

ISLANDSCAPES AND SAVAGES: ECOCRITICISM AND
HERMAN MELVILLE'S *TYPEE*

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ISLANDSCAPES AND SAVAGES: ECOCRITICISM AND
HERMAN MELVILLE'S *TYPEE*

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DEDICATION

To my parents

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INTRODUCTION

In Herman Melville's debut work *Typee*, he describes and characterizes the largest of the Marquesan islands, Nukuheva, and fictionalizes his encounter there with the native Marquesans. A partly fictionalized travel narrative, *Typee* was based on an actual whaling voyage made by Melville at the age of twenty-one. It proved to be his best selling book (although not an overall bestseller of its genre), thanks to readers in both England and America. In *Typee*, Melville provides detailed descriptions of Marquesan island landscapes and of the savages' interactions with these landscapes, relying on his own personal sojourn in the Marquesas as well as those of other travel writers, such as David Porter. In so doing, he embarks on a philosophical quest to make sense of the civilized world (America) by contrasting it to the savage world of which he partakes in *Typee*. What readers receive from Melville is a mixed creation: travel narrative, fiction, philosophical discourse, and quasi-autobiography. And this creation (specifically – fictionalized travel narrative), when analyzed with an approach such as ecocriticism, provides a uniquely "green" interpretation of the environmental and cultural values embedded in the story.

Ecocriticism (which has also been called literary-environmental studies, literary ecology, environmental literary criticism, and green cultural studies) can be defined as an “earth-centered approach” to literary and cultural studies. Ecocriticism examines the relationships between literature and the environment. It is primarily motivated by a concern for the planet in an age when environmental issues have mushroomed. Thus, “ecocritics” form a group of environmentally conscious literary scholars, writers, historians, and activists whose common interest is to bring an ecologically critical demeanor to (which is often referred to as “greening”) the arts and humanities. Their efforts are focused on heightening cultural awareness about the ways in which human beings interact within their own environments (natural and man-made) and how those relations have had short and long-term global effects. This ecological emphasis in literary criticism has been a direct result of the realization that the environmental movement not only depends on technology and science, but on the arts and humanities as well: “The success of all environmentalist efforts,” writes prominent ecocritic Lawrence Buell in *Writing for an Endangered World*, “finally hinges not on ‘some highly developed technology, or some arcane new science’ but on a ‘state of mind’: on attitudes, feelings, images, narratives” (i).

This thesis analyzes the depictions in *Typee* through an ecocritical lens and theorizes *Typee*'s influence on American arts and culture upon (specifically in regards to attitudes toward “nature”) reception and internalization. To do this, it is necessary to pose several important ecocritical questions and then to consider

them using the narrative and additional secondary sources. These questions include but are not limited to: How are nature, landscapes, and cultures represented in *Typee*, and how would these representations have “heightened awareness” in the nineteenth century? What role did *Typee* and other travel narratives play in the nineteenth century literary market place, in representing nature, ecology, and culture? How might *Typee*, and the ideas therein, have been received, processed, and internalized (e.g., the influence of place on imagination – individually, culturally, and nationally)? And in what ways can *Typee*, and other texts like it, help to define a Western identity in terms of relationships to nature and the exotic. I attempt to use these questions to examine *Typee* and the role it plays, and what that entails ecologically, within American culture and imagination.

Chapter 1 briefly reviews the publishing history and reception of *Typee* and discusses the way in which fact and fiction are intertwined within the text. It explores why the text can be considered partly fictionalized travel narrative and where such a genre fits into the corpus of ecocriticism. It also discusses the history of ecocriticism and the two streams of thought that have developed over the years and the way in which both of these fields of thought can be applied to *Typee*. In addition, it analyzes the way in which *Typee*'s exotic setting, with its islandscapes and inhabitants, is imagined and portrayed thus contributing to place (an important literary element of ecocriticism). It outlines Buell's “Five Dimensions of Place-Connectedness” and describes the way in which *Typee* fits

into these dimensions and, conversely, how the conception of *Typee* may inform Westerners' sense of place.

Chapter 2 focuses on the first ten chapters of *Typee* (in which Melville describes his release from civilization) and the juxtaposition of civilization and primitive life throughout the plot. It discusses the dichotomy established by Melville in plot and setting and uses concrete detail to show how such conflict informs not only the narrative at large but the discourse therein as well. In addition, it considers Melville's acknowledgement and creation of space and place in the narrative.

Chapter 3 uses Mary Louis Pratt's book, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* to inform the interpretation of interactions between "savage" and "civilized." In addition, it analyzes, using the "theory of domination" set out by Val Plumwood, the dualisms in the narrative, including male/female, colonized/colonizer, nature/civilized, and mind (reason)/body (nature), as these dualisms can be seen in *Typee*. The goal here is to expose such dualisms for the sake of our own awareness and to challenge such dualisms when the opportunity arises.

Lastly, this thesis concludes by briefly discussing *Typee's* ending and reflecting on the moral questions present throughout the narrative, linking it back to ecocriticism and the importance of the arts and humanities within this particular body of literary criticism.

CHAPTER I

ECOCRITICISM AND MELVILLE'S SENSE OF PLACE

How often had we pored over the chart and centered always on that midmost bight and on the valley it opened – the Valley of Typee. 'Taipi' the chart spelled it, and spelled it correctly, but I prefer 'Typee,' and I shall always spell it 'Typee.' When I was a little boy, I read a book spelled in that manner – Herman Melville's 'Typee'; and many long hours I dreamed over its pages. Nor was it all dreaming. I resolved there and then, mightily, come what would, that when I had gained strength and years, I, too, would voyage to Typee [...] The years passed but Typee was never forgotten. (London 154-155)

THE HISTORY AND RECEPTION OF *TYPEE*

Melville departed from the shores of Fairhaven, Massachusetts in 1841 on a whaling voyage aboard the *Acushnet*, the ship on which he sailed to the Marquesas and the same one that is fictionally named the "Dolly" in *Typee*. He did not know that his "itch for things remote" would eventually lead him to do two things: one, live with the natives of the Taipi (Typee) valley on the island of Nukuheva for a period of time, and two, become a writer. Four years after his adventures in the South Seas, at the age of twenty-five, he sat down with the memories of his experiences abroad to write his first book: *Typee: A Peep at*

Polynesian Life During a Four Months' Residence in a Valley of the Marquesas as it was titled in America or *Narrative of a Four Months' Residence Among the Natives of a Valley in the Marquesas Islands; or, A Peep at Polynesian Life* as it was initially titled in England (Stern 17-21).

It is a tale narrated by a young sailor, Tommo (a somewhat fictionalized Melville), who is writing three years after the fact about his adventures in the remote regions of the South Pacific. *Typee* may be briefly summarized as follows: After being six months at sea and at the discretion of "Vangs" (the "hard-hearted" captain of the ship), the *Dolly* is steered toward the Marquesas. Tired and dispirited by nautical life, Tommo and fellow shipmate Toby (that is, Melville's friend, Richard Tobias Greene) conspire to jump ship, once having arrived on land. On a rainy morning, they set their plan into action and head for the Marquesan hills with but a few biscuits for sustenance. Toughing through the disagreeable (yet at times, and from a distance, magnificent) terrain, they eventually encroach upon a valley where they hope to find shelter and assistance from the "friendly" Happar tribe. What they walk into, however, is the Typee valley, which they had explicitly hoped to avoid. The larger part of the story describes the meeting – a clash of sorts – between the two American sailors, Tommo and Toby, and the Typee natives who were thought to be fiercely barbaric and savage cannibals.

The "reception of *Typee* was extremely favorable," writes Milton Stern, but "the single issue fervor of the pro-missionary journals produced the erroneous

impression that *Typee* was widely attacked” (7) for what was perceived as Melville’s criticism of missionaries and his raciness. In response to such claims and quick “to appease enemies of his book” (Stern 7), Melville allowed American and English publishers to expurgate and bowdlerize *Typee*. Consequently it became at least three different versions of one book (i.e., American, British, and revised), thus making it what John Bryant calls in his introduction to the book a “fluid text” (Bryant xi). However, notwithstanding its censorship, *Typee* received a “healthy” reception in both America and England – selling over 20,000 copies by the end of the nineteenth century – but it failed to ever become a bestseller (Bryant xxvi). While some were attracted to its romantic plot, others delighted in its explorative and adventurous nature.

Initially Harper and Brothers turned down the manuscript, claiming it was written under false pretenses; however, it was received in England quite differently. Stern reports in “The Publication of *Typee*: A Chronology” that John Murray, a British publisher who “specialized in authentic travel adventures,” was willing to publish *Typee* as an additional installment in his *Colonial and Home Library* as a “completely factual piece of nonfiction” regarding the South Seas (18). “These books [in the *Colonial Home Library*] were inexpensive and were aimed at a wide, popular readership in the ‘Backwoods of America’ and ‘the remotest cantonments’ of Great Britain’s ‘Indian dominions,’” says Stern (18), which may reveal something about the people enchanted by such tales.

Nevertheless, no one, as Harper and Brothers had asserted, could deny that

certain aspects of *Typee* were indeed fabricated. For example, Tommo stays with the natives for four months in the story, when, in reality, it is documented that Melville stayed with them for only four weeks. And claiming that Melville's foremost concern was that of creative artist over journalist, Mary Edwards writes: "That he compromised to the extent of presenting *Typee* as a travelogue [versus fiction] in order to have the book accepted by a publisher of such material in a time when he was first attempting to make a living from his writing says nothing about the reliability of any element of the text as an account of his own personal experience" (2). Nevertheless, to satisfy Murray's requirements, "Melville added more 'ballast,' factual materials about people, places, customs, and events in order to avoid the semblance of fiction, which was taboo in the *Colonial and Home Library*" (Stern 18). Melville gathered some of these facts from travel texts such as David Porter's *Journal of a Cruise*, William Ellis's *Polynesian Researches*, Frederick D. Bennett's *Narrative of a Whaling Voyage*, John Coulter's *Adventures in the Pacific*, and Sir Edward Belcher's *Narrative around the World* (Bryant xxiii). He then wove his findings into *Typee* to help corroborate its otherwise "questionable" details. Additionally, as Robert T. Tally Jr. writes, "the hubbub over the text's 'truth' only settled down after Richard Tobias, Toby of the narrative, emerged [after disappearing from the island] in Buffalo and vouched for Melville's account" (189). A two-volume, edited but unbowlerized (despite earlier emendations) version of the account, with the title *Typee; or, A Narrative of a Four Months' Residence Among the Natives of a Valley of the Marquesas Islands; or A*

Peep at Polynesian Life and with “The Story of Toby” tacked onto the end, was then published in the 1846 edition of Murray’s *Colonial and Home Library* (Stern 20).

Thus, truth and fiction are ambiguously intertwined in *Typee*, resulting in what some call Melville’s first novel. However, John Bryant opines in his introduction to *Typee* that “[t]his book is not a novel” (xi). Bryant suggests that while *Typee* does share “familiar” features with the literary genre of novel such as “a fairly consistent worldview delivered through fairly coherent characters and plot,” it is also and perhaps more importantly, he avers, an autobiography, a travel book, an anthropological study, and a “polemic against Western missionaries.” And as it encompasses these disparate genres, “it is best,” he says, “to come to *Typee* divested of any preconceived expectations of form” (Bryant xi). Arguably, the book’s realistic attributes make it worth reading, and its romantic plotline in addition to Melville’s storytelling abilities only add to its appeal. Stern writes in his introduction to *Critical Essays on Herman Melville’s Typee* of the book’s reception years after its release: “Appreciation of the liveliness of the storytelling and its transmission of a sense of firsthand experience deepened at the end of the nineteenth century into a recognition that in effect the long-neglected Melville had been the major creator of the genre of the South Seas adventure-romance” (11). Classifications like this one by Stern and others (e.g., “anthropological study” and “romantic travelogue”) allow for myriad categorizations of *Typee* as literary genre. Regardless of genre, however, *Typee*

offers an excellent text for ecocritical analysis, since it combines vivid and meticulous detail in its descriptions of natural environments with a stirring tale of an individual's experience of his environment. Ecocriticism enables the reader to focus on both the naturalistic description and the narrative elements of *Typee*.

ECOCRITICISM AND GENRE

The term "ecocriticism" was first introduced by William Rueckert in 1978 in an essay titled "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" (Fromm xx) and took hold towards the end of the twentieth century (i.e., the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s) as increasingly more likeminded literary scholars, realizing their own growing concerns for "environmental" issues, began approaching literary theory ecologically, thus forming what is now regularly referred to as "ecocriticism." The arrival of this form of criticism within literary and cultural studies, according to eminent ecocritic Lawrence Buell, can be traced back specifically to two books: Joseph Meeker's *The Comedy of Survival* (1972) and Jonathan Bate's *Romantic Ecology* (1991) (*Future* 16-17). However, Buell argues, two very influential books within the scope of ecocriticism (although not "catalytic for the environmental turn in literary studies" like Meeker's and Bate's) are Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Idea in American Culture* (1964) and Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City* (1973), in which "Both [Marx and Williams] dwelt upon the salience and durability of their respective national penchants to identify national essence

symbolically with ‘country’ (Williams) or a bucolic ‘middle landscape’ between settlement and frontier or wilderness (Marx)” (*Future* 13-14). Marx discusses how the pastoral ideal and what has been considered Virgilian (“new life in a fresh green landscape”) or the idyllic has helped shape the American imagination and has set the stage for a new beginning for Western society (Marx 3). Williams, on a similar note, discusses and analyzes two contrasting extremities – the country and the city – and the spectrum of settlements that fall between the two: “suburb, dormitory town, shanty town, industrial estate” (Williams 1). Not only are both texts foundational to ecocritical theory, but they also present a dichotomy inherent in both early settlements and modern culture (wild/civilized or rural/urban). Such a dichotomy plays a key role in Melville’s *Typee* as well.

Furthermore, ecocriticism is in constant flux as it has only recently developed. Therefore, “no definitive map” of ecocriticism can be sketched (*Future* 17). However, in order to help understand its evolution, Buell (among other ecocritics) has divided its gradual development into two sequential “waves.” But these “waves” – first and second – should not be, Buell argues, thought of distinctly. “Most currents set in motion by early ecocriticism continue to run strong, and most forms of second-wave revisionism involve building on as well as quarreling with precursors” (*Future* 17). It may be more appropriate to think of the body of work that makes up ecocriticism as a “palimpsest” rather than two (or more) successive “waves.” This palimpsest model might be compared to ecological discourse regarding sustainable development, in that old

ideas are consistently studied and reworked in order to lessen the waste of natural resources and denigration of the earth (*Future* 17). Likewise, ecocriticism and ecocritical ideas are continually changing.

When the earliest ecocritics referred to the “environment,” it was thought to be the “natural environment” (i.e., plants, trees, forests, lakes, ponds, streams, etc.). This was driven by a “theory known as deep ecology and is very much based in the life sciences, focusing on self-realization and the biotic community” (Bennett 208), more so than Marx’s and Williams’s works that precede it and more so than the ecocriticism that follows it. Deep ecology is less interested in anthropocentric concerns and strictly focuses on the “deepest shade of green” for which nature writers journeyed outside their communities to explore. This type of ecocriticism “embraced those environments at furthest remove from human habitation – the pastoral and the wild – as represented by a narrowly defined genre of nature writing” (Bennett 208). The approach of later ecocritics, on the other hand, combines man-made environments with natural environments by focusing on the “interconnection between urban and non-urban space, humans and nonhumans, traditional and experimental genres, as well as the impact of race, class, gender, and sexuality on how we use and abuse nature” (Bennett 208). Thus the study of urban and cosmopolitan environments in later ecocriticism, which embraces “different shades of green” rather than the “deepest shade of green,” as ecocritic Michael Bennett explains, gives rise to a

more human-centered rather than earth-centered basis for environmental-literary and cultural studies.

Most significantly for me, attributes of early and late ecocriticism are both useful for analyzing the narrative of *Typee*, which incorporates biocentric and anthropocentric qualities. Melville's geographic location or setting — far removed from Western civilization — allows him to reflect on the “wild” landscapes and the natural history of the Marquesas (i.e., using a biocentric approach) as well as providing him an opportunity to discuss the idiosyncrasies of his own culture in contrast to the natives' more primitive culture (an anthropocentric view). The relationship between “savage” culture and nature, perhaps not only awakens “civilized” readers to an alternate way of living (i.e., engaging with “nature”) but also arguably inspires them to creatively analyze how they interact within their own environment(s). In addition, *Typee's* lush depictions of “landscapes” and of the island people in all probability made it a fascinating read for nineteenth-century Americans bereft of travel experience abroad, especially an exotic “abroad”; this undoubtedly accounted for its popular, if somewhat controversial, reception. *Typee's* exotic setting provides readers a way to escape from familiar social constructions and ordinary obligations into an “Edenic” (i.e., a pristine, although not always congenial, form of nature) and distant land — a land that, for many, could only be imagined; and as Mary Louis Pratt argues in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, this contact with “Nature” and with cultures outside of one's own society not only gives rise to “planetary consciousness” but

also plays an important role in the identity formation of the society (e.g., American) within which the “contact” is internalized (15-37).

The combination of nature writing or travel narrative and fiction in *Typee* provides a rich source of biocentric and anthropocentric detail, through an imaginative engagement with the natural world that begs to be examined from an ecological point of view. Thus, it is most useful to think of *Typee* as a partly fictionalized travel narrative (creative nonfiction, perhaps), a fusion in which “Melville had combined personal experience and secondary sources (travelogues and scientific works),” with fictionalized characters, “to give ‘true’ accounts of his adventures in the South Seas and elsewhere” (Tally 183). As I hope to show in the subsequent chapters, an ecocritical interpretation of *Typee* offers fruitful new ways of looking at Melville’s book as both nature writing and fiction.

Whether it was his intention, the use of travel narrative, in a sense, makes Melville a nature writer. As Thomas J. Lyon describes in a chapter titled *A Taxonomy of Nature Writing*, travelogue, indeed, earns a spot within the broad range of nature writing:

Accounts of travel and adventure (which usually have a strong element of solitude in them) often present the same sort of contrast between the too-safe, habituated existence left behind and the vivid life of discovery. The travel and adventure writer often seems like a ramble writer gone wild; there is less emphasis on natural history and more on movement, solitude and wildness. Often the account is framed on the great mythic pattern of

departure, initiation, and return, and always the account gains meaning from the basic American circumstance that wilderness, where the traveler and adventurer usually go, has always in our history been considered a realm apart. [...]The exhilaration of release from civilization, the sense of self-contained and self-reliant movement, and above all, the thrill of the new, are the prominent qualities here. (Lyon 24)

In this context, the term “ramble” refers to a type of nature writing in which “the natural history and the author’s presence are more or less balanced,” where the writer ventures into nature but not too far and rarely into wilderness (Lyon 24). In contrast, the travel writer journeys, like Melville, to more remote and perhaps more exotic wildernesses than the ramble writer; thus he is described as being the “ramble writer gone wild,” which may entail taking his shirt off. Melville’s account fits this description of travel and adventure writing well. The essential “pattern of departure, initiation, and return” describes Tommo’s movement in *Typee* and the land to which he travels is definitely, especially from a nineteenth-century perspective, “a realm apart.” In addition, an “exhilaration of release from civilization” and “the thrill of new” are two of the main contributions of the narrative.

Furthermore, by employing the form of personal narrative, Melville is able to represent the nature/culture construction in a dramatic fashion, while also grounding it in the autobiographical condition of an individual traveler’s narrative. *Typee* and Melville’s other early writings were generally personal

narratives that could accomplish his aims to represent the exotic or unfamiliar while also using a narrator who is “one of us” with respect to the readership. Later, when writing *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre*, Melville found the limitations of personal narrative to be problematic. In his article, “‘Spaces that before were blank’: Truth and Narrative Form in Melville’s South Seas Cartography,” Tally addresses Melville’s struggle to “deliver the whole truth” in his personal narratives. Tally compares Melville’s narratives to mapmaking, concluding that both offer “fictional representations of true places” (182). Citing Melville’s humorous but telling quip in *Moby-Dick* about “true places” not being “down on any map,” Tally writes:

Indeed, this sense that the true cannot be adequately represented, here with direct reference to mapping, is a central theme of Melville’s literary cartography. In his early works, Melville grappled with this problem, and the dynamic tension between a faithful recounting of facts and the need for speculative solutions to the crisis of representation animates his personal narrative. In a quite obvious sense, the *place* represented on the map is not *true*; there can be no perfectly mimetic image of the *topos*. (187)

Like the mapmaker who struggles to give an accurate topographical representation, Melville also struggled to present completely factual delineations of his experiences in the South Pacific. Tally argues that Melville desired to provide the “unvarnished truth” but became increasingly aware of the difficulty in doing so, especially via personal narratives. Thus, he ultimately abandoned

this form altogether. However, in his earlier works like *Typee* and *Omoo*, Melville, the “literary cartographer,” uses personal narratives to provide “fictional representations” of real places by “discovering the unfamiliar and incorporating it into the known world – filling spaces that before were blank” (Tally 184).

Many ecocritics traditionally have tended to limit their examinations to nature writing. As a result, narrative fiction has received far less attention than has nonfiction prose, as Jonathan Levin points out in “Beyond Nature? Recent Work in Ecocriticism.” This, he concludes, is because, “first, it [narrative fiction] foregrounds human drama at the expense of the inherent drama of organic nature, and second, it rarely allows for a close and detailed account of the particularities of natural phenomena” (Levin 182). It may have been useful, Levin argues, for ecocritics during the early stages of ecocriticism to focus on the texts that gave prominence to the natural world or the “facts of nature” such as nature writing. However, he continues, “[n]arrative fiction does foreground the relationship between nature and culture very effectively” (182). In *Typee*, the fictional aspects of the text (e.g., the plot) provide the structure within which “nature” – the unsympathetic terrain through which Tommo and Toby muddle, the scenic views at which they also marvel, and the barbarous peoples with whom they interact – is philosophically expounded and explored by Melville. His storytelling serves, in a way that perhaps nonfiction cannot, to juxtapose the two cultures (American and Marquesan), revealing the disparate ways in which each culture interacts within its environments. As a partly fictionalized narrative,

Typee does indeed foreground human drama. However, the way its narrative is embedded within the Marquesan terrain contributes to the drama's significance, by demarcating the boundaries (if any) between nonhuman and human, between nature and culture, and between differing views of these distinctions.

In addition, there exist multiple roles, as philosopher Kate Soper asserts, which "nature" can be "called upon to play" within the realm of ecological discourse (155). She defines these roles as first, second, and third "nature" or the "metaphysical," the "realist," and the "surface" or "lay" concepts of nature. The first or the "metaphysical" idea of nature is "the concept through which humanity thinks its difference and specificity"; the second or "realist" concept of nature refers to the systems, processes, and powers which are "operative in the physical world" and that "provide the objects of study of the natural sciences"; the third, "surface" or "lay" concept of "nature" is the "ordinarily observable features of the world" and refers to the "nature of immediate experience and aesthetic appreciation" (Soper 155-56). Soper suggests that when the Green Movement calls upon "nature," they usually are speaking of the third or "surface" concept of nature: wildlife, raw materials, and non-urban environments (156). Thus, they call upon a "nature" that has been affected by humanity's occupancy of the planet. The "realist" concept is invoked, Soper asserts, when a distinction is drawn between the object ("nature") and the subject (humanity), and this occurs when the appeal is made to protect and preserve nature. Furthermore, the "realist" concept of "nature" is applied when attention

is drawn to the human transformation of nature such as destruction, waste, and pollution by “referring us to structures and processes that are common to all organic and inorganic entities, human beings included” (156). An ecological reading of *Typee* would call upon all three concepts, and would go even further, so as to question whether or not “nature” is itself a cultural formation. Buell writes, “the emergence of contemporary environmental criticism is in part the story of an evolution from imaging life-in-place as deference to the claims of (natural) environment toward an understanding of place-making as a culturally inflected process in which nature and culture must be seen as mutuality rather than as separable domains” (*Future* 67).

In fact, arguably the most significant element of *Typee*, and also a compelling reason for it to be ecocritically analyzed, is the remote and exotically “wild” and primitive setting in which the story takes place – that is, its depiction of space and place. “These are not simple antonyms ... space as against place connotes geometrical or topographical abstraction, whereas place is ‘space to which meaning is ascribed’” (Buell, *Future* 63). While the location of the Marquesas, or that which can be charted along longitude and latitudinal lines, gives the story authenticity in terms of its autobiographical contribution and adherence to science and the natural world, the various dimensions of place represented – physical, sociological, imaginative, and experiential – make up the sundry dimensions of Tommo’s overall character and “sense of place” as presented by the text, including his observations of and reactions to nature as

well as his philosophical discourses concerning the interrelatedness of nature and culture. Since place, and even placelessness, gives meaning to space, it is not only a significant attribute of nature writing, fiction, and virtually all literature but is also a fundamental concern for ecocritics. “Writers like Barry Lopez, [...] have done their best work as roaming ethnographers, gleaning more insights from interdisciplinary study and place-based informants (both native peoples and field scientists in Lopez’s case) than from staying put” (Buell, *Future* 69). Much of our modern lives and even those of people like Melville (whalers, for example) are spent in transit, from a simple bus ride to town to a distant sea-voyage. What is learned about these places and the native peoples needs “to be studied comparatively in order to give rise to the first theories of global environmental endangerment” (*Future* 69). Additionally, destinations – such as the Marquesas islands – can incite introspective thinking on the part of the traveler.

SENSE OF PLACE

Jean Arnold, in an essay titled “Mapping Island Mindscapes: The Literary and Cultural Uses of a Geographical Formation,” suggests that islands act as incubators, so to speak, within which the development of ideas take place:

Islands have been useful to writers because their distinctive geographical formations have supplied narrative settings that isolate ideas. [...] Because literary islands form settings for writers’ imagined solutions to cultural or

perceptual problems, these islands also have the power to reveal the unconscious concerns of the culture in which the writer lives and from which the literature arises. (Arnold 24)

This is certainly true for *Typee*. Not only does the island supply a setting for the narrative, but it also does exactly what Arnold suggests, in that it allows Melville to isolate (which literally means to “put on an island”) his ideas, particularly those pertaining to what he perceives to be the shortcomings of “society.” These provide inlets into what has been termed by Barry Lopez as “interior landscapes” – inner reflections and responses to exterior landscapes (65). This idea is further explored in the next two chapters.

Nevertheless, place plays a particularly significant role in ecocriticism insofar as “an awakened sense of physical location and of belonging to some sort of place-based community have a great deal to do with activating environmental concern” (Buell, *Writing* 56). The greater the attachment to or admiration for a place, the greater concern there is for its protection and preservation. And since, in the larger scheme of things, the planet (and the myriad forms of life which depend on its well-being for their survival) is what the environmental movement hopes to protect and is itself a “place,” one might suggest that place-awareness and place-connectedness form the cornerstone of ecocriticism. “At the turn of the twenty-first century, ‘place’ and ‘planet’ are understood as interdependent” (Buell, *Writing* 77). Moreover, spaces and places can be examined at different levels: from tiny spaces, to dwellings, to neighborhoods, to cities, to regions, to

the entire earth. In the case of *Typee*, the majority of the narrative, besides a few introductory chapters, is set within a time lapse of several months, on the island of Nukuheva or “within the parallels of 8° 38’ and 9° 32’ South latitude, and 139° 20’ and 140° 10’ West longitude from Greenwich” (Melville 11).

In an effort to elucidate “place sense” and its importance to literary and the cultural imagination, Buell organizes “the cultural work that place-responsive imaginative acts can perform” into what he calls the “Five Dimensions of Place-Connectedness” (*Writing* 64). In this thesis, I refer to these dimensions to illuminate the phenomena of place and the nature-culture construction within *Typee*. The first dimension of place-connectedness consists of “concentric circles,” lessening in familiarity as they branch out from a central location. To illustrate this, one might think of “concentric circles” drawn around their own house. With the first encircling their house, the next may include their house and the neighbor’s house, then the entire street on which the house resides followed by the whole neighborhood. Then the circles would move further out to include the city, the state, the region, and so forth, so that the territory encircled becomes increasingly unfamiliar as it moves away from the initial house. In thinking about *Typee*, the diagram of “concentric circles” occurs as Tommo progressively moves away from his home in America, onto the *Dolly*, and gradually into the less familiar South Pacific regions. And while this model works for the “early nineteenth-century lococentric maritime village” such as the one described by Whitman in “There Was a Child Went Forth” (Buell’s example),

it is an insufficient or less than sufficient model, Buell asserts, for “ancient nomadic peoples before the dawn of agriculture and cities” and for “postmodern transnationalism, mobility and diaspora” (*Writing* 65).

Thus, Buell’s second dimension of place-connectedness picks up where the “concentric circle model” leaves off and is illustrated by a “scattergram or archipelago of locales, some perhaps quite remote from each other” (*Writing* 65). “To understand fully what it means to inhabit a place,” he writes, “is therefore not only to bear in mind the (dis)connections between one’s primary places [i.e., home, work, recreation, friends, vacation home, worship] but also the tentacular radiations from each one” (*Writing* 66). One might work on one side of town, live on the other, and have friends whom they visit occasionally in yet another part of town. In addition, “transnational” examples of these radiations – which for modern humans are everyday exchanges – might include partaking in a cup of Columbian coffee while enjoying the Georgian countryside or working in Texas with someone who travels from Paris. Unlike the first dimension, this conceptualization of place, especially in the literature of place, suggests that a “sense of inhabiting different places simultaneously” rather than a “pious obeisance to lococentrism” leads to a greater awareness of place and place-connectedness (*Writing* 66). “The commonest way this is done,” writes Buell, “is via a stylized contrast between attentive witness and bona fide inhabitant” (66). In *Typee*, Tommo simultaneously is a witness and inhabitant of primitive culture, while still retaining some allegiance to civilization: he occupies the dual positions

of an American and a Marquesan, civilized and savage, domesticated and wild. He also, prior to jumping ship, was a laborer in a transnational whaling industry whose main product fueled many American lamps. So some aspect of the Pacific may have been involved any time someone turned on a light, creating the “tenticular radiations” Buell refers to.

Furthermore, the third dimension of place implies that places are not fixed entities, but rather are continually changing as they are “shaped and reshaped by forces from both inside and outside” (*Writing* 67). In this context, “place is not just a noun but also a verb, a verb of action.” Buell suggests that places have histories – usually beyond the knowledge of our own experiences – which are often ignored. A common mistake of “discoverers and explorers of old as well as tourists today” is to presume they are the first and only or first few people to have seen and experienced what seem to be untouched, “pristine-looking” landscapes, when, in fact, the land had been altered by inhabitants years before and continues to be affected by ongoing evolutionary processes (*Writing* 67). Thus, what seem like landscapes in their “purest” state is misleading (of course, what constitutes “pure” is another debate entirely). One must consider the history of the place to know it well. This is true in urban areas where landscapes and environments are continuously modified as a result of renewal and restoration projects; and it’s even true for “pristine” places like the Marquesas that also have histories and are always changing. Thus, to know a place, one must consider the memory of its landscapes.

Buell's fourth dimension of "place sense" is that human identities are essentially formed by the accumulation of experiences with "all of the places that have been significant to a person, or a people, over time: like a coral reef or a set of tree rings" (*Writing* 69). In other words, who we are depends upon all that we encounter. The argument has been made, says Buell, that one's identity is deeply fixed during childhood and is difficult to alter in later years, other examples, he continues, show that although many associations are indeed forged during childhood, they can be transformed in adulthood (*Writing* 69-70).

Notwithstanding the timing of these encounters (early or later), "identity-shaping places are not merely personal but also cultural artifacts" (*Writing* 70). Buell offers the example of Psalm 137, in which the Hebrew people sat by the Babylonian waters and wept in remembrance of Zion and their people. It "was the expression of a people, not just a solitary prophet, and so too with the experience of displacement, diaspora, exile, expatriation today: the single person's experience is mediated by the group's" (*Writing* 70). A reinvention process occurs as places are absorbed into the person's or group's identity in which actual places are transformed into "stylized" and "subjectified" ways of identifying those places (*Writing* 71).

Dispersion of such travel accounts as *Typee* into the cultural imagination of America precipitates a "stylized" identification with places like the Marquesas and other regions, where places are absorbed and reinvented by the culture. However, where this leaves the fourth dimension and enters the fifth is in its

“connectedness with fictive or virtual places” (*Writing* 71). Although the Marquesas are not invented places, very few nineteenth-century Americans (or Americans today, for that matter) had ever stepped foot on these islands. But must one actually go to the islands and experience them first-hand for it to have any influence over them or matter to them? Today images of hard-to-reach places from all over the globe are simulated and channeled to people around the world very easily. However, even before modern telecommunications, the replication and reinforcement of unseen places through imagery, Buell says, have been exchanged for a long time through forms of media such as books, storytelling, dreams, and religion, as is the case with *Typee* (*Writing* 73). The internalization of these images within a cultural imagination, I argue, helps to create and form a value system in which the culture then conducts their own society within their own communities and in relation to the outer world. The idea of these unseen and imagined places and what they carry with them become perhaps more meaningful than the actual land itself (*Writing* 72). While this may divert attention away from the “lococentric” and “oneness-with-the-land” attitude that the environmental movement hopes to promote, such idealism may also be reflected in the way people interact within their own environments. For example, as Buell notes, planned communities like “Disney corporation’s Celebration, Florida” are founded somewhere in the region between the “unseen actual” and the “imagined utopian” (*Writing* 73).

This suggests that the concept of place and “place-connectedness” is far more abstract than it is literal and far more subjective than it is objective. In other words, the way in which a place is perceived depends on variables beyond empirical evidence. When an affective connection between humans and a given space is forged, sense of place occurs. As Neil Evernden describes this “phenomena” in “Beyond Ecology: Self, Place, and the Pathetic Fallacy,”

[T]here appears to be a human phenomenon, similar in some ways to the experience of territoriality, that is described as aesthetic and which is, in effect, “a sense of place,” a sense of knowing and being a part of a particular place. There’s nothing very mysterious about this – it’s just what it feels like to be home, to experience a sense of light or of smell that is inexplicably “right.” (Evernden 100)

Evernden suggests that humans as well as other creatures (e.g., birds in migration) instinctively navigate towards what feels “right.” For Melville, as is revealed in the first few chapters of *Typee*, what feels “right” is land and all that it entails: fruit, grass, and liveliness. But as the tale continues, his feelings towards the island and island people become more convoluted.

In the next chapter, I work closely with the first ten chapters of the text to analyze the dichotomy between civilization and primitive life as established by Melville through plot. I also explore his criticisms of Western society and the aspects of racism that persists in the aforementioned dichotomy.

CHAPTER II

LAND HO! TOMMO'S RELEASE FROM CIVILIZATION AND THE THRILL OF THE NEW

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. (Melville, *Typee* 15)

SPACE, PLACE, ENVIRONMENT

In *Typee's* first chapter, the narrative moves immediately from description of life on the *Dolly* to recollections of the "loamy earth" – a less than subtle contrast – where Tommo's disdain for being aboard the ship, after months at sea, only creates in him an insatiable longing for land. Melville begins the chapter with an emphatic, exclamatory "SIX MONTHS AT SEA!" loudly clarifying, in the first four words of the text, his disenchantment with life on the whaler. Melville continues:

Yes, reader, as I live, six months out of sight of land; cruising after the sperm-whale beneath the scorching sun of the Line, and tossed on the billows of the wide-rolling Pacific – the sky above, the sea around, and nothing else! [...] Oh! for a refreshing glimpse of one blade of grass – for a

snuff at the fragrance of a handful of loamy earth! Is there nothing fresh around us? Is there no green thing to be seen? (Melville 3-4)

The longing in this case is not for a certain piece of land – an exact location or specific position on a map such as the Marquesas – but to land in general, wherever that happens to exist. Melville uses strong diction and effective imagery to emphasize a stark contrast between the unpleasant, nauseating, and desolate conditions onboard the ship and the abundant qualities envisioned of land. For example, words like “scorching,” “tossed,” and “billows” convey a sense of extreme dissatisfaction, in that such images might draw upon the reader’s experience of having a sunburn or being sea sick. Conversely, the word “refreshing” to describe the experience of seeing grass conveys the potential rejuvenating effect land has on a person, in that such a “glimpse” can refresh and revive a listless, tired spirit. While both ocean and land are considered parts of nature – “the part of the environment which we [i.e., humans] have had no hand in creating” (Soper 16) – Melville introduces a dichotomy here in which the sea is portrayed as the undesirable component of nature and land as delightful. This is a point of interest since other Melville novels, like *Moby-Dick*, for example, portray the opposite in which land (and all it entails, such as the monotony of civilization) is the deplorable half of the dichotomy that drives the sailors out to sea.

Even “[t]he old ship herself,” Melville continues, “longs to look out upon the land from her hawse-holes once more” (4). By personifying *Dolly* and

attributing feelings to her, Melville effectively uses pathos to help guide the readers' attention even more intensely towards *terra firma*. In this scene, Captain Vangs and an insignificant sailor by the name of Jack address the incorrigibility of the ship:

“I’m as good as a helmsman as ever put hand to spoke; but none of us can steer the old lady now. We can’t keep her full and bye, sir: watch her ever so close, she will fall off; and then, sir, when I put the helm down so gently, and try like to coax her to the work, she won’t take it kindly, but will hall round off again; and it’s all because she knows the land is under the lee, sir, and she wont go any more to windward.” Aye, and why would she Jack? Didn’t every one of her stout timbers grow on shore, and hasn’t she sensibilities as well as we. (Melville 4)

If Melville’s description of the conditions aboard the ship weren’t bad enough, then evoking a sense of pity for the poor “old ship herself” through imagery and anthropomorphism will surely convince readers of the ship’s and the sailors’ dire need to find ground, showing that both human and ship are rooted in the earth. He describes *Dolly* as being a tired “old lady” who knows, like the sailors, where she belongs – on land – as she was crafted out of that which grows on land (i.e., “stout timbers”), and thus by this sheer fact and by her own “sensibilities,” she knows that returning to land is in her best interest. In this sense, *Typee* takes on a place-centered approach to the drama early on in the narrative, in that it is very grounded in the individual’s experience with his environment. An attachment to

land is created where space is given meaning, and a focus on nature – pleasurable and unpleasurable – is initiated in the first chapter and continues throughout the text.

The sailors are then told they will be heading for the Marquesas Islands: “Hurra, my lads! It’s a settled thing; next week we shape our course to the Marquesas!” (5). And immediately ideas of place – that which gives meaning to physical space – deriving from enchanting stories of “olden voyagers” and “European discoveries in the South Seas,” enliven Tommo’s imagination:

What strange visions of outlandish things does the very name spirit up! Naked houris – cannibal banquets – groves of cocoa-nut – coral reefs – tattooed chiefs – and bamboo temples; sunny valleys planted with bread-fruit-trees – carved canoes dancing on the flashing blue waters – savage woodlands guarded by horrible idols – *heathenish rites and human sacrifices*.

(Melville 5)

Melville claims to have heard of these “outlandish” things before arriving in the Marquesas; whether he is telling the truth or inventing the story in order to provide a more “realistic” account is fairly inconsequential. What is consequential, however, is the way in which primitive peoples are portrayed here and throughout the book, as antithetical to civilization’s progeny and more in line with nature’s children. Primitive peoples, as Kate Soper suggests in *What is Nature?* have been described at times by Western culture as “inhuman.”

Groups such as “barbarians (those who do not speak one’s own language),

slaves, negroes, women, Indians, savages, 'wild' or 'wonder' men, witches, sorcerers, dwarfs and idiots [...] have been associated with functions or attributes that place them nearer to nature and render them not quite fully human" (Soper 74). Thus, these "strange," unpredictable peoples are seen, as "nature" is, contrary to humanity or, more specifically, contrary to "civilized" humanity (that is, Western civilization), making them one with the wildest of wildernesses.

Furthermore, in his book, *The Sign of the Cannibal: Melville and the Making of a Postcolonial Reader*, Geoffrey Sanborn asserts his position regarding Western travelers' obsession with barbarism in comparison to those of postcolonial critics Peter Hulme and Gananath Obeyesekere; he argues against Hulme and Obeyesekere's argument that "colonial-era travelers unconsciously projected their 'cannibalistic' desires onto the people they encountered, thereby concealing and justifying their own unacknowledged avarice" (17). In contrast, Sanborn suggests that "the image of the cannibal is not the projection of a secret lust, as so many critics have argued, but the trace of a secret lack," a lack of knowledge about the people and culture, which in turn gave rise to an anxiety that colonials projected onto the unknown, and Sanborn contends that Melville is an "archaeologist of that lack" (17). Therefore, Melville's account of his experiences on Nukuheva provides ecocritical scholars with an archaeological study of the general lack – once again filling the spaces.

Melville occupies these spaces with representations of the wild in a variety of contexts, from Arcadian landscapes to the dwellings of uncivilized humans, all of which fit into a spectrum spanning varying degrees of “wild”: from what is truly, organically and exotically wild (as described in *Typee*) to what would be considered “artificially wild,” such as national parks, for instance. Artificial wildernesses, arguably, are created and maintained by “civilized” humans to mimic genuine wilderness as a way of providing a sense of the uncultivated natural state in an otherwise domesticated area. In her essay, “The Uses of Landscape: The Picturesque Aesthetic and the National Park System,” Alison Byerly when speaking of Yellowstone Park as part of the American wilderness asserts that “[i]t is not an *example*, but a *symbol* of wilderness; it functions as a representation or illustration of the concept” (60). Likewise, *Typee* functions today as a representation or illustration of the concept of wilderness for Westerners, one perhaps less “artificial” and less “domesticated,” but at the same time less attainable for most, than a national park and feasibly serves, like the parks, as a national landmark or artifact within the construct of contemporary American (or Western) culture, one that when read has an effect similar to a walk in the deep woods or a very remote camping trip, arousing even for some the native memories of their own land. Essentially, Melville creates what Byerly, in another ecocritical essay titled “Rivers, Journeys, and the Construction of Place in Nineteenth-Century English Literature,” calls “panoramas” in which experiences are constructed in order to “eliminate danger and overcome the boundaries of

space and time," where "seeing [by way of descriptive imagery, in this case] is the next best thing to being there" (Byerly 81).

Moreover, Melville entertains his readers in the exposition of his story (or "panorama"), with a report on a missionary's failed attempt amongst the islanders and a tale about how the natives' indecent exposure sent a crew of Frenchmen retreating hastily from the island (6-8), both of which underscore the thematic distinction between the preconceived notion of "civility" and "savagery" and Melville's desire to unveil the idiosyncrasies and nuances of both. Furthermore, the notion of cannibalism precipitates Melville's interest in the Typee natives; and while he shudders at the thought of such barbaric rituals, he is also propelled to discursively investigate their primitive nature. In an effort to illustrate how Tommo's disgust for the savage cannibals (as indicated by the "shudder") is the catalyst for his attraction to and even curiosity about the natives, Sanborn writes:

The desire expressed in Tommo's shudder is a desire to come into contact with what Captain Delano will call "naked nature," that timeless substance that "humane" beings tend to think of themselves as emerging from. The sense of timelessness ordinarily attached to the repeatable stereotype is intensified, in this case, by the conventional association of lustful cannibalism with instinct [...] Whether an object of desire, like naked houris, or an object of dread, like cannibal banquets, the stereotypes associated with savagery are almost inevitably objects of anticipation,

insofar as they promise the certain and constant presence of the substance that makes a civilized, humane identity possible. (80-81)

Melville's call is emphatically not that of converting the natives to Christianity like some of his predecessors on the island; in fact such people become comic relief for him, and his tone toward them sardonic and mocking (apparent in his recollections); nor is he there to colonize the land or dominate the natives, although he does bring, naturally, colonial perspectives with him. Rather he is driven by an innate inclination to break away from the known world by comprehending the exotic and exposing Sanborn's aforementioned "substance," and as a result closing the ideological gap between civility and savagery by exploring the socially constructed differentiation, parallel, and overlapping of the two – that is, examining by way of first-hand experience what Mary Louise Pratt calls "contact zones" which are "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (Pratt 4).

In addition, and as a way of countering Sanborn's assertion that Melville's cannibal interests is the "trace of a secret lack," Justin D. Edwards, in *Exotic Journeys: Exploring the Erotics of U.S. Travel Literature, 1840-1930*, with the help of Gananath Obeyesekere, suggests that the interest in and even fear of cannibalism indicated a heightened sense of sexuality and perhaps even homosexuality. Edwards writes: "Obeyesekere links cannibalism with male sexuality by suggesting that nineteenth-century discourses surrounding anthropophagy, particularly as they were articulated after a shipwreck, were often infused with

sexual currency" (31). Thus, if Obeyesekere's connection is sound, an island provides the perfect setting for Tommo to come in contact with his "natural" desires and to explore his "primitive" passions, as a way of releasing himself from civilization and experiencing the other.

SAVAGERY, CIVILIZATION, & RACISM

Nevertheless, as *Dolly* approaches Nukuheva, Melville enumerates basic geographical and anthropological details of what he sees and knows already in regards to the island and island peoples: "innumerable sea-fowl," "A hardly perceptible blue irregular outline," "one of a distinct cluster, comprising islands of Ruhooka, Ropo, and Nukuheva," "inhabitants speak the Marquesan dialect," "their existence was altogether unknown to the world until the year 1791," "[Nukuheva] is about twenty miles in length and nearly as many in breadth" (10-11). In addition to these details, he goes on to elucidate the recently defiled state of the Marquesans, saying:

Its inhabitants have become somewhat corrupted, owing to their recent commerce with Europeans; but so far as regards their peculiar customs and general mode of life, they retain their original primitive character, remaining very nearly in the same state of nature in which they were first beheld by white men. The hostile clans, residing in the more remote sections of the island, and very seldom holding any communication with

foreigners, are in every respect unchanged from their earliest known condition. (11)

Such description gives rise to significant questions concerning both the ecocritical analysis of *Typee* and ecocriticism as a movement. For example, does Melville's discontentment and restlessness stem from what he has gained "scientifically," whereas the natives' seeming abundance derives from their unchanging, abiding relationship and contentment with the environment in which they live?

When attempting to answer this question it is important to keep in mind that while the islanders are envisioned to be these very caring, thoughtful participants with nature they should not be painted in an absolute way as being what Shepard Krech III refers to as the "Ecological Indian" in which they are viewed as the ultimate environmentalists and conservationists (26). Krech writes,

For while this image may occasionally serve or have served useful polemical ends, images of noble and ignoble indigenoussness, including Ecological Indian, are ultimately dehumanizing. They deny both variation within human groups and commonalities between them. As the historian Richard White remarked, the idea that Indians left no traces of themselves on the land "demeans Indians. It makes them seem simply like an animal species, and thus deprives them of culture." (26)

It is observably true in *Typee* that due to the natives' interactions with their environment, they produced much less waste (in the way that Westerners think

of waste today). Thus, while they seem to be more in harmony with their environment, it is also important not to discount them as being less than human or cultureless.

Furthermore, the natives' "peculiar customs" are observed and accounted for as *Dolly* continues onward, approaching the island. Soon the sailors make initial contact with the "savage occupants," and a flotilla – what appears to be "cocoa nuts floating closely together in circular groups" (13) – advances towards them. These canoes are filled with males, as it was taboo and punishable by death for females to ride in the outriggers; however, the savage women soon follow, swimming behind the men towards the oncoming ship. They are described as looking and behaving like mermaids with "savage vivacity" and "infinite glee." The delineations of their physical appearances – "extreme youth," "light clear brown," "delicate features," "graceful figures," "softly moulded limbs," and "free unstudied action" – portray them in a favorable, intriguing light, what Melville describes as being both strange and "beautiful in the extreme" (15). He is uncomfortable with yet subtly captivated by the female indecorum. Melville writes: "Not the feeblest barrier was interposed between the unholy passions of the crew and their unlimited gratification" (15). Melville maintains his evocative tone as he recounts in general the activities that take place during their first encounter with the natives, such that readers can clearly imagine the details regarding what ensues. Nevertheless, the islanders, "Unsophisticated and confiding," are portrayed by Melville as naïve, innocent

victims, while the white men, the “European civilizers,” remorselessly lead the savages to their own disgrace. Thus, Melville contends, “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” (15). In this case, not only are the loco-centric natives “contaminated” but effectually their ecosystem is polluted as well, perhaps partially due to their own curiosity, as the natives do in fact swim to the whaler in order to greet the sailors.

Melville goes on to describe the way in which the French, who had held possession of the island for several weeks prior to *Dolly's* arrival, overtake the Nukuhevan natives by creating “works of defence” to keep the islanders at bay through fear of having themselves and their communities obliterated. He delineates the islanders’ admiration for and lack of understanding about the technologies of civilized peoples, including their “military evolutions,” the “officers’ regimentals,” “A blacksmith’s forge,” even “a horse” (an animal they were unacquainted with, therefore they endearingly dub it a “big hog” and declare it to be “the most extraordinary specimen of zoology that had ever come under their observation”) (17). Yet, despite the natives’ amusements, the French intend to claim the land, run the Marquesans away from their only home, and keep what Melville describes as a “signal infraction of the rights of humanity” concealed from the rest of the world, thereby retaining their humanitarian status. Concerning this matter, Melville writes: “A high degree of refinement, however, does not seem to subdue our wicked propensities so much after all; and were

civilization itself to be estimated by some of its results, it would seem perhaps better for what we call the barbarous part of the world to remain unchanged” (17). Note Melville includes himself (evident by the use of the first person plural pronoun “we”) when referring to civilization. He then sketches out reasons the French would hypothetically enlist in order to defend their cruel behavior and provides an example (mockingly towards the French) about a British woman who refused to lower the British flag upon the request of a French sailor. All this is used to show the insufferable injustices brought upon the natives and despotic nature of civilized man, and, as a result, raises the issue of dehumanization within the contextual framework of ecocritical theory.

Buell, in *Writing for an Endangered World*, discusses the schisms between the “anthropocentric” (human) and “ecocentric” (or “biocentric” / nonhuman) elements of environmental discourse – a gap which an “extension of moral and sometimes even legal standing to wider circles of human *and* nonhuman community” has attempted to lessen – and the ethical questions that arise from such rift (224-25). The islanders seem to be considered (by colonials) not quite human; they in fact are seen (as mentioned earlier) more comparable to animals, and therefore can easily be perceived, by the “imperial” eye, as slaves, which inherently gives rise to moral and ethical implications and questions, ones that have already been considered by ecocritics. For example, do animals (or perceivably “lower” forms of human nature) have rights? And what about nature; are we (“humans”) infringing upon those rights when we capture,

subjugate, and occupy? In *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*, Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin address anthropomorphic racism and speciesism and nature's tendency to be exploited:

Within many cultures – and not just western ones – anthropomorphism has long been naturalized. The absolute prioritization of one's own species' interests over those of the silenced majority is still regarded as being 'only natural'. Ironically, it is precisely through such appeals to nature that other animals and the environment are often excluded from the privileged ranks of the human, rendering them available for exploitation. (5)

While this is a very relevant discussion in regard to the treatment of the Typee natives by imperialists in general, I argue that Melville seems to question the validity of such racism, going against the colonial grain and viewing the natives as humans (perhaps even more human than their civilized brothers), with rights, and with a locality that fares much better without the mark of the "white man." In fact, one could argue, Melville exemplifies in some ways counter-racism towards the "white man." Nevertheless his view of the natives as being closer to, almost a part of, nature is in itself inherently racist, which points out another facet of western racism – the marginalization of the nonhuman. Huggan and Tiffin, in the same chapter, speak to such division: "Not only were other people often regarded as part of nature – and thus instrumentally as animals – but also they were forced or co-opted over time into western views of the environment

[...]” (6). Melville, undoubtedly views the natives as being more in tune with their own environment than westerners, living on the land’s provided abundance, and thus they are exhibited (pun intended) as part of nature — fiercely wild. And Melville’s depiction, while not meaning to, alienates both the islanders and nature from “civilized humanity.” Nevertheless, there are various instances in *Typee* in which Melville shows that in many ways the behavior of so-called “civilized” persons parallels, ironically, the actions of what would be categorized barbaric, in that on occasion civilized behavior displays a minimal amount of sympathy towards fellow beings, which is an element that some argue is necessary in defining the essence of “civilized” and moral enlightenment.

Captain Vangs is a perfect example. When Tommo, sickened by his current circumstances, contemplates jumping ship, the distinction between life aboard the ship and what seems to be an abundant savage life, already highlighted in previous chapters, becomes considerably more defined. Concerning the ship, Melville writes: “The usage on board of her [*Dolly*] was tyrannical; the sick had been inhumanly neglected; the provisions had been doled out in scanty allowance; and her cruizes were unreasonably protracted” (21). Words and phrases, such as “tyrannical,” “inhumanly neglected,” “scanty allowance,” and “unreasonably protracted,” employed to describe Vangs’s captaincy convey the brutality, ruthlessness, and oppressive nature of his character, showing his clear lack of concern for the preservation and conservation of life on his ship. Through imagery and a strong thematic

consistency and awareness of his environment, Melville makes clear Tommo's disconcertion with the ship's deprivation and lack of vitality; and in juxtaposition to the resplendent, teeming island of Nukuheva, which Melville goes on to outline in detail, his inclination to jump ship seems only natural. In describing the island, he paints the following panorama:

Viewed from our ship as she lay at anchor in the middle of the harbor, it presented the appearance of a vast natural amphitheatre in decay, and overgrown with the vines, the deep glens that furrowed its sides appearing like enormous fissures caused by the ravages of time. Very often when lost in admiration at its beauty, I have experienced a pang of regret that a scene so enchanting should be hidden away from the world and in these remote seas, and seldom meet the eyes of devoted lovers of nature. (24)

It is the "deepest shade of green" Melville marvels over, with its inexhaustible resources and rich, verdant landscapes, those that (as Melville makes apparent) are "a realm apart." Thus, Melville, "the rambler gone wild," is far from home and the "reality" of civilization (that which he seems to find monotonously rote) and has entered a place that conversely fosters imagination and fascination.

His departure from the ship symbolizes his "release from civilization," the hierarchical system he has become regrettably familiar with, and his emergence on the island (which unfolds with the plot) symbolizes the "thrill of the new" for Melville and his contact with the "other" (i.e., the remote wilderness of

Nukeheva, the bountiful plant and animal life extant there, and, of course, the natives). Frederick Turner deliberates on such emancipation in “Cultivating an American Garden”:

The true assertion of the purity of the spirit was to “go back to nature,” to build a cabin in the woods, to ship aboard a whaler, to be a mountain man, to ‘light out for the Territory,’ as Huck Finn puts it, and leave behind the soft, corrupting, emasculating sophistications of ‘sivilization.’ In nature one could discover for oneself the real meaning of America’s political liberation: our natural solitude, our natural equality, our natural selfishness. (46)

Melville went to the whaling industry to make money; however, he could have chosen any other industry by which to make a profit. I argue that while whalers may have been the only ones hiring, the adventurous lifestyle also appealed to Melville, as it no doubt gave him something to write about. In addition, like one seeking true “liberation,” Melville hoped, to some degree, to elude the burdens of civilization on the whaling voyage, but, unfortunately, finds them ultimately inescapable. Therefore, the whaling voyage, in terms of spiritual release, is insufficient; and Melville, if he is to find any remnants of “purity” must jump ship.

Nevertheless, while the Nukuhevan landscape, replete with natural beauties, enchants Tommo, there is also a grave rumor that supersedes its magnificence and brings chills to even the most barbaric of barbarians: among

the gracious and well-mannered tribes populating the island (i.e., the Nukuhevans and Happars), there exists one tribe of fiercely “inveterate gormandizers of human flesh” – that of the notoriously “perfidious Typees” (25). Tommo exhibits the natural apprehension and strange excitement regarding these “savage beasts”; but as Sanborn points out, when the threat of danger becomes more palpable, Tommo’s “visions of cannibalism becomes increasingly racist” (81). However, to Melville’s credit, he also rationalizes their behavior by blaming the civilizers; he writes: “Europeans have at some time or other been the aggressors, and that the cruel and bloodthirsty disposition of some of the islanders is mainly to be ascribed to the influence of such examples” (27). So, once again the lines between savagery and civilization are blurred, and Melville persistently attempts, throughout the narrative, to disentangle the two by way of juxtaposition, so as to see each for what it truly is, or what it is not. Reflecting upon the interaction of the captain and the barbarian at the conclusion of Chapter 4, Melville writes:

In the one is shown the result of long centuries of progressive civilization and refinement, which have gradually converted the mere creature into the semblance of all that is elevated and grand; while the other, after the lapse of the same period, has not advanced one step in the career of improvement. ‘Yet, after all,’ quoth I to myself, ‘insensible as he is to a thousand wants, and removed from harassing cares, may not the savage be the happier of the two?’ (29)

Melville seems to be questioning here the whole idea of “moral enlightenment” and “advancement.” In what way are westerners enlightened, when the simplicity and ease of native life appears to produce a greater amount of happiness? Essentially he is challenging the underlying motivations of western society and the system around which it is structured.

EXPLORING THE TERRITORY

As luck would have it, Tommo finds another malcontented sailor like himself, Toby, to join him in the escape. Tommo describes him as “one of the class of rovers you sometimes meet at sea, who never reveal their origin, never allude to home, and go rambling over the world as if pursued by some mysterious fate they cannot possibly elude” (Melville 32). Like Melville, Richard Tobias Greene (whose nickname is Toby) is a “rambler gone wild” (alluded to by Lyons), in search of exotic wildernesses realms apart and thrilling new experiences. The two plan their clandestine getaway, and notwithstanding the captain’s fierce warning regarding the natives they make their break, hacking a path through the dense, indifferent tropical vegetation, ascending the higher interior of the island. In less than a day, their toil pays off, and they are rewarded with what Melville describes as a “magnificent” view: “perforated with deep glens or diversified with smiling valleys, formed altogether the loveliest view I ever beheld, and were I to live a hundred years, I should never forget the feeling of admiration which I then experienced” (40). However, at this point, despite

their praise for the awe-inspiring land, Tommo and Toby have yet to become reliant on its abundance, including food and other resources. For example, Tommo remarks:

Although I had never before thought of providing anything in the way of food for our expedition, as I fully relied upon the fruits of the island to sustain us wherever we might wander, yet I could not resist the inclination I felt to provide a luncheon from the relics before me. (36)

The relics Melville speaks of are the biscuits he and Toby snatched at breakfast before running away. The two are still dependent on this form of nourishment and have not yet relinquished their ties in this regard to civilization so as to be completely dependent on the Marquesan land. Moreover, Toby and Tommo pause to take stock of the supplies they managed to steal away with. In Toby's frock is "a pound of tobacco," "a hash of soaked bread," "five yards of calico print," "a sailor's little 'ditty-bag,' containing needles, thread, and other sewing utensils," "a razor-case," and "two or three separate plugs of negro-head," while Tommo has with him "tobacco," "A few morsels of bread," "a fathom or two of white cotton cloth," "and several pounds of choice pigtail" (42-43). In addition, Tommo makes the joke, after a night of torrential rain, "I recommend all adventurous youths who abandon vessels in romantic islands during the rainy seasons to provide themselves with umbrellas" (48). Thus, while they have physically left their sense of security (i.e., the ship) behind, they are not yet relying on the land or thinking in terms of such reliance completely; they still

have a the sense of the familiar. However, Tommo and Toby, in the next few chapters, and over the course of a few days, are slowly transformed as they penetrate the interior landscapes of the island, from unknowing boy-scouts seeking out a new adventure, to survivalists in the untamed thicket, and eventually to breaking away from comfort and familiarity, infiltrating and immersing themselves in native society.

For several days the protagonist and his comrade maneuver through the verdure, making shelter out of bushes, and tree limbs and ropes out of tree roots, gradually ascending and descending the sides of the mountain toward the interior valley, where there is believed to be an abundance of fruit. After the initial shock, and as they awaken to a greater sense of physical location, Tommo, in an appraisal of his surroundings, takes note of the seemingly flawless nature. He recounts: "The whole landscape seemed one unbroken solitude, the interior of the island having apparently been untenanted since the morning of the creation" (44). The important word in this statement is "apparently," because while the "isandscape" appears to be untouched, this is not true, since the natives dwelled on the island and inevitably traveled the "undefiled" forests regularly for food and basic materials. However, what this statement implies, I argue, is the Marquesan landscape simply lacks (in terms of Melville's construction of the notion of "pristine") the parasitic advancements of civilization. Therefore, the natives' mark on nature, from Tommo's point of view, is virtually nonexistent, due to their symbiotic and non-intrusive relationship

with it, undoubtedly a sight very similar to the colonists' first peek at the New World's untainted landscapes (qualities that have been both diminished and enhanced over time). As a result, Melville is utterly mesmerized by the "unblemished" scene around him. In fact, it meets all the qualifications for what he deems paradise: "Had a glimpse of the gardens of Paradise been revealed to me," Melville writes, "I could scarcely have been more ravished with the sight" (49). In this sense, paradise is equated with that which is untouched or seemingly untouched; whereas, destitute ships, soulless industry, tyrannical captains and all that busies the scene aboard *Dolly* are indicative of hell (or the opposite of paradise). But, any argument "for" nature and "against" the advancements of civilization in an absolute fashion is untenable. One cannot discount everything associated with civilization and deem it deplorable, simply because it does not fit into the preconceived, rarely attainable notion of paradise. It is too simplistic, too black and white, to equate what's "natural" with good and what's "man-made" with bad. Rather, the dichotomy is complex and intricate, like an ecosystem is complex and intricate. That which is "man-made" has positive qualities too—to protect and defend, guard and preserve, fortify and shield—while, conversely, nature can bring hardship upon the most skillful outdoorsman. This complexity plays a role in the narrative when Tommo and Toby, while "ravished" from the outset by nature's grandeur, also quickly awaken to its adverse qualities.

The grandeur of Nukuheva's landscape is unbelievably delightful from a distance, but to be in the thick of it leads to a very different understanding.

Tommo and Toby abandon themselves to nature, experiencing both its beauty and splendor and its harsh impassivity too (nature, as it turns out, has its own mechanisms of survival). The nights are dark, cold, and haunting; the gorges are steep and narrow; the rain leaves one feeling constantly damp and chilled. As Tommo describes it in one terrible experience:

During the whole of the night the continual roaring of the cataract – the dismal moaning of the gale through the trees – the pattering of the rain, and the profound darkness, affected my spirits to a degree which nothing had ever before produced. Wet, half famished, and chilled to the heart with dampness of the place, and nearly wild with pain I endured, I fairly cowered down to the earth under this multiplication of hardships, and abandoned myself to frightful anticipations of evil; and my companion, whose spirit at last was a good deal broken, scarcely uttered a word during the whole night. (65)

The imagery of “roaring cataract,” “pattering rain,” and “profound darkness” appeals to the senses of hearing and sight and supports a despairing depiction of nature, where even the gale appears to be in pain as she “moans through the trees.” Also, the expression “nearly wild with pain I endured” is an interesting detail in that it depicts Tommo approaching his breaking point: he is not only physically bereft of warmth and comfort but haunted by what is to come as well.

Hoping their perseverance, upon reaching the head of the valley, will prove fruitful, they remain cautious of any encounter with the natives, a

potential encounter that has been worked up to be the suspenseful subject of the book. At one point the two adventurers even consider turning back, but quickly realize they have no desire to return while any chance remains of meeting the ship, and, if they have come this far, argues Tommo, they might as well find out what the valley has to offer: "in a word, I said that since we had deemed it advisable to enter the valley, we ought manfully to face the consequences, whatever they might be" (67). Thus, eventually they find the fruitful delicacies of the valley for which they had been hoping (a fruit that Melville, in hindsight, calls "annuee") and enjoy the sweet, satisfying "ambrosia" these desired treats have to offer. Not long thereafter, they notice the first sign of native presence in the valley: "a slender bread-fruit shoot perfectly green, and with the tender bark freshly stript from it" (67). From an ecocritical eye, it is no coincidence at all this sign reveals the islanders' exchange with nature, for most likely the shoot served as a curative of some sort or food. Nonetheless, "The plot was now thickening," inserts Melville. Soon they stumble upon another sign, "a faggot of the same shoots bound together with a strip of bark," and they contemplate the distinction, upon which their safety relies, "Typee or Happar?" Either way, the signs indicate human life, so Tommo prepares for any potential meeting by gathering together a peace offering in the form of a cotton cloth and a stick; and soon enough, they spot them, two Typee children (although they do not know they are Typee at the time), "a boy and a girl, slender and graceful, and completely naked, with the exception of a slight girdle of bark, from which

depended at opposite points two of the russet leaves of the bread-fruit tree" (68). After some apprehension on the part of the natives, they allow Tommo to drape the cloth across the young girl's shoulders (the first sign, maybe, that Tommo is not completely abandoning himself to savage ways at this point) and after a few attempts at communication, the native children lead the two wayward travelers to their village.

The next chapter analyzes, through an ecocritical lens, the first-hand exchange between the Typee natives and the two Americans in the "contact zone." Then, I use Val Plumwood's "theory of domination" to lead the analysis into an examination of dualisms, from male/female to mind/body, with an emphasis on nature.

CHAPTER III

INNER LANDSCAPES: DUALISMS IN THE “CONTACT ZONE”

Through space and time speaks the voice of that nineteenth-century genius Henry David Thoreau: *In wilderness lies the preservation of the world.* Only when we are lost – and isn't the testimony of the twentieth century evidence that humankind is lost amid the very splendor and potential of the civilization it has created? – can we begin to find ourselves. Once we lay down our conventional system of directions, then we see that we are cosmic orphans. Who is our Mother? Our Father? Where are we going? Where is our Home? (Oelschlaeger 334)

“CONTACT ZONE” AND LANGUAGE

The Typee children lead Tommo and Toby into the depths of the wilderness – the Typee nation – where they are then surrounded, prodded, and examined by the older natives. This exchange between the two cultures marks the beginning of a prolonged exchange in the “contact zone,” extending over the next twenty-three chapters. Let me clarify, though, how I employ and also digress from Mary Louis Pratt's definition of the “contact zone” in this analysis. She defines “contact zone” as “the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving

conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (6). The first part of this statement clearly defines the circumstances between the natives and the two Americans in *Typee*: they are both peoples whose geography and history could not be more dissimilar, and they clearly attempt to interact with each other. However, I do not see their relations with Tommo as being contingent on the qualities of coercion, inequality, and conflict (as indicated by Pratt), at least not in a colonial sense. While there is external conflict presented in the narrative, such as Tommo and Toby stumbling through the terrain and making contact with the natives, the majority of the conflict is internal, within Tommo himself. Melville's treatment of the exchange between native and sojourner is not grounded in imperialism, but rather in anti-imperialism, arguably. While there are some clear instances of racism as already mentioned, these are the result of ignorance and perhaps language structure, not imperialistic desires. Tommo secretly hopes to experience and immerse himself in the barbaric, not to destroy it, even though fear of the unknown and the "other" plays a major role in his ability to immerse himself completely. Thus, while Pratt uses the "contact zone" as a way to explore the imperial frontier, which I am not doing explicitly (although the interior clash of dualistic structures, as I discuss later, could, I suppose, also be considered a "contact zone" in a sense), the concept is still a helpful framework through which to view the meeting of these two peoples, because it brings the awareness of a socially charged space to the forefront.

As mentioned in Pratt's Introduction, the term "contact" originates from the field of linguistics, in which "the term contact language refers to improvised languages that develop among speakers of different native languages who need to communicate with each other consistently, usually in the context of trade" (6). This is certainly true in *Typee*, when conflicting languages force Tommo and the natives to rely on gesticulations and pidgin language in order to communicate. In regards to the difficulty of understanding one another, Tommo recounts:

Occasionally we caught some indistinct idea of their meaning, when we would endeavor by every method in our power to communicate the desired intelligence. At such times their gratification was boundless, and they would redouble their efforts to make us comprehend them more perfectly. But all in vain; and in the end they looked at us despairingly, as if we were the receptacle the end of invaluable information; but how to come at it they knew not. (75)

The differences in language no doubt impede the interaction between native and visitor. In some instances it even brings about fear through misunderstanding, for example when Tommo and Toby first meet the natives and cannot tell if they are calling themselves Happars or referring to the other group on the island, thus leaving Tommo and Toby wondering in fear whether or not they are in the midst of the fierce *Typee* cannibals. These differences in language and the problems that arise are also illustrated by the various instances when the natives try to explain their strange rituals, and due to convoluted evidence, Tommo and Toby

cannot decipher whether or not the Typees are indulging in cannibalistic activities or not, so inevitably there is an underlying fear of the unknown. Nonetheless, while the imperfect “contact” language allows the two cultures to come together, there still exists a gap in which otherness and fear is present.

In addition, and on the topic of language and linguistics, it is helpful to consider the antithetical nature of the words “civilized” and “savage” from a linguistic, or structuralist, perspective. In his article “What is Structuralism?” Peter Caws, while attributing his mode of thinking mostly to Levi-Strauss and the structuralist movement, distinguishes primitive society from modern society and the “savage mind” from the “civilized mind” by way of “social organization” (200). Levi-Strauss, Caws explains, contrasts the two societies analogously, comparing primitive society to a clock or mechanical machine and modern society to a thermodynamic machine (201). Primitive societies, Levi-Strauss argues, “have a tendency to maintain themselves indefinitely in their initial state, which explains why they appear to us as societies without history and without progress” (qtd. in Caws 201). The key word here, once again, is “appear.” On the other hand, Levi-Strauss argues that modern societies “operate in virtue of a difference of temperature between their parts [...] (which is realized by different forms of social hierarchy, whether slavery, serfdom, or class distinction); they produce much more work than others, but consume and progressively destroy their sources of energy” (qtd. in Caws 201). Since the “civilized mind” or modern society views the world in fragmented parts,

according to Caws's summarization of structuralism, it is easily alienated from the structuring activity and constantly seeks insight into its own structuring process. Whereas the "savage mind" or primitive society maintains a constant mental complexity, resulting in complex languages and an intrinsic ability to organize the totality of experience into one coherent whole (Caws 202).

Moreover, language serves as the primary agency, according to Levi-Strauss, through which the world is structured (Caws 203). Magic, myth, and totem are secondary agencies used by the "savage mind" to structure the world, creating in it intelligibility, directly effecting and integral to its own reality (Caws 203). Magic, myth, and totem are attributed to the Old or primitive world, while modern minds would associate similar agencies of structure to science, literature, and morality, where science is the modern equivalent to magic, literature to myth, and "rules of conduct" or morality to totem (Caws 203).

Language, myth, and so on represent the way in which man has been able to grasp the real; they are not structures of some ineffable reality that lies behind them and from which they are separable. To say that the world is intelligible means that it presents itself to the mind of the primitive as a message, to which his language and behavior are an appropriate response – but not as a message from elsewhere, simply as a message, as it were, in its own right [...] The message, furthermore, is unitary, a fact that modern man easily forgets [...] (Caws 203)

The “savage mind” goes about its business structuring the world without looking for insightful meaning about how or what it structures (Caws 204). The “civilized mind,” on the other hand, seeks meaning in the structuring process, while looking for the “proper way” of communicating truth (Caws 202). In effect, according to Levi-Strauss, the modern mind finds itself “anguished and alienated,” unable to make sense of the fragmented parts (Caws 203-204).

And this idea of being “anguished and alienated” is an accurate description of the state of mind in which Tommo presents himself, regarding his view of “civilization” especially. In fact, as alluded to already, almost the entire narrative is discursively based around Melville’s attempt to see the differences between these two structuring processes. While there is a latent fear underlying his curiosity about the natives that maybe these savages truly are the remorseless cannibals as was well “known,” he also, during his stay, takes notice of the seeming peacefulness that abounds amongst these primitives which stands out in stark contrast to the seeming social injustices prevailing in America. He conjectures:

I once heard it given as an instance of the frightful depravity of a certain tribe in the Pacific, that they had no word in their language to express the idea of virtue. The assertion was unfounded; but were it otherwise, it might be met by stating that their language is almost entirely destitute of terms to express the delightful ideas conveyed by our endless catalogue of civilized crimes. (126)

While the natives, as Melville implies, do in fact have a word to express the concept of virtue, they do not have what Melville is arguing, through his use of verbal irony, the numerable “delightful” crimes marked out by civilization, although as indicated in the book, certain violations of taboo in Typee culture were punishable and perhaps “barbaric.” However, the degree to which civilized “crimes” marginalize various groups within civilized society, versus the seeming harmonious interactions of the Typees despite the few transgressions, is what he finds most appalling.

In an effort to illustrate how civilized people “mar their own felicity with their own ingenuity” Tommo enumerates the various points of contention that seem to be mediated by the simplicity of savage life or merely nonexistent in the native culture. The most egregious of these, and perhaps the underlying cause of the others, is the concept of currency:

There were no foreclosures of mortgages, no protested notes, no bills payable, no debts of honor 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, backing their clients up to a quarrel, and then knocking their heads together; no poor relations, everlastingly occupying the spare bed-chamber, and diminishing the elbow room at the family table; no destitute widows with their children starving on the cold charities of the world; no beggars; no debtors’ prisons; no proud and hardhearted nabobs in Typee; or to sum up all in

one word – no Money! That “root of all evil” was not to be found in the valley. (126)

This passage exemplifies the utopian vision which underlies the discourse throughout the narrative and highlights Melville’s feeling of bitterness for the injustices pervading America at that time; and while these social issues, especially those concerning money, were a part of Tommo’s disenchantment (considering his main reason for going to the whaling industry in the first place was driven by monetary concerns), such iniquities have only become more problematic in recent years, when numerous cases of fraudulent activity have surfaced in America, and the gap between rich and poor has arguably widened. For-profit business, which could be identified as one of the underlying motivations of colonialism, has, over the last century, exploited humans and the nonhuman by allowing cheap labor, the maltreatment of animals, and massive amounts of waste to be dispensed back into the environment.

In effect, “civilized man” has dominated and continues to dominate those elements around him. Huggan and Tiffin, in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, discuss environmental racism, a concept coined by philosopher Deane Curtin and defined as “the connection, in theory and practice, of race and the environment so that the oppression of one is connected to, and supported by, the oppression of the other” (qtd. in Huggan 4). They delineate between two forms of racism, romanticized racism (mentioned last chapter) and discriminatory racism:

Environmental racism has both positive and negative components, accruing just as easily to those considered romantically to be in harmony with nature, e.g. the familiar trope of the 'ecological Indian' (Krech 2000), as to those accused of damaging their environment on the basis of cultural attributes directly or indirectly associated with their race. Environmental racism is perhaps best understood as a sociological phenomenon, exemplified in the environmentally discriminatory treatment of socially marginalized or economically disadvantaged peoples, and in the transference of ecological problems from their 'home' source to a 'foreign' outlet (whether *discursively*, e.g. through the more or less wholly imagined perception of other people's 'dirty habits', or *materially*, e.g. through the actual re-routing of First World commercial waste.) (Huggan 4)

Thus if the oppression of one (native) is connected to the oppression of the other (nature), then the idealization of one is connected to the idealization of the other. It is what Val Plumwood refers to as "hegemonic centrism" in which women, nature, and indigenous people constitute the subordinate power in the struggle with the hegemonic white man. Plumwood's "theory of domination," which she establishes in an essay titled "Androcentrism and Anthropocentrism: Parallels and Politics," helps to show the similarities in the different forms of colonization; and, moreover, *Typee* serves (through Melville's discourse) as a mirror in which the effects of subordination are reflected. The two concepts, "savage" and "civilized," are more or less two sides of the same coin; thus when Melville holds

up a mirror to himself (and what he knows) he is able to see what is reflected in the mirror behind him, which are the qualities of the savage. He blurs the line between the two. Furthermore, Plumwood “insists that feminism must address not only the forms of oppression which afflict humans but also those that afflict nature, the extension of feminist insights and models of centrism to illuminate problems in the concept of anthropocentrism is a core concern of the ecofeminist theoretical project” (Plumwood, “Androcentrism” 327). Ecofeminism then becomes a helpful lens through which to view the savage/civilized, nature/culture dichotomies and a useful tool with which to then propose “anti-dualist remedies.”

INNER LANDSCAPES AND DUALISMS

The same features of domination, as listed by Plumwood, apply to the male/female structure, the colonization of indigenous people, and the colonization of nature. Such features include the following: (1) radical exclusion; (2) homogenization; (3) backgrounding, denial; (4) incorporation; and (5) instrumentalism. Radical exclusion, as Plumwood explains, occurs when the dominators view the “other” as lesser and inferior in nature; the subjects are then given little importance and viewed as interchangeable and homogenous, creating a polarized structure. Once the structure is established, the “inferior” half is denied and deemed inessential, becoming background to its “superior” and as a result is incorporated into the structure wherein the former is defined in relation

to the latter, and ultimately, becomes a means to an end for the dominator. Within Typee society, native women are not allowed in taboo areas and are radically excluded from certain activities. For example, Tommo in an attempt to better understand native rituals describes the degree to which such dualistic (male/female) order is maintained: "The holiest of spots was defended from profanation by the strictest edicts of the all-pervading 'taboo', which condemned to instant death the sacrilegious female who should enter or touch its sacred precincts, or even so much as press with her feet the ground made holy by the shadows that it cast" (91). In addition, native men and women are polarized in their duties; men perform the warrior tasks, such as hunting and fighting, while women, as has historically been tradition in advanced societies as well, take care of domestic matters, namely food preparation and the weaving of a tapestry called *tappa*.

Tommo, unknowing of the rules delineating proper interactions between native men and women, inappropriately attempts to take a group of females on a canoe and is reprimanded for doing so: "The honest fellow looked at me bewildered for a moment, and then shook his head solemnly, and murmured 'taboo! taboo!' giving me to understand that unless the canoe was removed, I could not expect to have the young ladies back again" (132). Thus, by nature of the restrictions placed on the women, homogenization occurs and a polarized structure is established, giving way to a phallogocentric, warrior-focused society. The women are depicted as hardworking damsels (Melville even refers to them

as “inmates of the house”) lacking the privileges of “enlightened young ladies” (Melville 85). In fact, males not only dominate the females in this native abode, but a stratification of rank also exists within the native community, as indicated by the variations in their tattoos: “The warrior, from the excellence of his physical proportions, might certainly have been regarded as one of Nature’s noblemen, and the lines drawn upon his face may possibly have denoted his exalted rank” (78). Therefore, as indicated by these traits and symbols of status, either the natives are more “human” than the “civilized” give them credit for, or the “civilized” themselves are more “barbarian” than they realize. Nevertheless, it is important to note two things, as Melville does in a later chapter: one, “[...] that the influence exerted over the people of the valley by their chiefs was mild in the extreme: and as to any general rule of standard of conduct by which the commonalty were governed in their intercourse with each other, so far as my observation extended, I should be almost tempted to say that none existed on the island, except, indeed, the mysterious ‘Taboo’ be considered as such” (200); and, two, “The religious restrictions of the taboo alone excepted, the women of the valley were allowed every possible indulgence. 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 [...] Like so many spoiled beauties, they ranged through the groves – bathed in the stream – danced – flirted – played all manner of mischievous pranks, and passed

their days in one merry round of thoughtless happiness" (204). Thus, despite the rank and the taboo, the natives were a very happy people.

Furthermore, the theory of domination can also be applied to the subjugation of indigenous peoples. The natives' interaction with nature is viewed as inferior (nearly animalistic), as they are considered "primitive" and "uncivilized," lacking in the features of cultivation; thus they become in the colonizer's eyes available for conquest. However, Melville, unlike others (the missionaries, for example), does not see the necessity for colonization. For example, Melville juxtaposes the two ways of living, "civilized" and "savage," and implies that being "civilized" might not be much to gloat about; he writes:

What a striking evidence does this operation furnish of the wide difference between the extreme of savage and civilized life. A gentleman of Typee can bring up a numerous family of children and give them all a highly respectable cannibal education, with infinitely less toil and anxiety than he expends in the simple process of striking a light; whilst a poor European artisan, who through the instrumentality of a lucifer performs the same operation in one second, is put to his wits' end to provide for his starving offspring that food which the children of a Polynesian father, without troubling their parent, pluck from the branches of every tree around them. (112)

Melville implies that while the natives could gain from civilization's ingenuity and invention, the West too could learn something from the "savage" way of life

and might benefit from taking on their non-invasive perspectives and interactions with nature (and fortunately, through his writing and those of others, we have learned something about them). Nonetheless, according to Plumwood's "features of androcentrism," the colonized are then "deprived of or accorded lesser political rights, social consideration, and access to voice" (339); and, as with Native American Indians, they become inferiorized and denied agency, "whose prior ownership of the land and whose dispossession and murder is never spoken, admitted" (339). It is then the job of the colonizer to "remake the colonized in the image of the colonizer," which is what Melville argues against on numerous occasions in *Typee*, asserting that the colonized are better off in their original state without the poverty, sickness, and injustice which has historically prevailed in colonized spaces, due to a lack of stability in which inevitably the colonized end up comprising the lower class who then become instruments for the colonizers. In discussing this exact issue, Melville writes: "Not until I visited Honolulu was I aware of the fact that the small remnant of the natives had been civilized into draught horses, and evangelized into beasts of burden" (196).

Nevertheless, the "contact" approach "treats the relations among colonizers and colonized, or travelers and 'travelees,' not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power" (Pratt 7). However, by nature of this asymmetry, the colonized often lose

their autonomy, and the environments in which they live are also often compromised; thus, as implied by Plumwood and others, a sort of social stratification in terms of wealth and poverty – i.e., nice communities on one hand and the “barrio,” “ghetto,” or “third world” on the other – is established. Diseases spread, and people go hungry; instead of allowing nature’s abundance to sustain them, the colonized are then forced into a situation in which they are reliant on the *hand* to get fed and cured. In *The Cruise of the Snark*, Jack London writes about his visit to Nukuheva, years after Melville’s, and his encounter with the Typean people, who, unfortunately, lived in much different circumstances from those Melville witnessed:

Life has rotted away in this wonderful garden spot, where the climate is as delightful and healthful as any to be found in the world. Not alone were the Typeans physically magnificent; they were pure. Their air did not contain the bacilli and germs and microbes of disease that fill our own air. And when the white men imported in their ships these various microorganisms of disease, the Typeans crumpled up and went down before them. (London 170)

Here, once again, the ships symbolize Western or advanced civilization – the same society Melville expresses disdain for in *Typee*. The fact is that the discursive “panorama” which Melville portrays of the Typee people, and the Marquesan terrain, in comparison to later accounts, reveals the ruination caused by colonization. Now we have the word *endangered* to express such destruction,

and this term is no longer used solely in relation to animals; it is also used, as is widely understood, to describe the state of nature in many parts of the world. Unfortunately, that same *hand*, the “machine in the garden,” has gotten so big that, as a result, there is not much (or considerably less) “garden” left; therefore, what is left is endangered. So, after the passing of 165 years since Melville’s publication of *Typee*, the presence of colonization, which Melville had so much antipathy for, has only grown; and what was not overwhelmingly in jeopardy at that time (the environment) has now become incredibly compromised, thus the reason for the increase in environmental concern. Moreover, the features of domination can equally be applied to the phenomena of the physical world and the environment it creates.

The domination of nature first radically emphasizes the differences between humans and nature, leading to a “view of the human as outside of and apart from a nature which is conceived as lacking human qualities such as mind and agency” (Plumwood 340). Examples of nature are then perceived to be interchangeable by the dominator, lacking in rare qualities. However, this is where places like the Marquesas and other exotic destinations such as the Arctic, even, which are becoming fewer and fewer in number, stand out as being unique and distinct, ones that should be protected and preserved. Once nature has been colonized it no longer has the same appeal, as it no longer is seen as exotic; rather it is viewed as conventional and ordinary. It becomes the background to an ever-growing technological and industrial society. In effect, humans no longer fit into

the order of nature, but, rather, nature now fits into the order of humans, both of which orders (I would like to add) are human creations. Its purpose, within the colonized boundaries, then becomes to serve the needs of humans – a means to an end. Nature outside those boundaries maintains the exotic (versus its suburban opposite) connotation that some humans view as precious ground, untainted and paradisiacal, whereas others view such nature with the eye of a colonizer and see it as land to be taken and assimilated into civilization. That said, Melville (among others) has placed this unique place – the Marquesas and Typee, more specifically – on the map of both literary and environmental imagination.

Furthermore, the concept of nature applies not only to the physical world but to the innate, essential qualities of a person or animal as well. Plumwood's theory of domination goes further in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* to discuss and problem solve the Cartesian duality – the domination of reason over imagination and the colonization of mind over body. In describing the resolution to breaking down the dualism of mind/body and mind/nature, she asserts:

It means re-examining the lower value accorded the underside, the body, the senses, emotion, the imagination, the animal, the feminine and nature.

Is the contrast treated as absolute and rigid or as allowing flexibility and overlap? Is 'nature within', those characteristics of humans such as sexuality and emotionality that are shared with non-humans and which bridge mind/body dualism, to be sharply separated, feared, denied,

denigrated, kept under lock and key by reason and never fully admitted to the status of the human (seen perhaps as ‘mechanism’, ‘instinct’, or ‘id’)? [...] Or is it integrated, honoured and accepted, treated as a vital and creative part of human life and culture? Are concepts of body, reason, imagination and emotion, matter and mind, human and animal, retained in their dualised and hyperseparated forms, even where the traditional devaluation of the contrasts of reason is abandoned? (Plumwood 123)

Plumwood’s implication here is that the problem of domination and colonization, as it is the struggle between the various dualities, begins with an inner duality, that of the mind (reason) and body (imagination). In many ways, Melville challenges this duality in particular, from his sexually charged interactions with the “sea nymphs” to his romantic ideations of the land and savage peoples, and from his disparaging comments about missionaries to his praises of the natives. Perhaps it is an exploration of the imagination, a release from reason. Even, John Bryant in the Introduction to the Penguin edition of *Typee* avers: “Melville’s strategy is to make Tommo’s new primal awareness our own” (ix). While Melville does not ultimately assimilate into the natives’ society for good, he does take his account home where it was received and internalized in American culture.

I conclude this thesis by discussing the ways a “panorama” such as *Typee* is relevant in today’s postcolonial world, how it can be useful in informing and bringing awareness to our own interactions with nature.

CONCLUSION

Tommo has the chance to assimilate into the Typee society by allowing them to tattoo his face and body, a taboo that would declare him part of the tribe, but he does not. Melville writes,

Horrified at the bare thought, of being rendered hideous for life if the wretch were to execute his purpose on me, I struggled to get away from him, while Kory-Kory, turning traitor, stood by, and besought me to comply with the outrageous request. On my reiterated refusals the excited artist got half beside himself, and was overwhelmed with sorrow at losing so noble an opportunity of distinguishing himself in his profession. (218-19)

In fact, as it turns out, Melville was a spectator, a tourist, all along. His close rendering of the Typee people, however, allows him to contribute something, in acknowledgement of his time spent with the natives, to Western civilization – a way for us (civilization) to learn something from the natives (specifically regarding the way they interact with their environment and each other).

For example, Melville distills the essence of humanity to a set of virtuous and honorable principles, which should equally apply to both savage and civilized (as both are human); however, he decides that such qualities are exhibited more clearly (especially in their interactions with each other) by the natives. He writes:

The grand principles of virtue and honor, however they may be distorted by arbitrary codes, are the same all the world over: and where these principles are concerned, the right or wrong of any action appears the same to the uncultivated as to the enlightened mind. It is to this indwelling, this universally diffused perception of what is *just* and *noble*, that the integrity of the Marquesans in their intercourse with each other is to be attributed. (201)

While the natives are amazed by the inventions of civilization, civilization should be equally amazed with the simple and non-intrusive way the natives deal with each other and the ease they have relying on nature's abundance. As stated in Chapter 1, ideally, as Pratt argues, contact with "Nature" and cultures outside one's own society gives rise to "planetary consciousness" and is important in helping to form the identity of the culture within which this "contact" is internalized. Robert Finch in "Very Like a Whale" writes, "Man, I believe, has a crying need to confront otherness in the universe. Call it nature, wilderness, the 'great outdoors,' or what you will – we crave to look out and behold something other than our own human faces staring back at us, expectantly and increasingly

frustrated" (24). While, Melville did not immerse himself entirely, I think he hoped to learn something from the Typee natives and to bring that knowledge back to America so that we could perhaps learn from them. The internalization of Melville's (Tommo's) "contact" (if it is seen as such) can be beneficial in helping us as a culture be more tolerant of differences in people/cultures without having to dominate and change them. It can also help us re-envision our interactions with nature, even if it simply means (at the least) recognizing it exists and giving it agency – what Deane Curtin describes as right thinking complemented by "moral empathy" (x).

In *Environmental Ethics for a Postcolonial World* Curtin discusses the environmental and population crisis caused by rapid economic change. She mentions various literary works in order to make her point, one of which is *Frankenstein*: "[...] Shelley imagined a Creature living on the border between culture and nature. But, unlike Tarzan, Shelley's Creature looks back on human culture's violent attempt to gain godlike control over nature with horror and foreboding. In sharp contrast to human culture, the Creature is peaceful" (xi). Although I have acknowledged the Typee natives as humans (which they are) they also inhabit a space that is different from what we currently know. Curtin goes on to aver: "These works of the literary imagination, then, pose similar questions of continuing relevance about the relationships of people to place. They do it through imagining a creature who occupies a sort of hybrid space between nature and human culture" (xi). Curtin suggests, as I will too, that many

of the moral questions regarding human interactions with nature, technology, and fellow humans which arise within works of the literary imagination (including *Typee*, of course) will need to be considered and answered in the coming years if we plan to sustain any real quality of life.

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