individualized personalities. With Melville, then, the recognition of the Negro as a human being was a matter of growth and maturity. He says himself in one of his earlier works:

"Being so young and unexperienced then, and unconsciously swayed in some degree by those local and social prejudices that are the marring of most men, and from which, for the mass, there seems no possible escape; at first I was surprised that a coloured man should be treated as he is in this town; but a little reflection showed that, after all, it was but recognizing his claims to humanity and normal equality;..."

1 "Redburn", op. cit., p. 1520.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

MELVILLE'S NOVELS


BACKGROUND


CRITICISMS

BOOKS


PERIODICALS


