

**A Poetics of Hybridity:
Herman Melville's Oceanic Imagination and Generic Heterogeneity**

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To my parents

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Abbreviations for Herman Melville's Works

The following texts have been used in this dissertation and will be cited by the abbreviations listed here.

- BB* *Billy Budd, Sailor: An Inside Narrative*
- BP* *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War*
- JM* *John Marr and Other Sailors With Some Sea-Pieces*
- MA* *Mardi and a Voyage Thither*
- MD* *Moby-Dick: Or, The Whale*
- OM* *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas*
- PP* *Published Poems: Battle-Pieces, John Marr, Timoleon*
- PT* *The Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces, 1839-1860*
- PE* *Pierre: Or, The Ambiguities*
- RD* *Redburn, His First Voyage*
- TP* *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life*
- WJ* *White-Jacket: Or, The World in a Man-of-War*

**A Poetics of Hybridity:
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**Introduction:
Melville's Sea and Textual Hybridity**

Melville the Poet

The present dissertation will explore the ways in which Herman Melville's poetics is informed by the notion of hybridity, coupled with his oceanic imagination. I will argue that the essence of hybridity or mixture in Melville's text lies in his continual effort to blend different genres and forms. More specifically, these generic blends seem to be based on Melville's rhetorical use of poetry that aims at breaking the boundary between prose and poetry and bringing epic and lyrical elements together in a single text. Thus, the ultimate purpose of this study is to reevaluate Melville's poetics in its relation to the issue of generic heterogeneity.

Although Melville's poetry has received much critical acclaim only recently, it has a long history of being read and discussed. It is generally acknowledged that one of the first critical attempts to evaluate Melville's poetic talent was made by John Freeman, whose *Herman Melville* (1926) discussed the writer's major poetical works. Later, in the 1940s, critics attempted to assess the poetic aspects of Melville's work, particularly in his prose narratives. In *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941), F. O. Matthiessen devoted detailed

attention to Melville's poetic talent, especially focusing on *Moby-Dick* and its tendency to reveal lyrical lines or formal verse.¹ Moreover, Matthiessen edited *Selected Poems of Herman Melville* in 1944 and made Melville's poems accessible to the general reader.²

In the 1990s, studies on Melville's poetry aimed at redressing the previous evaluation of Melville as a failed poet, putting special emphasis on the author's substantial poetic achievements in his later years. In light of these reevaluations of Melville's poetic talent, recent scholars have developed a growing interest in Melville's poetry, as Elizabeth Renker predicted in 2000 that "a revival of Melville's poetry will begin within the next 10 years" (Renker, "Melville the Poet" 348).

As we shall see in detail in Chapter 2, critics such as Robert Penn Warren, Stanton Garner, Lawrence Buell, and Cody Marrs place great value on the importance of the Civil War in evaluating Melville's achievements in his later years; In fact, the national crisis inspired Melville to write his first published volume of poetry, *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866), a book that critics today compare to Whitman's "Drum-Taps" in light of the two poets' representations of the Civil War.³ On the other hand, critics such as William C. Spengemann, Matthew Cordova Frankel, and Hershel Parker focus on the poetic language in his prose narratives.⁴ However, whether we discuss Melville's poetry or his poetic prose, little critical attention has yet been paid to the interrelation between Melville's ideas of poetry and his tendency to transgress the boundaries of generic categories. Therefore, it seems undeniable that whereas Melville's poetic talent has steadily gained high evaluations, the essence of his textual hybridity still remains largely unrevealed.

The mixed use of prose and poetry, one must hasten to add, was common to Melville's contemporaries such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Edgar Allan Poe. However, I argue that Melville seems to drastically differ from the others in that he demonstrates the rhetorical use of poetry to bring the lyric and the epic together—that is, to represent the intensity of subjective experience within a historical context. As is widely known, Melville first interspersed a number of sea ballads in his third novel, *Mardi* (1849). However, it is a little known fact that he continuously made an attempt to seek the rhetorical use of a ballad to redefine the lyric with reference to the epic. This emphasis on the ballad as a key to generic hybridity is one of the main topics that the present study aims to highlight.

Some scholars discuss Melville's textual heterogeneity in light of its cultural context. Based on previous studies, however, I wish to examine the importance of textual blending particularly in terms of Melville's poetics demonstrated across the boundaries of different genres. In contrast, some scholars evaluate Melville's poetic usage of meter or rhyme within a conventional framework.⁵ Such a technical approach is not the main goal of the present study, although one should keep in mind that it will help us, at least partially, to understand how he seeks to rhetorically employ poetic language in prose or in generically hybrid texts.

In Melville's works, I argue, the idea of textual heterogeneity that is informed by a poetics of hybridity appears primarily in two ways: one is in the use of poetic diction in prose; the other, more importantly, is in the juxtaposition of the prose headnote and the concluding dramatic verse in a single text. I place a greater value on the latter, because this writing mode

seems to occur as Melville's most idiosyncratic achievement, one that goes beyond his attempts to fuse poetry with prose narratives in his fictional works.

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to examine these two poetic practices particularly from two related perspectives: one is the dialectic between epic and lyric; the other is the significance of the sea. In other words, all works that are examined in the present dissertation are associated with those two subjects. In what follows, then, I would like to explore Melville's generic as well as thematic singularities, with their interrelations in mind.

Epic and Lyric

A good starting point to elucidate Melville's creative idiosyncracies might be to reexamine a general account of the definitions of epic and lyric poetry from *Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism: Lyric, Epic, and Allied Forms of Poetry* (1920). Although this book is a classic study on the forms of poetry, it will still help us gain a basic understanding of the two poetic forms. The book defines the epic as follows:

[T]he epic depicts a victorious hero, who represents a country or a cause which triumphs with his triumph; it presents a great or important action, and the characters are great or important; a certain elevation of tone pervades the whole poem; the action ... is slow and episodical, and achieves no more than a diffuse unity; the larger the scope of human interest and experience, the greater the success of the poem (Gayley and Kurtz 424)

This quotation constitutes the standard or most conventional definition of

the epic. This definition may particularly prove useful when we speculate about characters such as Captain Ahab in *Moby-Dick*, who is similar to Milton's Satan, or Captain Vere in *Billy Budd*. These epic novels always pose a question about how we should interpret the thoughts or actions of Melville's protagonists, and to what extent they can be considered epic or heroic.

To discuss the same question from a slightly different angle, another observation of the epic may also be helpful, for it leads us to an awareness that "each genre is related to and defined by others to which it is related" (Ralph Cohen 210). Ezra Pound, an expatriate American poet from the early Modernist period, defines the epic in brief as "a poem including history" (Pound 86). Given the poet's double desire to create a brief, haiku-like Imagist poem *and* to produce a long, multidimensional poem like *The Cantos*, Pound's famous remark on the epic genre, as James E. Miller notes, extends "from the finely restricted lyric end to the freely unbounded epic end, from the individual to society, from consciousness to country, from self to civilization" (Miller 76).

This observation regarding the (dis)continuity between epic and lyric poetry indicates that a genre does not exist independently but emerges "to compete or to contrast with other genres" (Ralph Cohen 207). From that perspective, we can consider epic and lyric poetry in the context of the relationships between public and private, and between history and individuality. Therefore, in this dissertation, I would like to use the term *epic* in ways that expand its narrowly technical definition, to describe history, society, country, and civilization; and the term *lyric* as associated with personal feelings, consciousness, and self.⁶ However, the terms epic

and lyric may be also defined with reference to their forms as opposed to their themes. Therefore, special attention should be given to the thematic purpose and stylistic function of epic and lyric poetry.

It is generally acknowledged that the first half of the nineteenth century in America was the age of the epic. As a past scholar notes, what the age demanded was not lyric poetry but the “length and the need for an impressive form to express a large country” (Dickie 7). This is because, whereas epic poetry is characterized by an aspiration to construct a national identity, the essence of lyric poetry resides in a personal desire for embracing or purging subjective emotions. Therefore, lyric poetry was historically regarded as an inadequate form during the time when poetry was required to represent a large nation.

However, there was no fertile ground for developing the epic in America at that time, at least according to the contemporary reviewers of literary magazines in the 1830s and 1840s. For example, “American Poetry,” a review anonymously published in *The Knickerbocker* in 1838, begins with the question “Where is the American epic [?]” and observes that “the present age is incapable of the epic” by the want of a master of the genre (383). Also, another review, “The Inferiority of American Literature” in *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1840, similarly remarks that most of the writers created “pieces of little length” (709) that were considered insufficient for expressing a great country.

In addition, a contemporary poet offered a similarly negative view on the possibility of writing epic poetry. In his literary essay, “The Poetic Principle” (posthumously published in 1850), Edgar Allan Poe considers a modern epic as “an inconsiderate and blindfold imitation” (Poe, *Essays and*

Reviews 72).⁷ Also, for Poe, a long poem does not exist because it is “a paradox” (Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 571). To some degree, as John P. McWilliams notes, Poe’s “dismissal of the epic” and the lengthy narrative poem was associated with “his own kind of lyric” that was characterized by the brief intensity of the poet’s emotion (McWilliams, *The American Epic* 188). In the first chapter of the present dissertation, we shall discuss Poe as a poet of exceptional character, who, in his essays on poetry, developed the idea that prose and poetry become entangled with one another because of their different purposes.

During the late nineteenth century, however, as Virginia Jackson writes, various forms of poetry were transformed “into the single abstraction of post-Romantic lyric.”⁸ Historically speaking, one of the causes of this lyricization is the fact that the term *lyric* was extended to define poetry as a whole. Thus, twentieth-century critics took a lyrical speaker *I* as a crucial source of lyric poetry, and this perspective dominates modern interpretations. Consequently, lyric poetry is generally defined “as a short, nonnarrative poem depicting the subjective experience of a speaker” (Jackson 183). In this context, Emily Dickinson is often considered as a representative of the age of post-Romantic lyricization, whereas William Cullen Bryant’s poem “To Waterfowl” (1818) is considered a foretoken of an American lyric.⁹

With these observations, however, I do not imply that the late nineteenth-century American era was the age of lyric poetry. Rather, I would like to emphasize that lyricization seems to have coexisted with discourses and historical conditions that often excluded or concealed lyric

intensity. In this sense, I agree with James E. Miller's view on Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* as a landmark of original American poetry, "a *lyric epic*." He remarks that "Whitman's ambition was epic, and that he had to invent a new epic form for the new era and the new country," and that he first employed *lyric epic* in *Leaves of Grass* (Miller 147).¹⁰ Certainly, *Leaves of Grass* may be worthy of being called a *lyric epic* primarily because it celebrates the self to express a country, and the spirit of democracy that defines the country's essence.

Such a framework proves enlightening if we reconsider the achievement of Melville as an experimenter with literary genres. In light of the dialectic between lyric and epic, Melville's work has thus far received at least three critical responses during the 1990s and the 2000s: Helen Vendler's "Melville and the Lyric of History" (1999) printed in *The Southern Review*; Christopher Sten's "Threading the Labyrinth: *Moby-Dick* as Hybrid Epic" published in *A Companion to Herman Melville* (2006) edited by Wyn Kelly; and Virginia Jackson's "Who Reads Poetry" in the January 2008 issue of *PMLA*, with a special section titled "The New Lyric Studies," which was featured in response to the discussions on epic poetry in the October 2007 issue of *PMLA*.

These three critical essays provide helpful perspectives from which to redefine the hybridity of epic and lyric poetry in terms of both thematic and stylistic practices, as will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. However, I wish to add another perspective to these previous studies; that is, the importance of the ballad. Few critics have focused on the genre, particularly regarding its relation to the question of epic and lyric poetry. Even Agnes D. Cannon makes no reference to the question in her essay,

“Melville’s Use of Sea Ballads and Songs” (1964). In fact, the ballad proves highly significant in light of the dynamic relationship between epic and lyric.

First, a ballad is a literary form that can be linked with both epic and lyric poetry. In general, the ballad is associated with lyric poetry, as an expression of an intense personal emotion, as well as in its relation to song; at the same time, it is never unrelated to epic elements in the sense that it contains history, myth, and story. Moreover, because the ballad is one of the chief integral components of Melville’s sea narratives, it will help us explore how the Melvillian sea functions and provides an imaginative stage in its relation to epic and lyric poetry.

In addition, since Melville often created the binary form of a prose headnote and a concluding verse by extending the ballad, the genre is inseparably related to the author’s hybrid composition. Thus, both the prose and verse sections contain epic and lyric dimensions. Even if the prose appears to focus on the historical narrative objectively, we can find an essence of subjective experience there, too. Although the verse section embodies a lyrical essence, we can also construct a historical narrative behind it. In this regard, the full text of the juxtaposed composition can be called, as it were, an *extended ballad*—an attempt to bring the epic and the lyric together in a single text—as a *prose-and-verse* form of writing that uniquely transgresses generic limits. Therefore, it is significant to draw a line between the idiosyncratic prose-and-verse form and various other types of mixed-form writing, such as a prose work containing poetic phrases or interspersed verses.

It is for this reason that I will focus on the ballad as a key concept for

the rhetorical use of poetry, to understand the epic and the lyric as mutually interrelated materials. The terms epic and lyric can be reconsidered in regard to Melville's innovative use of the ballad, as an *extended ballad*. It should not be dismissed that this writing mode is also linked to another generic blend, a blend of prose and poetry. Therefore, a reconsideration of Melville's use of a sea ballad from that perspective will help us clarify how the excluded or hidden lyric intensity can be dealt with in relation to the generic blends. This is one of the fundamental reasons why the present study concentrates on Melville's writings that directly or indirectly represent the sea.

Fusion of Literary Genres and a Poetics of the Sea

As mentioned above, the general account of the sea ballad can provide a partial explanation of the thematic interrelations between the sea and generic blending. As a next step, I will shift the focus of my attention from the relationship between epic and lyric to a poetics of oceanic hybridity, the other primary subject of the present dissertation. My hypothesis is that the Melvillian sea is linked to generic blending, especially in the following three respects.

First, I wish to offer an additional observation about the sea ballad as an aid for providing a clearer outline of relevant concerns. For sailors, as Hester Blum notes, the sea principally served "as a site of labor" (Blum, *The View from the Masthead* 7) in American narrative writing about the sea in the nineteenth century, whereas British sea narrative was connected with "the Royal Navy and the island nation's long history of maritime prowess" (8). Blum provides a detailed account of sailors' literary culture and the

epistemology of maritime narratives, with particular focus on the analysis of a sailor's first-person narrative of nautical labor. Unfortunately, however, she makes no direct reference to sea ballads, although they often describe essential aspects of nautical labor.¹¹ The sea ballad primarily serves as a work song that brings order to the maritime labor of seamen on board a ship. Furthermore, I wish to add that the sea ballad, as mentioned earlier, provides a stage appropriate for bringing the epic and the lyric together. I argue that this aspect is one of the most important and essential qualities of the ballad in Melville's oceanic writing. Consequently, we need to pay special attention to the fact that Melville was becoming increasingly preoccupied with the innovative use of the ballad as a nautical design to convey a personal experience in its relation to particular historical conditions.

Second, from a broader perspective, the sea serves as a metaphor for the stage that dissolves miscellaneous materials and activates fundamental metamorphoses, as acknowledged in general by the concept of "sea-change" in William Shakespeare's *Tempest*. Specifically, as W. H. Auden argues in his classic study *The Enchafed Flood, or the Romantic Iconography of the Sea* (1950), the sea is a metaphor for "the primordial undifferentiated flux" (18) that even has the power to cause one's identity to dissolve and to bring about an individual fused with the universe. Ishmael's masthead reverie in Chapter 35 ("The Mast-Head") in *Moby-Dick*, which brings about his transfiguration from a first-person narrator to a third-person narrator, provides a typical example that represents the disembodied communion with the universe. Although his reverie is interrupted by the threat of death, the sea invites Ishmael to blur the boundary between self and other and become

an omnipotent narrator: “at last he loses his identity; takes the mystic ocean at his feet for the visible image of that deep, blue, bottomless soul, pervading mankind and nature; and every strange, half-seen, gliding, beautiful thing that eludes him” (*MD* 159).

To borrow the words of D. H. Lawrence, the Melvillian sea is “a cosmic element” that had “primal influence upon us beyond the personal range” (Lawrence 175). Ishmael turns into a “spiritual being” because of his “state of being where the self excels into the universe, and knows all things by passing into all things” (186). Thus, his existence is everywhere present and hidden at the same time. In this context, Ishmael’s discharge from the first-person narrator and his transfiguration into the third-person narrator suggest that his identity can be dissolved into something rich and strange, mystically transformed by the power of the sea that blurs the distinction between “mankind and nature.”

Furthermore, if one recalls how the *Pequod* was composed of a cosmopolitan crew in *Moby-Dick*, a ship can serve as a microcosm of society that is vastly multivalent in cultural makeup. In this sense, it can be said that Melville’s ship provides a ground upon which crews bring disparate values together. Speaking of *Moby-Dick*, moreover, it is important to remember that the novel has been read in terms of various genres—as a romance, a dramatic tragedy, a sea adventure, a fictional encyclopedia, and as an epic. To some degree, this state of affairs suggests that the sea narrative exemplifies a potential for “continuous transformations of genre and idea” (McWilliams, *The American Epic* 187). In this way, as long as the sea has the power to figuratively integrate mixed elements or to dissolve miscellaneous materials, it is likely that the representation of the ocean

embodies, albeit figuratively, a ground upon which different literary genres are fused.

Finally, and more practically, the strategy of generic blending in Melville's oceanic writing owes much to his individual experience at sea. Blum suggests that "[t]he sea has long served as a subject for poetical contemplation, certainly, although most poets, as landspeople, would not have direct access to maritime experience" (Blum, *The View from the Masthead* 80). It can safely be said, however, that Melville is one of the few authors who directly weaved his experience at sea into his writings.

In a private letter, Melville writes that "Polynisia furnished a great deal of rich poetical material" (*Correspondence* 106) that has never been explored in literary works. Although that remark shall be discussed in Chapter 1, I would like to indicate here that Melville's experience at the South Seas seems to become a subject not only for poetic contemplation but also for a reflection on the epic and the lyric, on society and self, and on historical principles and personal specificities. For Melville, the term "Polynisia" connotes individual lives that were marginalized from the white American civilization.

Therefore, Melville's oceanic writing cannot be read without reference to its historical contexts, which include: whaling as a national endeavor, a major nineteenth-century industry that provides the context of *Moby-Dick* (Chapter 2); a series of wars at sea and guerrilla warfare, a historical background at the core of Melville's first published volume of poetry, *Battle-Pieces* (Chapter 3); the history of pioneering settlements in the American West, a mythic movement recollected in "John Marr" (Chapter 4); and the military code that overrules personal considerations, a code

enacted dramatically in *Billy Budd* (Chapter 5). I will argue that Melville was keenly aware of the fact that these historical incidents and conditions made it difficult to express a lyric human condition—namely, an intense subjective experience or an inner consciousness—that was not recorded in history. In each of the above-mentioned works that are associated with the sea, not only does Melville deal with his perception of history, but he also seeks to assess the value of his characters' individual experiences, or personal feelings generated by those historical incidents and conditions.

And yet, it does not follow that Melville envisions the lyric in a sentimental mood; rather, he seeks to depict individuals in their relation to history. Such a simultaneous approach to epic and lyric dimensions seems to reflect Melville's attempt to release subjective experiences and emotions oppressed under particular historical conditions. In doing so, the rhetorical transaction of poetry beyond generic difference serves at least as a means to reconcile the two different materials, the epic and the lyric. In particular, death seems to be one of the lyrical centers of Melville's oceanic imagination because historical events and conditions in the above-mentioned works often seem to cause an individual's death or a personal tragedy. Consequently, I argue that the sea is a place where decisive events occur and where historical awareness is deepened and one reflects upon one's life and death in personal terms.

My argument, then, is that both poetic prose and *prose-and-verse* writing (*extended ballad*) can be taken as an attempt to foreground the lyric that was forced to be effaced in its relation to the epic. The primary question here is how Melville seeks to bring about reconciliation for the incompatible relationship between epic and lyric through the rhetorical use

of poetry. In short, the fusion of these different genres in a single text seems to occur as a consequence of Melville's attempt to bring them together, to highlight the individual in/with history. In other words, Melville opens up new possibility whereby the epic and the lyric may be combined with the help of a poet in prose, and through the rhetorical use of poetry beyond the limits of conventional literary genres.

Therefore, I propose that Melville's distinctiveness as a poet is related to the fact that he seeks to realize generic hybridity, experimenting with periodic and qualitative variations throughout his career. In this regard, Melville's attitudes toward binary oppositions drastically differ from those of his contemporaries. Altogether, the reconsideration of Melville's sea as a principal material source for his literary production will help us assess Melville's balanced approach to epic and lyric poetry, to history and the human condition unarchived in history.

The present study consists of five chapters, followed by the final Conclusion. Chapter 1 begins by examining the literary background against which Melville cultivated his primary perception of breaking the boundaries between prose and poetry and between epic and lyric. Thus, the initial chapter serves as a basis for the subsequent consideration of Melville's creative attempt to develop his poetic practices. The main purpose of Chapter 1 is to compare the ideas of prose and poetry in the English and American poetic traditions. I particularly focus on how William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge influenced Edgar Allan Poe and Melville. More precisely, special attention will be given to the comparison of the influence of Wordsworth on Melville and that of Coleridge on Poe. To argue

this issue, I will take up Wordsworth's preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), Melville's literary essay "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (1855), Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817), and some of Poe's literary essays, all of which are concerned with the fusion of literary genres. In so doing, I wish to consider what literary essays Melville actually read and how he responded to the generic strategies of his poetic precursors.

Chapter 2 on *Moby-Dick* aims to explore the possibility that Ishmael is qualified to be called a poet. One of the ways to examine how Melville seeks to transgress the boundary between prose and poetry by means of a rhetorical use of poetry is to analyze how the narrator in prose employs poetic practices. Therefore, this chapter attempts to read *Moby-Dick* from the perspective of Ishmael as a sailor-poet narrator. To this end, I would like to reconsider *Moby-Dick* as a romance wherein Ishmael re-experiences his voyage from its beginning in his own personal way. Ishmael is a privileged narrator, insofar as he is the only crew member of the *Pequod* that survived the voyage to recount his story. When read in this context, Ishmael's use of monophonic language and poetic diction proves to be more significant, because it seems to function as a way to describe a subjective experience that would remain unrecorded in history. Therefore, I propose that those aspects are evidence of his status as a poetic subject, which best describe the tendency of going beyond the boundary between prose and poetry.

In a broader sense, Ishmael attempts to gather knowledge about the science and practice of whaling, particularly in a series of cetology chapters, whereas he suddenly becomes personal and poetical in specific moments. Particularly, I will focus on those moments as evidence that Ishmael desires

to be a poet or, rather, that he *is* a poet. To this end, after providing a general account of the concepts of monophonic language, romance, and the related poetical framework, I will discuss Ishmael's status as a poet in detail, especially in regard to Chapter 102 ("A Bower in the Arsacides"), Chapter 36 ("The Quarter Deck"), Chapter 24 ("The Advocate"), and Chapter 7 ("The Chapel"). Ultimately, I wish to conclude that Ishmael embodies Melville's vision of a poet in prose, who hopes to incorporate poetry into prose.

Chapter 3 continues to explore Melville's work in relation to poetry by turning especially to his innovative use of the ballad. In this chapter, I analyze a long narrative poem, "The Scout toward Aldie," as a ballad. I first argue that "Scout" occupies a unique position among Melville's other war poems. Second, I examine the sea image in "Scout" with a focus on the situations in which "Scout" may be regarded as a poetic variation of *Moby-Dick*. Finally, I will emphasize that it is important to note a peculiarity that is often overlooked by most critics: that is, in "Scout," Melville chooses a ballad as a literary form of his own for the first time. Therefore, I argue that Melville attempts to merge the lyric and the epic together by vigorously demonstrating the usefulness of the ballad. This emphasis is central to the discussion in Chapter 3, and it also provides the incentive for the subsequent two chapters. In addition, I would like to underscore that "Scout" contains separate poems in it. In short, "Scout" differs from other works because it represents a kind of textual hybridity, demanding attention to *a poem within a poem*.

Chapters 4 and 5 address Melville's *prose-and-verse* writing as a new composition based on his poetic practices in his later years. This

composition, elaborated through the innovative use of a ballad, challenges traditional conceptions of literary genres. My point is that the juxtaposition of a prose narrative and a concluding dramatic verse can be considered as a single text, an *extended ballad*. The prose section and the verse section are both associated with epic and lyric poetry. At least in thematic terms, if not in a stylistic sense, the prose can be considered an enlarged part of the concluding dramatic verse. In this sense, the prose section is an integral part of the poetry section. From that perspective, it can be recognized that this *prose-and-verse* combination functions as a single text that attempts to deal with history and with the individual, enacting the rhetorical transaction between prose and poetry. This compositional coherence, however, vanishes when these two sections are read separately. Therefore, with these thematic interrelations in mind, I will discuss Melville's attempt to deal with historical *and* individual materials in "John Marr" and *Billy Budd*.

In Chapter 4, I challenge the critical commonplace that "John Marr" is an elegy wherein Melville recollects his seagoing past. Rather, it displays Melville's view on America's pioneering history, in which white settlers displaced Native Americans. "John Marr" figuratively recounts a Native American's encounter with white settlers on the frontier-prairie in the 1830s from the perspective of an outsider, dislocated from the structure of the white civilized society. The prose section develops a historical narrative on how the white settlers excluded the marginalized other, whereas the verse section focuses on the intense, personal feelings of that marginalized other through the lens of Melville's poetic narrator.

However, "John Marr" also displays a wider perspective from which to critique American civilization that destroyed a pre-modern paradise.

Therefore, I wish to emphasize the dynamics of historical awareness as Melville's critical response to the destructive drive of a modern, civilized age, which is one of the primary themes that runs through the prose section and the verse section. It is at this point, I argue, that "John Marr" anticipates *Billy Budd*, the final *prose-and-verse* writing that is explored in the final chapter. Another aim of Chapter 4 is an analysis of Melville's poetic practices that foreground the lyric in its relation to the epic in the verse section—such as the creative use of apostrophes, personal pronouns, and verb tenses. No critical attention has yet been paid to these rhetorical modes of Melville's poetry.

Finally, Chapter 5 complements the previous chapters by exploring the rhetorical coherence of prose and poetry in *Billy Budd*, and focuses especially on the concluding ballad titled "Billy in the Darbies." The fact that the rhetorical use of poetry transcends generic distinctions serves the author's purpose of conveying personal emotions with reference to a certain historical condition behind them. Melville's employment of an *extended ballad* can be fairly representative of his considered view on history and the human condition, which correspond to an outside narrative and an inside narrative respectively. By means of the thematic fusion between the long prose headnote and the concluding dramatic verse, a *prose-and-verse* form, or an *extended ballad*, serves as a way for Melville to present his view on the dangerous crossing of good and evil, and on the true nature of justice and injustice with regard to history and individuals.

Through these examinations, the present dissertation shall make a contribution to opening up a new vista of Melville's poetics of hybridity, as well as his oceanic imagination, and to providing a new perspective from

which to appreciate his generic idiosyncrasy, closely paralleled with his distinctive understanding of the sea as poetic capital, an understanding that is unique among the other writers during the age of the American Renaissance.

Chapter 1

Innovators of Literary Genres: Coleridge, Wordsworth, Poe, and Melville,

The purpose of this chapter is to present the literary background against which Melville cultivated his perception to cross boundaries within and between prose and poetry, and, specifically, the epic and lyric forms. To this end, I compare ideas of prose and poetry in the English and American literary traditions by a reconsideration of literary texts and related works within their cultural context. I focus on William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Edgar Allan Poe as poets whose rhetorical use of prose and poetry influenced Melville. I examine, thus, both autobiographical and literary relations in reference to Melville's reading of and interest in their works. Above all, the examination of Wordsworth's influence on Melville, along with Coleridge's influence on Poe, is central to the investigation of their interrelations in this chapter.

Prose and Poetry

In nineteenth-century America, many original American genres appeared, such as Charles Brockden Brown's American Gothic, Poe's Gothic mystery or modern detective fiction (a form of narrative that focuses on crime), and Whitman's free verse. However, many uncertainties remained regarding literary genres. In fact, the boundary between prose and poetry was not clear at that time, as commonly seen in works of

nineteenth-century American writers. For example, for T. S. Eliot, Whitman was “a great prose writer” insofar as his versification is “a *logical* development of certain English prose” (Eliot, Introduction 10; italics in original). In addition, Emerson’s *Nature* (1836) was labeled as a “prose poem” by Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, who remarks in her review of Emerson’s *Nature* in *The United States of Democratic Review* of February 1838, that “*Nature* is a poem; but it is written in prose” (Peabody 591). Emerson also wrote many books in which verse in the epigraph and the prose that follows complement one another.

Another example is Henry David Thoreau, who admired Emerson as a mentor. Thoreau’s distinctiveness is that he refined in his later prose subjects already addressed in earlier poems. One contemporary critic considered his writing method indicative of Thoreau’s tendency to depart from conventional poetic form. Elizabeth Hall Witherell notes that “many of his [Thoreau’s] characteristic themes and images appear first in early poems and are elaborated later in prose,” thus “writing poems helped him to develop a colloquial idiom in prose” (Witherell 62). Specifically, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849) was considered unique, because it displayed a “re-contextualization” (McGill 359) of various unsourced verses from commonplace books—whereas most travel authors of the time based their work on poetic conventions to describe the landscape. Although the theme is different, the design of placing a certain narrative within another context might, at least partially, be analogous to the ways in which Melville reassembles newspaper accounts interspersed with verse and anecdotes to compose his first published volume of poetry, *Battle-Pieces and the Aspects of the War* (1866). According to Merton M. Sealts, Jr.,

Melville read *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849) in 1850 (Sealts 101).

However, Thoreau differs from Melville because, whereas Thoreau's reading of Wordsworth seemed to influence his composition of poetry within the confines of the genre, Melville's readings of *Lyrical Ballads*, a collaboration by Coleridge and Wordsworth, crucially influenced his rhetorical use of poetry beyond genre differences.¹ Thus, in this context, as we shall see later, Poe seems to have an approach close to Melville's because his rhetorical use of poetry owed much to the former poets, in particular, Coleridge.

Indeed, there is some similarity between these poets and Melville, insofar as all attempted to bring prose and poetry together. However, a crucial distinction between Melville and contemporary writers is that perhaps only Melville was engaged in pursuing the concept of the rhetorical use of prose and poetry as a life-long theme, with variations throughout his career. In this sense, Melville's concept of poetry is radically different from Emerson's.² In fact, many scholars have attempted to discover the essence of Melville's artistic view as an author in anguish over genre. For example, Nina Baym's "Melville's Quarrel with Fiction" (1979) is a typical example that recognizes Melville's engagement with genre as one of the most interesting aspects of his approach to art.

Additionally, in the 1980s and 90s, scholars began to focus more on this issue. Two of the most important critical studies are John Samson's *White Lies: Melville's Narratives of Facts* (1989) and Sheila Post-Lauria's *Correspondent Colorings: Melville in the Marketplace* (1996). Indeed, these two books have significance because both place Melville's approach to

reconstructing existing literary genres within a public or cultural context. However, neither devotes a chapter to the examination of Melville's poetry. To fill, if not completely, this critical gap, I reconsider the development of his concerns with genre that leads to Melville's hybridity particularly in his later years.

Melville's Textual Heterogeneity

Melville's heterogeneity, particularly his fusion of prose and poetry, appears in two principal ways. One mode is the use of poetic diction in prose. This quality is best exemplified in his sixth novel, *Moby-Dick* (1851). When writing of this novel, Melville read the complete works of Shakespeare and skillfully used this reading to employ poetic diction, as many have noted. For example, Chapter 36 ("The Quarter Deck"), depicting Ahab's soliloquy echoing King Lear, contains a famous passage that F. O. Matthiessen brilliantly rewrote in blank verse, as I later show in Chapter 2.

The other mode of genre blend is employed by the ballad. This compositional practice is much more visible and important. Melville's first test of the limits of the ballad genre is employed in his third novel, *Mardi* (1849). Prior to this, Melville wrote his first novels, *Typee* (1846), and *Omoo* (1847) entirely within the confines of the fictional genre of the travel narrative. As a result, he became very conscious of the intense selectivity of particular genres. Although the travel narratives sold well, Melville learnt that conventional literary genres did not fit well with his design for romance fiction. Thus, in *Mardi*, he inserts sea ballads of varying length from 15 to 49 lines and selects romance as its framework, which warrants a freedom of narrative. Melville had a strong conviction that *Mardi* would

open new ground, although it did not sell well. While working on the novel, Melville wrote to John Murray on May 25, 1848, as follows:

I have long thought that *Polynisia furnished a great deal of rich poetical material* that has never been employed hitherto in works of fancy; and which to bring out suitably, required only that play of freedom & invention accorded only to the Romancer & poet.... My romance I assure you is no dish water nor its model borrowed from the Circulating Library. *It is something new I assure you, & original if nothing more.*

(Melville, *Correspondence* 106; emphasis added)

This passage illustrates that Melville abandoned narrative principles and did not use the conventions of fictional genre to design *Mardi*. Above all, when he remarks confidently that “[i]t is something new I assure you,” he seeks to reject all existing categories for his purpose. As a result, however, *Mardi* was generally unpopular with the public. For example, an unsigned review in the *London Athenaeum* (March 24, 1849) states, “if as a romance, it fails from tediousness—if as a prose-poem, it is chargeable with puerility” (Higgins and Parker 193). However, another review in the *New York Tribune* (May 10, 1849) praises *Mardi* because the language is “a hybrid between poetry and prose” and “can be read aloud so that the nicest ear could not distinguish it from heroic verse” (Higgins and Parker 226). Another review in *Literary World* (August 11, 1849) also praises the interspersed lyric chants, noting, “the poet is here true as to his proper emotion” (Higgins and Parker 247).

However, it is important at this point to focus on Melville’s reference to Polynesia, for it seems to be Melville’s primary preoccupation in his later

years, in “John Marr” and even *Billy Budd* (posthumously published in 1924). Although Baym remarks that when writing *Mardi*, Melville “abandoned narrative principles and did not use normative fictional genre” to give *Mardi* “a total shape” (Baym 912), she does not specifically mention Polynesia. However, I will argue that Melville employs his experience at sea as poetic capital in terms of a celebration of the pre-modern paradise of the South Sea in the modern age, and his reference to Polynesia should be considered in this context. It seems, for Melville, the sea stimulates his poetic imagination and makes him ponder the individual in relation to civilization. In short, Melville attempts to bring the lyric and the epic dimensions together in a single text beyond genre differences of prose and poetry. In this sense, Melville’s concern for Polynesia as rich poetic capital and his innovative use of poetry, the ballad in particular, are associated.

Importantly, Melville, in his later years, deliberately changes the use of ballad; he attempts to explore the essential function of the ballad genre. Although there is little critical focus on this aspect, Melville initially chooses the ballad as a literary device in “The Scout toward Aldie” within *Battle-Pieces* that brings the lyric and the epic together, allowing the volume to be described as an “epic assembly of lyric” (Lewis 203).

Furthermore, in “John Marr,” Melville launches his new poetic by placing the ballad in contraposition with a long prose headnote. In the first book-length collection of essays on Melville’s poetry, *Melville as Poet: The Art of “Pulsed Life”* (2013), edited by Sanford E. Marovitz, Robert Sandberg directs attention to a prose-and-verse project Melville carried out in his later years, either 1876 or 1877—91.³ According to Sandberg, Melville’s prose-and-verse writing is characterized by the “contiguity”

(Sandberg 231) of introductory narrative prose and concluding dramatic verse, and, thus, should be distinguished from mixed-form writing. In these writings, Melville uses the ballad to pursue a coherent strategy for bringing lyric and epic materials together to assess both the historical record and the value of personal feeling. In short, the ballad became a means of expressing subjective emotion oppressed by historical events such as the Civil War, the Westward Movement, and the military code in the age of imperialism.

How then did Melville cultivate these peculiar views on prose and poetry or the epic and lyric? To clarify the factors behind these two modes of different literary genres, I wish to reexamine the literary essays of Melville and his contemporaries. A reconsideration of Melville's view on English literature will provide a perspective from which to examine the influence of English Romantic Poets on Melville.

Melville's "Hawthorn and His Mosses"

The period from the 1830s to the 1850s is one where many writers published literary essays to cultivate a national literature. Representative examples are Ralph Waldo Emerson's "American Scholar" (1837), Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846), Melville's "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (1855), and Walt Whitman's "The Preface" in *Leaves of Grass* (1855). These texts were read as attempts to define the position of the American poet or express a sense of exaltation during a period of elation of American literature, although Poe's text concentrates on his poetics rather than his view of national literature. When read specifically in light of literary genres, these texts prove more enlightening because we can understand the extent these writers are concerned with the issue of genre in

the process of creating a national literature is this rich period of original American writing.

In “The American Scholar,” as generally acknowledged, Emerson criticizes the idea that America has long been dependent on European culture, and remarks, “Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close” (Emerson I: 52). Whitman, who inherited Emerson’s idealism, similarly emphasizes originality in “The Preface” of his 1855 *Leaves of Grass*. He remarks that the expression of the American poet is to be “transcendent and new” and “not direct or descriptive or epic” (Whitman 712). For Whitman, to express the inner world corresponding to reality becomes a creative theme and the originality American poets should express. Emerson and Whitman showed their peculiarities in seeking Americanism in the broad natural landscape. For them, nature is America, as exemplified by the American modernist poet, Ezra Pound, who famously praised Whitman as a “spiritual father” (Pound 115) of American poetry.⁴

Certainly, Melville seeks originality for American literature in a similar way, expressing a sense of exaltation of common people in “Hawthorne and His Mosses,” which was anonymously published in *The Literary World* in 1850. However, I argue it is important here to draw a simple distinction between Melville and his contemporaries. Melville spanned the boundary between English and American Literature, whereas others seemed rigidly committed to creating a national literature in contrast to the English tradition. Meanwhile, it seems Melville was not intrinsically concerned with this boundary. For example, he did not share with others the idea that American authors need to be independent from the British tradition

to achieve and maintain originality. When cultivating the originality of American literature, more than any other writer, Melville aimed to innovate a form while carefully acknowledging the value of British literature. On this point, Post-Lauria emphasizes Melville was skilled at reading and innovating, rather than creating forms, thus calling him “a responsive genius” who employed existing popular forms to reflect upon his world. It is in this context that Melville’s concept of “correspondent coloring” assumes definite meaning (Post-Lauria 230).

As Post-Lauria observes, Melville did not invent a new genre such as Whitman’s free verse or Poe’s modern detective story. Although she makes no reference to Melville’s later poetry, I wish to add that Melville in his later writings also seeks to innovate existing popular forms of poetry. As we shall see later in chapters on “The Scout toward Aldie” and *Billy Budd*, Melville’s peculiarity restructures existing literary forms through his own personal reading experience, or, more specifically, to relocate the American narrative within the frame of British and classical literature.

Indeed, America might be a country with a short history, deficient in tradition and materials for literature. Notably, however, Melville in “Hawthorn and His Mosses” claims it is not “paucity,” but a “superabundance” of material that modern authors should confront (Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses” 246). In this sense, *Melville in the South Sea* (1939) by Charles R. Anderson, a pioneering study of Melville’s reading experience, becomes the basis for extensive studies on Melville’s reading that grounds his literary practices on pre-existing texts.⁵

When considered in this context, Melville’s celebration of Shakespeare and his debt to the past may prove more significant. When

Melville conveys his principal message that great American writers need to possess “a corresponded coloring” (Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses” 246), he employs the persona of “a Virginian Spending July in Vermont” (239), as he describes the author of this essay. Melville consistently provides the perspective of the Southerner who regards the Northern Bostonian as merely following British literature and persists in abandoning this literary subservience to England. Through this perspective, Melville evokes a sense of exaltation of the national literature to readers.

Thus, it is natural that Melville should take an ironic attitude toward literary imitations and underscore “real originality” (Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses” 246).⁶ “Hawthorne and His Mosses” aimed at providing an inspiring literary criticism by advocating a new literature and great writers. Among others, Melville mentions Nathaniel Hawthorne as an author who reflects the times. In praising Hawthorne next to William Shakespeare, Melville focuses on “the great art of telling Truth” (244) as a similarity between the two great writers, which is often noted.

However, the paradox of placing Hawthorne next to Shakespeare should not be dismissed. Although “Hawthorne and His Mosses” celebrates national literature, it involves a duality against the times because it specifically celebrates Shakespeare.⁷ In the quotation above, this contradiction is simply displayed by the word “Shakespeare” as a nominal for great authors. Given that “Hawthorn and His Mosses” was published anonymously at that time, it is possible that Melville intended to confess the secrets of his inner feelings to the public. Here, we are concerned with Melville’s opinion about the necessity for advocating the value of great foreign writers.

Melville's literary bent for foreign writers could be construed as imitation. Thus, to avoid this impression, Melville rhetorically observes that, while American authors acknowledge excellence, they "should refrain from unduly lauding foreign writers" (Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses" 248). At the same time, Melville disagrees with authors being "studiously cleave to nationality" in their writing because he recognizes he can write national literature while praising the value of foreign writers (248). Therefore, Melville did not resist the influence of foreign writers such as Shakespeare, or, in particular, the English poets. Perhaps Melville was sufficiently shrewd to know these great poets could provide an incredibly fertile ground for his poetic diction in prose. At least, Melville may have insight into the nature of originality when he remarks that "[i]t is true, but few of them as yet have evinced that decided originality which merits great praise" (247). Thus, when read in the context of literary genre, "Hawthorne and His Mosses" reminds us that Melville is often most original and modern when he addresses modern life in the tradition of his English predecessors.

Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*

Melville's idiosyncratic appreciation of the value of great foreign writers (particularly poets) seems to form a background condition for the heterogeneity of his writings. In addition to Shakespeare, I add Coleridge and Wordsworth to those who help explore the specific literary background of Melville's innovative use of prose and poetry.

According to Merton M. Sealts, Jr., Melville read Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817) on February 8, 1848 (Sealts 52) while

composing *Mardi. Biographia Literaria* can be considered an attempt to achieve a new mode of literary genre in that it is both a literary essay and his private view of Wordsworth. Most important is Chapter 18, which emphasizes Wordsworth's assertion: "*There neither is or can be any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition*" (Coleridge II: 60; italics in original).⁸ Chapter 14 is also important because it explains the mode of composition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), a collaboration by Coleridge and Wordsworth. Here, Coleridge argues the difference between prose and poetry consists in "a different combination of them" or in "consequence of a different object proposed" because they contain the same elements. He writes:

According to the difference of the object will be the difference of the combination. It is possible, that the object may be merely to facilitate the recollection of any given facts or observations by artificial arrangement; and the composition will be a poem, merely because *it is distinguished from prose by metre, or by rhyme, or by both conjointly.* (Coleridge II: 11; emphasis added)

This passage indicates Coleridge's idea of prose and poetry, in which he distinguished the two genres according to each purpose. In addition, Coleridge divides the use of language into three qualities: "*first*, that which is peculiar to poetry; *second*, that which is only proper in prose; and *third*, the neutral or common to both" (Coleridge II: 121; italics in original). Chapter 14 of *Biographia Literaria* had a great effect on Edgar Allan Poe when developing his theories on poetry, particularly "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846), which examines his "The Raven" (1845) by following

Biographia Literaria in its method of critical analysis. As we shall see later, Poe is greatly indebted to Coleridge, rather than Wordsworth, for his view of prose and poetry.

It seems possible Melville touched on the idea of crossing the boundary between genres in *Biographia Literaria* during the time of writing *Mardi* where he experiments with the introduction of verse into prose. Certainly, in the following years, Melville has a strong interest in Coleridge. Indeed, Coleridge's thematic influence on Melville is evident in Chapter 42 of *Moby-Dick*, "The Whiteness of Whale." In that chapter, when he traces the history of whiteness that evokes a profound sense of wonderment, Melville mentions Coleridge's albatross from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," assessing "the noble merit" (*MD* 190) of the poem and poet. Here, however, we are more concerned with Wordsworth than Coleridge because Wordsworth's artistic views in *Lyrical Ballads* may highlight more clearly the specific background for Melville's use of the ballad in blending epic with lyric.

Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*

The preface to *Lyrical Ballads* seems to provide a hint for our concerns. When *Lyrical Ballads* was enlarged to two volumes in 1800, a long prose preface attributed to Wordsworth was attached to that edition and revised several times until 1845. The preface enunciates the idea that *Lyrical Ballads* attempts to become a poem that is "so materially different" (Wordsworth 243) from popular works. In fact, *Lyrical Ballads* is considered a revolutionary poetry publication primarily because it combines two quite different types of poetry: lyric and ballad. There is evidence that

Melville read *Lyrical Ballads* in 1860 when he composed *Battle-Pieces*, but it is assumed he had read it previously in the early 1850s.⁹

The traditional folk ballad originally contained lyrical elements. However, as its narrative content became dominant, its subject matter developed an impersonal and objective aspect possessed as common knowledge. As F. W. Bateson sums up, the essential element of the ballad was a “tragic story,” whereas the lyric was traditionally characterized by the “out-pouring of feelings” (Bateson 137). Thus, because the ballad was considered essentially different from the lyric, a lyrical ballad was regarded as an oxymoronic hybrid like the prose poem.

Against this background, Wordsworth attempted to restore the lyrical elements of ballads. He combined the ballad and lyric by using the ballad to convey “more pathetic situations and sentiment” (Wordsworth 264) rather than narrative.¹⁰ Specifically, as Stephen Parrish argues, Wordsworthian ballad is lyrical in the following two respects: “its [a lyrical ballad’s] passion” comes “from the mind of the speaker or the dramatic narrator of a ballad tale,” whereas “it was heightened by the employment of ‘lyrical’ or rapid metre so as to convey this passion to readers unaccustomed to responding to the common language of men in common life” (Parrish 106). Furthermore, Patrick Campbell highlights this innovative fusion of two exclusive genres—lyric and ballad—by calling it an “uneasy marriage” (Campbell 41).

Thus, the late eighteenth century was a revival period for the literary ballad form. Wordsworth’s attempt to bind lyric and ballad is frequently considered evidence of his “distrust of the conventional boundaries of poetic genres” (Hamilton 45). Indeed, Melville was essentially in collusion

with Wordsworth because Melville attempted to cultivate poetic practices beyond the confines of the literary genre and to revive the ballad for conveying its lyrical qualities. It may be true, as a previous studies note, that Melville used ballads to describe maritime labor and indicate “the state of mind or emotional mood of his character” (Cannon, “Melville’s Use” 2). However, I wish to add that, whereas Wordsworth achieved an innovative fusion of lyric and ballad, Melville used the ballad to achieve a marriage between two other genres: lyric and epic. Melville depicts the subjective experience or intense personal feeling and historical incident or condition in a single text of an *extended ballad*.

Wordsworth’s preface to *Lyrical Ballad* assists further to address these concerns. Although the preface establishes a text that complements the following poems in the volume, it is more than a simple account of the writing or publishing process. Rather, it displays Wordsworth’s reflective analysis on a wide range of issues such as poetic diction, creative imagination, the effect of meter, and the public mission of the poet. Above all, the following quotation shows Wordsworth’s concept of prose and poetry. He writes, “I here use the word ‘Poetry’ (though against my own judgment) as opposed to the word Prose, and synonymous with metrical composition” (Wordsworth 254).¹¹ As he noted two pages earlier, some of the most interesting parts of the best poems are found in “the language of prose when prose is well written” (252). These passages clearly present Wordsworth’s fundamental idea that it is impossible to distinguish the diction of good prose and poetry except by meter.

Wordsworth’s view corresponds closely to a passage in Melville’s “Hawthorne and His Mosses.” In this essay, Melville writes, “For poets

(whether in prose or verse), being painters of Nature, are like their brethren of the pencil, the true portrait-painter” (Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses” 249). In these words, we glimpse reflections of Wordsworth’s idea of prose and poetry in his preface to *Lyrical Ballad*. Agnes D. Cannon focuses on this passage as strong evidence of Melville’s tendency to blend prose and poetry into the single medium of poetry.¹² Although Cannon makes no reference to similarities between Melville and Wordsworth, I propose the passage is a textual echo that shows the link between Melville and Wordsworth as innovators of prose and poetry. Alternatively, I emphasize Melville was greatly influenced by Wordsworth, given that Melville reread the *Lyrical Ballad* when he first used the ballad as a literary form in *Battle-Pieces* to unite the lyric and epic.

Poe’s Literary Essays

Another innovator of literary genres who seemed to inspire Melville to cultivate an organic interrelationship between prose and poetry is his contemporary American poet, Edgar Allan Poe. According to Sealts, Melville read *The Works of the Late Edgar Allan Poe* (1859) in an 1860 edition that contains a “clipping” of “The Raven” and other works (Sealts 86). Previous critics have analyzed Poe’s influence on Melville primarily in thematic terms.¹³ In the most recent study, *Early Modern Poetics in Melville and Poe: Memory, Melancholy, and the Emblematic Tradition* (2012), William E. Engel explores how their readings of early-modern texts influenced their compositional practice, by focusing particularly on their debt to the past. Engel is perhaps the first to reveal the influence of seventeenth-century English literature on Poe and Melville. However, a

comparison between the two writers remains to be discussed in terms of the rhetorical use of prose and poetry beyond genre differences.

Therefore, to pursue this issue, we examine Poe's literary essays from 1836 to 1848 bearing in mind his concept of a literary genre owes much to Coleridge rather than Wordsworth. Whereas Wordsworth's use of lyric and ballad influenced Melville's innovative use of the ballad, Poe's ideas on literary genre were largely influenced by Coleridge. Thus, a reconsideration of Coleridge's strong influence on Poe will clarify my principal concerns with Wordsworth's influence on Melville's use of the ballad in his writings, as shown in later chapters.

It is not that Poe and Melville display drastically contrasting ideas of literary genre; rather, they are much closer in terms of the rhetorical use of prose and poetry. Specifically, I suggest Poe and Melville both hope to align poetry with prose, namely, outside the scope of the traditional practice of poetry. In what follows, we follow the process from Poe's side of the development of his poetics with a link, or distinction, between Poe and Melville in mind as innovators of prose and poetry.

Let us first examine the rambling epistolary essay, "The Letter to B—" (1836), considered the oldest of Poe's literary essays in print. This essay is significant. For one thing, it already develops a literary theory that leads to his famous last essay, "The Poetic Principle" (1850); for another, the essay marks Poe's early effort to define poetry based on Coleridge's ideas. For example, in the following passage, Poe intends to define poetry in accordance with its purpose. He writes:

A poem, in my opinion, is opposed to a work of science by having, for its immediate object, pleasure, not truth; to romance,

by having for its object an *indefinite* instead of a *definite* pleasure, being a poem only so far as this object is attained;
(Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 11; italics in original)

This quotation is clearly full of textual echoes with Coleridge from Chapter 14 of *Biographia Literaria*.¹⁴ Hence, previous scholars have remarked on that part as indicative of Coleridge's influence on "Poe's entire intellectual life" (Stovall 71). In fact, in this essay, Poe admires Coleridge, but is critical of Wordsworth. He states that Wordsworth is a metaphysical poet who thinks the purpose of poetry is, or should be, "instruction" and lacks "poetic fire" (Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 7-8).¹⁵ Here, however, I wish to emphasize that Poe compares a *poem* to a *work of science*, for this contrast clearly indicates his idea that the purpose of poetry is not scientific. In general, however, although a work of science may include prose, Poe might bear in mind the possibility that poetry can be aligned with prose in terms of purpose.

Another essay, "Nathaniel Hawthorne" (1842), is considered significant because it attempts to define American short stories by an assessment of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* (1837). In this essay, Poe establishes modern detective fiction, also considered to owe much to Coleridge (Schlutz 195). Although there is little critical focus on this aspect, "Nathaniel Hawthorn" is analogous to Melville's "Hawthorne and His Mosses" because both celebrate the value of Hawthorne. However, whereas Melville rhetorically celebrates the value of Shakespeare, Poe defines the short story in contrast to the novel. In doing so, Poe puts a high priority on their purpose, focusing on the importance of "the immense force derivable from *totality*," "the true unity," or "the fullness of his intention" (Poe,

Essays and Reviews 572).¹⁶ These key words recall Coleridge's idea of "esemplastic power" (Coleridge I: 295, 303) in his most famous chapter of *Biographia Literaria*, which distinguishes fancy and imagination. The word "esemplastic" was coined by Coleridge to mean, "to shape into one" (Coleridge I, 168). To maintain the power of unity, therefore, Poe defines the short prose narrative by saying that it should be read from "a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal" (Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 572). Poe also reiterates this unity of impressions in his later years.

In contrast to his conception of the novel, Poe also developed the idea of poetry in more detail than his earlier essay "Letter to B—." Here, its rhythm is defined as an essential aid for the development of the poet's highest idea of the "Beautiful," and the "artificialities of the rhythm" are considered inseparable to the development of thought or expression that has their basis in "Truth." However, a wide variety of modes of thought and expression is an obstacle to the nature of the poem and "absolutely forbidden" (Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 573).

In his later essay, "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846), Poe again maintains beauty is the only "legitimate province" of the poem (Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 16). For Poe, poetry is characterized by the excitement of the soul. However, the major accomplishment of this essay is to develop his theory of poetry in the style of Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria*. Poe's vision in this essay derives from Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. By his critical writing on poetry and explanation of his creative technique and the writing process of his poem "The Raven," Poe emphasizes the unity of impression and the important artistic element, "totality of effect," as an essential component of poetry (Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 15). To achieve

such unity and the highest order of poetry, as in the earlier essay “Nathaniel Hawthorn,” he prescribes the composition of a rhymed poem “not to exceed in length what might be perused in an hour” (Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 571). Here, however, based on the unity of effect, he reached what he conceived a proper length for his intended poem—“a length about one hundred lines” and that is another achievement of the essay (Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 16).

The subject of Poe’s last famous essay, “The Poetic Principle” (1850), is not very different from previous essays. The essay, however, differs substantially from others because Poe enlarges his view on the effect of unity, emphasizing that the “vital requisite in all works of Art, Unity” (Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 71). This is one of the most notable changes in his ideas throughout his essays on poetics. Poe concludes that a poem aims at achieving “pleasurable elevation, or excitement, *of the soul*,” whereas prose aims at conveying “Truth, which is the satisfaction of the Reason” (Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 78; italics in original).

Poe and *Eureka*

Thus, Poe deepens his concept of the nature of the prose tale and poetry throughout a series of essays. As we read his essays on poetics, it might seem that Poe distinguishes between the novel, prose tale, and poem by reiterating the individual role of each form within the confines of its single fictional genre, which Melville struggles to violate. Poe’s poetics even seem to be an intensive analysis on literary form appropriate for a poet who pursues his aesthetic conception.

However, we cannot engage in a simple account of Poe’s idea on literary genres as such. As mentioned, particularly before these essays, Poe

deliberately intersperses verse into his prose and employs poetical rhetoric in many works such as his famous tale “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839). In this story, a 48-line song entitled, “The Haunted Palace,” supposedly composed by Roderick Usher, is inserted into the tale. In his letter of May 29, 1841, Poe explains the poem intends “a mind haunted by phantoms—a disordered brain” (Meyers 111).

In addition, Poe wrote prose poems such as “The Island of the Fay” (1841), “Eleonora” (1841), “The Domain of Arnheim” (1847), and “Landor’s Cottage” (1849). We cannot explain why these works mix prose and poetry given Poe’s concept of a novel, tale, and poetry in his literary essays, nor should we dismiss these mixed-genre texts. In short, we need to consider Poe’s originality is displayed by these works although contradicted by his ideas on literary form in his essays. Thus, Poe should be considered an innovator of literary genres and a poet or inventor of fictional genres beyond their confines.

In this context, we must focus on *Eureka* (1848), which describes Poe’s intuitive conception of the nature of the universe. Here, we are concerned about his preoccupation with the rhetorical use of poetry beyond genre differences. Although the poetics in his essays might have aesthetic and theoretical intensity, we should not dismiss the fact that Poe seems to violate the boundary between prose and poetry in his late years. Considering Poe wrote *Eureka* in his later years, it is quite possible that this reflects a deepening of his aesthetic ideas contained in his essays. In fact, although *Eureka* appears to be prose, Poe wishes the work to be read as a poem. As he notes in the preface:

I offer this Book of Truths, not in its character of Truth-Teller,

but for the Beauty that abounds in its Truth; constituting it true.
 To these I present the composition as an Art-Product alone:—let
 us say as a Romance; or, if I be not urging too lofty a claim, as a
 Poem. (Poe, “Eureka” 484)

In “The Poetic Principle,” Poe mentions that a long poem does not exist because it is simply “a flat contradiction” in terms (Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 71). However, for Poe, long prose like *Eureka* can be a poem. This is at least one of the reasons for his juxtaposition of a poem with a work of science rather than prose in “The Letter to B—.” This is the idea Poe reached through his analysis of literary genres, particularly in light of the purpose of each in his essays. The passage quoted above indicates that prose and poetry are not mutually exclusive because both aim to achieve a single unit in a limited length. However, Poe claims, they serve different purposes. Truth is the purpose of the tale, whereas the aim of the poem is “the Human Aspiration for Supernal Beauty” (Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 92). Poe seems consistent in considering the purposes of prose and poetry in these terms.

The point is that for Poe, Beauty dwells in its Truth, and Poetry can abound in Prose. The preface to *Eureka* clearly illuminates Poe’s desire to reconcile prose and poetry, Truth and Beauty. In “The Poetic Principle,” Poe remarks that those who make a determined attempt “to reconcile the obstinate oils and waters of Poetry and Truth” are “theory-mad” (Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 76). However, “theory-mad” may be exactly what Poe hopes to achieve in *Eureka*.

In this sense, what is epitomized in the preface to *Eureka* is not a distinction, but a link between Poe and Melville. Certainly, Poe and Melville appear to differ because Poe sought for unity and aesthetics,

whereas Melville favored, in his famous word, “botches” of fragments rather than unity (Melville, *Correspondence* 191). However, when we trace the process of a developing poetic in Poe’s essays, we recognize more clearly the essential resemblance between them. Prose and poetry are mutually exclusive in general, but Poe’s *Eureka* is intended to reconcile these irreconcilable genres. Altogether, it is likely that Poe’s desire was transmitted, either directly or indirectly, to Melville’s prose-and-verse writing.

This chapter’s strength lies in an examination of Poe and Wordsworth’s influence on Melville. Both Wordsworth and Poe, although seemingly unconnected to Melville, together cultivate an innovative use of different literary forms—lyric and ballad (Wordsworth)—and prose and poetry (Poe). We have explored how Melville’s readings of literary texts and related works influenced his compositional practice or at least provided the background for Melville’s textual heterogeneity. Rather than simply comparing Melville and these two poets in terms of literary history, I focus primarily on both autobiographical and literary relations in reference to Melville’s reading and interest in their works.

Poe owes much to Coleridge’s concept of prose and poetry in his *Biographia Literaria*. Above all, the similarity between them is shown in “The Poetic Principle” wherein Poe attempts to develop a fundamental analysis of creative techniques in a self-reflective manner. Meanwhile, Melville owes much to Wordsworth’s views on the blend of lyric and ballad, in addition to prose and poetry, in *Lyrical Ballad* and its preface. However, we should keep in mind that Coleridge also influenced Melville in mixing

genre both directly and by way of Poe. Melville and the English poets have the closest connection in subject matter and composition, and the mixed use of prose and poetry and the lyric and ballad. Thus, in this respect, Melville's literary attachment to the English poets has profound significance.

Poe's literary essay appears to accentuate his differences from Melville because Poe defines each literary form in light of its purpose. However, Poe's sense of mixing genres in his works erases the differences between them. It marks his affinity with Melville in terms of an attempt to align poetry with prose. In this sense, *Eureka* is one of the most important works if we are to understand the relationship between Poe and Melville. From this perspective, one could argue that Melville continued to reshape Poe's ideas throughout his life, attempting to reconcile prose and poetry that Poe compared to oil and water.

Chapter 2

Ishmael the Poet:

Moby-Dick as a Romance, the Second Voyage

In Chapter 102 (“A Bower in the Arsacides”) of Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* (1851), Ishmael casually discloses a curious fact. When Ishmael remembers his experience of measuring a sperm whale in an island called Arsacides, he does not hesitate to reveal the fact that the whale’s dimensions are tattooed on his right arm and that his body “was crowded for space”:

The skeleton dimensions I shall now proceed to set down are copied verbatim from my right arm, where I had them tattooed; as in my wild wanderings at that period, there was no other secure way of preserving such valuable statistics. *But as I was crowded for space, and wished the other parts of my body to remain a blank page for a poem I was then composing—at least, what untattooed parts might remain—I did not trouble myself with the odd inches; nor, indeed, should inches at all enter into a congenial admeasurement of the whale. (MD 451; emphasis added)*

Although the passage has passed almost unnoticed, it is amazing that Ishmael’s whole body is “tattooed” and that he was composing a poem. While the exact time of reference remains hidden, the sudden disclosure of a profoundly curious past strongly suggests that Ishmael has the

qualifications of a poet. One of the few scholars who have ever referred to the passage, Matthew Cordova Frankel, points out that the character of “Ishmael as a poetic subject” (Frankel 141) emerges in the scene. He discusses Ishmael’s plans to inscribe poems on his body in light of his composition of the text itself, by associating the poems with Ishmael’s view on the act of writing, which can be seen in Chapter 32 (“Cetology”): “God keep me from ever completing anything. This whole book is but a draught—nay, but the draught of a draught” (*MD* 145). In short, “the composition refers self-reflexively to an unwritten piece preserved in an always unfinished process” (Frankel 141).¹ Then why does Melville give Ishmael the status of “a poetic subject”? How does Ishmael as “a poetic subject” use language? In what respects is his use of language characteristic of a poet? Unfortunately, Frankel does not offer any convincing answers to these questions.

This chapter examines these questions in the context of genre and language. In order to verify the possibility that Ishmael is qualified as a poet, first of all, I would like, after looking at previous studies on Melville’s poetical aspects, to focus on some letters in order to redefine Melville’s romance, which appears to be linked with poetry in his mind. Second, by examining the relation between *Mardi* (1849) and *Moby-Dick*, I demonstrate what he does with *Moby-Dick* and his preference for a romance over a novel.² Finally, I will show the poetical figure of Ishmael by discussing his consciousness of being a poet and his use of poetical language. Through these examinations, I would like to maintain that the figure of Ishmael, who becomes monophonic as well as omnipresent, represents a narrative which Melville was trying to produce.

Previous Studies on Melville's Poetics: Prose or Verse

Scholars have evaluated Melville's poetical talent in two ways so far: one way is focusing on his later poetry from *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866) to *Timoleon* (1891).³ For example, Lawrence Buell, who compares the war poetry of Whitman and Melville, regards the Civil War as a crucial element that "shaped Melville's mature poetic persona" (138–41, 148–49). Scholars such as Robert Penn Warren and Stanton Garner also argue that the Civil War made Melville a poet. Even recently, there is a strong tendency to praise *Battle-Pieces*.⁴

The other way is to focus on poetic aspects in his prose fictions. William C. Spengemann, Matthew Cordova Frankel, and Hershel Parker hold the same view that Melville used poetical language from the very beginning of his creative career. For example, Parker admires Melville's poetic qualities in *Typee* (1846), *Omoo* (1847), and *Mardi* (1849), as the reviewers of Melville's own day noted and praised. He conspicuously proffers the evidence that Melville had strong interest in poetry even in *Typee* (Parker, *The Making of the Poet* 138).⁵ It cannot be denied that Melville had already developed poetry in his prose fictions. Considering that Melville first turned to writing poetry in *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War*, the Civil War undoubtedly had a great influence on Melville's turning toward writing verse. Yet it was only a change of form. The war stimulated his imagination to create verse, but it is highly likely that he had been reflecting on poetry as a useful form of a narrative in the early years of his career as a writer.

For example, among Melville's prose fictions, scholars have sensed

the poetical qualities of Father Mapple and Ahab in *Moby-Dick*. In the case of Father Mapple, Buell highly evaluates “The Ribs and Terrors of the Whale,” a hymn he sings after offering a prayer in Chapter 9 (“The Sermon”), as well as “Billy in the Darbies,” a verse inserted at the end of *Billy Budd* (posthumously published in 1924) (Buell 138). As for Ahab, F. O. Matthiessen arranged Ahab’s soliloquy in Chapter 36 (“The Quarter Deck”) as blank verse in order to offer an example of Shakespeare’s influence on Melville:

But look ye, Starbuck, what is said in heat,
That thing unsays itself. There are men
From whom warm words are small indignity.
I meant not to incense thee. Let it go.
Look! see yonder Turkish cheeks of spotted tawn—
Living, breathing pictures painted by the sun.
The Pagan leopards—the unrecking and
Unworshipping things, that live; and seek, and give
No reasons for the torrid life they feel! (Matthiessen 426)

Matthiessen draws our attention to its degree of perfection by saying that “there are some clumsy sequences” (Matthiessen 426). Nevertheless, the passage shows that Melville undoubtedly developed poetical language in *Moby-Dick*. Actually, Melville had thought that it was possible to write poetry either in prose or in verse, as he writes in his literary essay, “Hawthorne and His Mosses”:

For *poets (whether in prose or verse)*, being painters of Nature, are like their brethren of the pencil, the true portrait-painter, who, in the multitude of likeness to be sketched, do not

invariably omit their own; and in all high instances, they paint them without vanity, though, at times, with a lurking something, that would take several pages to properly define. (249; emphasis added)

Melville thus uses the metaphor of painting to explain his idea of poetry. The first line of the passage clearly indicates that the use of verse is not necessary for one to be called a poet. Although critics have not paid sufficient attention to this passage, it is natural that Melville expresses his idea of poetry in an essay on art, for Melville wrote it after being influenced by Shakespeare, and, as Matthiessen mentioned, it can be said that he learned about the dramatic capacities of blank verse and about poetry from Shakespeare and Milton in order to treat his subject matter, the white whale (Matthiessen 421–31).

These examples reveal that Melville had a preoccupation with poetry before writing verse, but what are the characteristics of his poetry in prose? What is the difference between the poetics of Melville's later poetry and that of his prose fictions? Whereas Melville's poetry in his verse is exemplified by "his use of rhymed octosyllables, his favorite meter" (Buell 151), his poetry in prose is not always related to techniques such as meter. Melville's poetry is associated with romance in his mind, and this seems to be the foundation for his poetics of prose. To prove this hypothesis, it is necessary to examine Hawthorne's principle of romance, which Melville fulfills.

Romance: In the Case of Hawthorne and Melville

In the "Preface" of *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), Hawthorne

confirms the distinction between a novel and a romance:

When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim *a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material*, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. *The former*—while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably, so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart—*has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances*, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation. (1; emphasis added)

What Hawthorne explains here is that while a “novel” is dependent on facts or human experience, a “romance” is allowed “a certain latitude” both as to “its fashion and material,” and thereby its author can describe “the truth of the human heart” more effectively than in a “novel.” Critics have noted this aspect of a romance as a significant principle in addition to the definition of a romance, the meeting ground of the actual and the imaginary, in “The Custom-House” of *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). However, Hawthorne adds: “The point of view in which this Tale [*The House of the Seven Gables*] comes under the Romantic definition lies in the attempt to connect a by-gone time with the very Present that is flitting away from us” (2). Of course, this aspect is correlated with the problem of how much an author is dependent on his or her “experience” of the past in using imagination to describe “the truth of the human heart.” Whether it is a rambling

reminiscence or confronting the bitter past face to face, a romance gives meaning to the past. It might also involve stirring up nostalgia because reminiscence is, more or less, a vicarious experience. This is a principle of a romance which Hawthorne does not emphasize in “The Custom-House.” To reconsider the definition of a romance in this context enables us to recognize the important essence.

Melville’s romance is basically dependent on Hawthorne’s. It is quite likely that *Moby-Dick* directly reflects the essence of Hawthorne’s idea, especially since Melville read *The House of Seven Gables*, which appeared in print on April 9, 1851, when Melville was still revising *Moby-Dick*.⁶ However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, Melville had explained his own idea of a romance ahead of Hawthorne in a letter to John Murray on May 25, 1848, when Melville was working on his third novel *Mardi* (1849):

I have long thought that Polynisia furnished a great deal of rich *poetical material* that has never been employed hitherto in *works of fancy*; and which to bring out suitably, required only that play of freedom & invention accorded only to *the Romancer & poet*.... *My romance* I assure you is no dish water nor its model borrowed from the Circulating Library. It is something new I assure you, & original if nothing more. But I can give you no adequate idea, of it. You must see it for yourself.—Only forbear to prejudge it.—It opens like a true narrative—like *Omoo* for example, on ship board—& *the romance & poetry* of the thing thence grow continuously, till it becomes a story wild enough I assure you & with a meaning too. (Melville, *Correspondence* 106; emphasis added)

From the beginning of the passage, we can notice that Melville was sensitive to “poetical material” even when writing *Mardi*. This letter is crucial evidence that Melville was conscious of poetry in his early writings. Additionally, the letter might even tell us why Melville had been apt to avoid choosing America as a central setting in his prose fictions. He thought that America was short of “poetical material” and that a more congenial soil and spiritual climate were to be found in the sea or Pacific islands.

The most important thing in the letter, however, is that Melville appears to identify romance with poetry. In regard to this point, Parker recognizes “a higher form of literature” in Melville’s way of using the phrase “the romance & poetry”:

In Melville’s usages, the “poet” and the “poetic” are not associated with the metrical activity of verse-making but evoke the Romantic writer’s liberated consciousness in bold pursuit of the wild, the strange, the exotic. Romance and poetry were synonymous—they were imaginative, not factual and not commonplace, and they were associated in Melville’s mind with a higher form of literature than factual (and partially fictionalized) travel and adventure narrative. (Parker, *The Making of the Poet* 14)

Parker points out that Melville is saying romance and poetry are “synonymous.” In fact, the juxtaposition of the words “romance” and “poetry” (or “romancer” and “poet”) clearly shows how closely they are linked in Melville’s imagination. However, because Melville is saying that “poetical material” was what needs to be “employed” in works of fancy, the two must be treated separately. Melville claims that “poetry” is only

“material,” but his task was to write “poetical material” properly in “works of fancy,” that is, romance. “Poetry” and “romance” are not identical but they are complementary elements that contribute to the art of telling the truth. This is the reason why a romance can be a foundation for poetry. Melville had a keen sensitivity to what is poetical and he tried to connect it with romance. Here is an important distinction between romance in Melville and Hawthorne.

In this way, Melville was not so much concerned with form (prose or verse) as with material, style, or method. It was of the utmost importance to him to employ “poetical material” in “works of fancy.” The poetical language in a romance never disturbs the development of the story, never loses its meanings, but “grows” and connects “a by-gone time with the very Present that is flitting away.” Although Melville might not use the word “romance” in the same way as Hawthorne, reading *Moby-Dick* from this perspective enables us to interpret it in quite a different way: Ishmael’s language has an elasticity that leads to telling “the truth of the human heart,” and a romance provides the groundwork for his use of poetical language in *Moby-Dick*.

Accordingly, in order to evaluate Melville’s poetical aspects, we must abandon the choice between prose and verse. Instead, we must consider how his poetical imagination developed through his writing and how Melville was wrestled with the problem of writing poetry in romance until *Moby-Dick* took form. This method to capture poetical aspects of Melville’s “inner condition” is similar to what F. R. Leavis once applied so as to call Henry James a “poet-novelist.” When referring to Henry James as a “poet-novelist,” Leavis has in mind “a constant profound pondering of the

nature of civilized society and of the possibility of imagining a finer civilization than any he knew” (Leavis 128).⁷ This observation offers a perspective from which we should consider Melville’s use of poetry as a means to convey a personal experience of the marginalized Other in the civilized modern age.

Melville’s Return to Romance: From *Mardi* (1849) to *Moby-Dick* (1851)

After the failure of *Mardi*, Melville changed his style of writing in *Redburn* (1849), aiming at success.⁸ After the turn from *Mardi* to *Redburn*, however, Melville found himself in agony, as can be seen in his letters or “Hawthorne and His Mosses.” For example, Michael T. Gilmore writes that the essay shows “the opposition between his democratic convictions and his need to write for the democratic public” (52). Gilmore confirms that the essay illustrates how “Melville’s patriotic effusions coexist with a deep skepticism about the mass reading public and its aptitude for appreciating excellence” (58). Indeed it is natural that Melville experienced the conflict between his motivations of writing and the marketplace especially because of the failure of *Mardi*. However, I would rather emphasize another discrepancy that Melville faced when composing *Moby-Dick*, that is, the choice between writing a novel or a romance.

The inner conflict which Melville could not avoid at that time is hinted at in his letter to Hawthorne in 1851: “What I feel most moved to write, that is banned,—it will not pay. Yet, altogether, write the *other* way I cannot. So the product is a final hash, and all my books are botches.” (Melville, *Correspondence* 191; italics in original). “What I feel most

moved to write” can be thought of as *Mardi*, but Melville knew that romance, unlike an autobiographical novel, would not pay. This letter clearly shows that Melville reluctantly abandoned what he felt “most moved to write” for the sake of succeeding, but that he still had a strong interest in writing a romance like *Mardi*. After writing *Redburn* and *White Jacket* (1849), he turned to a romance again. This is why *Mardi* has been considered a work that leads to *Moby-Dick*. While *Redburn* and *White Jackets* are novels, *Mardi* and *Moby-Dick* are romances.

When this change in direction between *White-Jacket* and *Moby-Dick* is considered in the context of Melville’s preference for a romance, we can notice that Melville had a certain conviction that romance can function as a device quite essential to “the truth of the human heart.” When Melville confesses that he cannot write “the *other* way” even though “it will not pay,” it shows that his irresistible urge to return to *Mardi* was strengthened by reading Hawthorne and Shakespeare as well as by writing “Hawthorne and His Mosses.” In this sense, it is a greater turn in direction than it appears. After finishing *Redburn* and *White-Jacket*, while Melville advanced to *Moby-Dick* on the surface, he turned back to *Mardi* in his inmost heart. This is what happened to Melville between *White-Jacket* and *Moby-Dick*.

In a letter to an English editor Richard Bentley on June 27, 1850, Melville explains about the source of *Moby-Dick*: “The book is a romance of adventure, founded upon certain wild legends in the Southern Sperm Whale Fisheries, and illustrated by the author’s own personal experience, of two years & more, as a harpooner” (*Correspondence* 163). Melville wrote this letter on June 27, 1850 when he still did not start revising the book. The use of the words “a romance of adventure” (not “an adventure”) indicates that it

had remained Melville's preoccupation to write "poetical material" in a romance as I have already mentioned earlier.

Precisely because of this retrogression, as Melville himself felt, *Moby-Dick* has been regarded as a botch, both in respect of genre and of theme. Thus, his inner struggle over the act of writing primarily caused the multi-layered aspects of *Moby-Dick*, and it has been long evaluated as a highly polyphonic novel. However, when re-reading *Moby-Dick* as a romance in which Ishmael connects "a by-gone time with the very Present that is flitting away," we find that he intersperses many passages that show his figure as "a poetic subject" in the fabric of *Moby-Dick*.

Ishmael's Consciousness of Being a Poet

As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, a passage in Chapter 102 implies the connection between the figure of Ishmael as "a poetic subject" and the act of writing. In addition, it is noteworthy that Ishmael shows his constant concern with poetry throughout the text. For example, Ishmael shows his idea of the business of whaling in Chapter 24 ("The Advocate"):

As Queequeg and I are now fairly embarked in this business of whaling; and as this business of whaling has somehow come to be regarded among landmen as a rather *unpoetical* and disreputable pursuit; therefore, I am all anxiety to convince ye, ye landmen, of the injustice hereby done to us hunters of whales. (*MD* 108; emphasis added).

Ishmael's recognition that the "business of whaling" is "poetical" can be regarded as an essential principle for his pursuit of a white whale and for

the act of writing. In another part, he describes “the sperm whale, scientific or poetic, lives not complete in any literature. Far above all other hunted whales, he is an unwritten life” (*MD* 135). Ishmael’s problem of writing in this line appears to resonate with Melville’s concern which I mentioned earlier: “I have long thought that Polynisia furnished a great deal of rich poetical material that has never been employed hitherto in works of fancy” (Melville, *Correspondence* 106). When Ishmael places the word “scientific” in juxtaposition with the word “poetic,” it can be thought that he means hunting whales in a “scientific” way and in a “poetic” way are acts based on the same principle. Moreover, Chapter 86 (“The Tail”) begins with words which reveal that Ishmael is fully conscious of being a poet, but distinguishes himself from other poets: “Other poets have warbled the praises of the soft eye of the antelope, and the lovely plumage of the bird that never alights; less celestial, I celebrate a tail” (*MD* 375).

In these examples, Ishmael associates the act of writing on whales, “an unwritten life,” with being poetical throughout the text. Most curiously, in Chapter 86, Ishmael dares to say, “I know him [the whale] not, and never will” (*MD* 379), even though he constantly attempts to write about whales by illustrating a series of chapters on cetology. It might be his whimsical temperament, but Matthiessen and Spengemann emphasize that Ishmael becomes poetical when he tries to seek out what he can never know. Here, however, I would like to add another source of Ishmael’s “poetic subject” that is correlated with the act of writing: grief or sense of loss. This is highly relevant to the principle of romance, connecting the past and the present.

There is a crucial moment when Ishmael suddenly discards the role of

narrator and withdraws from the prosaic world. In Chapter 7 (“The Chapel”) he feels poignant sorrow at the loss of a lover, and expresses himself lyrically:

Oh! ye whose *dead* lie *buried beneath* the green grass; who standing among flowers can say—here, *here* lies my *beloved*; ye know not the *desolation* that *broods* in *bosoms* like these. What *bitter blanks* in those *black-bordered marbles* which cover no ashes! What *despair* in those *immovable* inscriptions! What *deadly* voids and *unbidden* infidelities in the lines that seem to gnaw upon all Faith, and refuse resurrections to the beings who have placelessly perished without a grave. (*MD* 36; emphasis added)

This is the passage in which Ishmael goes to a Whaleman’s Chapel, looks at sailors’ wives in front of marble tablets, and feels their “unceasing grief” and “unhealing hearts” (*MD* 36). The women’s grief stirs up Ishmael’s emotions, and he expresses what he feels poetically. By being sunk in deep thought at their grief and despair, Ishmael develops his own language. The language that he uses at this point is characteristic of poetry. For example, from the third line to the fifth in the passage, the words “these,” “those,” “inscriptions,” “voids,” and “infidelities” are voiced and resonant, and Ishmael repeatedly uses words with the sounds of “b” and “d.” The use of language in these lines enables him to express the hopelessness Ishmael feels when he encounters women who have lost their husbands. The oppressive atmosphere, which emerges from the alliteration of these voiced sounds, prevails in the whole passage.

The source of Ishmael’s poetical language here is grief, a sense of

loss, and the absence of lovers. In a broader sense, Ishmael's response to the absence is exemplified in Chapter 42 ("The Whiteness of the Whale"): "in essence whiteness is not so much a colour as the visible absence of colour" (*MD* 195). Although the scrutinizing of whiteness has caused numerous arguments among critics, it can be simply interpreted in terms of Ishmael's acute sensitivity to an absence rather than a presence. That is not to say that whiteness is directly related to something poetical, but as Melville refers to Coleridge's "The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" in a long annotation of the same chapter, whiteness and a poetical mind could, however indirectly, be connected in Melville's mind.

These elements are evoked in connecting the past and the present. Ishmael manages to put into words "the desolation that broods in bosoms" somehow or other by means of versified expression with a certain exaltation; thereby, he interweaves his own feelings into the description of the women's lament. When Ishmael narrates the story, he has lost all of his crew, including Queequeg whom he "married" as "a cosy, loving pair" (*MD* 51, 52). It is his own experience of loss that enables him to feel the depth of the widows' lament. The bereaved in front of the inscriptions on marble stones can be emblematic of the distance between the disturbing past and the present in Ishmael's inner mind. This elegiac passage reflects his mind at the time when he re-experiences the voyage of the past through narrating it. Hence, the prosaic world gives way to a poetic world at moments when he connects the past with the present in the weighted lines. When Ishmael feels sorrow, the intellectual Ishmael suddenly disappears; instead, the emotional or sentimental Ishmael appears, and his language turns monophonic.

The Function of Poetical Language

Thus, Ishmael's language expresses what *he* feels rather than what the bereaved feel. It excludes any voices other than that of Ishmael, which is characteristic of a poet's language as Michael Bakhtin explains in "Discourse in the Novel":

The language of the poet is *his* language, he is utterly immersed in it, inseparable from it, he makes use of each form, each word, each expression according to its unmediated power to assign meaning (as it were, "without quotation marks"), that is, as a pure and direct expression of his own intention. (285; italics in original)

If a poet is "inseparable" from his language, Ishmael's tattoos on his body and his hope for inscribing poems on its space represent symbolically the inner condition of a poet. Bakhtin also declares that in poetry "the word is sufficient unto itself and does not presume alien utterances beyond its own boundaries" and "any sense of the boundedness, the historicity, the social determination and specificity of one's own language is alien to poetic style" (285). According to Bakhtin, poetical language can be defined as language that does not resonate with any other context and shows no distance between its user and the language. This function of language is what Bakhtin calls "a pure and direct expression of [one's] own intention," that is, "monophonic."

Versified lines, as quoted from Chapter 7, are written in poetical language. Taken together the passage that follows the quotation, this can be understood more clearly:

It needs scarcely to be told, with what feelings, on the eve of a Nantucket voyage, I regarded those marble tablets, and by the murky light of that darkened, doleful day read the fate of the whalemens who had gone before me. Yes, Ishmael, the same fate may be thine. But *somehow I grew merry again*. Delightful inducements to embark, fine chance for promotion, it seems—aye, a stove boat will make me an immortal by brevet. Yes, there is death in this business of whaling—a speechlessly quick chaotic bundling of a man into Eternity. (*MD* 37; emphasis added)

Important in this passage is that Ishmael “somehow” grows “merry again.” This is a result of the use of poetical language, which is exemplified by the poet’s own words. T. S. Eliot explains the poetic quality of language in terms of its theme and function:

Poetry is not a substitute for philosophy or theology or religion, ...; it has its own function. But as this function is not intellectual but emotional, it cannot be defined adequately in intellectual terms. We can say that it provides ‘*consolation*’: *strange consolation*, which is provided equally by writers so different as Dante and Shakespeare. (Eliot, *Selected Essays* 137–38; emphasis added)

This is an explanation about what Eliot sensed in Shakespeare, and it is more or less resonant with the function of poetical language in the passage quoted from Chapter 7 in *Moby-Dick*. Indeed, it is well-known that Melville was influenced by Shakespeare’s works and was intensely impressed by “the great Art of Telling the Truth” (Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses” 244),

and the use of poetical language and of a dramatic form appears to be what he learned from Shakespeare, so far as we explore Ishmael's mind.

Ishmael's constant concern about being a poet seems to be relevant to his intention to dramatize the story of the Pequod ingeniously. In other words, dramatizing is one way of connecting the past and the present because, as Elliot explains in "A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry" (1928), "[a]ll poetry tends towards drama, and all drama towards poetry" (*Selected Essays* 52). This interrelation between poetry and drama is exemplified in the most obvious form in a series of chapters that take the form of a drama. Ishmael uses the stage directions "(Enter Ahab: Then, all.)" in Chapter 36 ("The Quarter-Deck"), and he consistently adopts the form of a drama with stage directions from Chapter 36 through Chapter 40 ("Midnight, Forecastle"). Eliot provides another explanation of the relation between poetry and drama: "The world of a great poetic dramatist is a world in which the creator is everywhere present, and everywhere hidden" (Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* 102). The word "creator" is full of implications because it connotes God. Yet the word may be simply interpreted as "a great poetic dramatist," that is, an author.

Hence Ishmael, who is the privileged narrator of *Moby-Dock*, can be interpreted as a "creator," which is a striking feature peculiar to poetic dramatists. Both explanations by Elliot help us understand the mode of Ishmael's transfiguration on the mast-head in Chapter 35 ("The Mast-Head"), which leads to the central problem of *Moby-Dick*: Ishmael suddenly abandons the role as first-person narrator and becomes a third-person narrator. In Chapter 35, Ishmael's spirit "ebbs away to whence it came," becomes "diffused through time and space" and forms at last "a

part every shore the round globe over” (*MD* 159). This transfiguration of Ishmael clearly shows that he is capable of becoming an omnipotent narrator. What happens to Ishmael on the mast-head is a crucial moment in becoming “diffused through time and space,” which allows him to use the form of a drama from Chapter 36. Ishmael “somehow” grows “merry again” and gains “[d]elightful inducements” just before his departure. The “consolation” results from an effect of language in poetry that Ishmael develops through “those marble tablets” and the widows’ lament.

Clearly, the “consolation” is related to his sense of loss and absence when he tries to keep the balance between the past and the present. *Moby-Dick* is itself Ishmael’s second sorrowful voyage insofar as he tells the fate of the Pequod from the start again, even though the past is unrecoverable. Therefore, the “consolation” or encouragement turns toward Ishmael himself, as the rhymed lines underscore not only Ishmael’s heartfelt sympathy for the widows but also his own sense of loss. Ishmael has lost everything after the voyage. The central figures in his sense of loss are Queequeg and Ahab: Queequeg is tied strongly to Ishmael and Ahab fights against “the Fates” and meets with defeats. Ishmael tries to grasp what remains after he has lost everything. Ishmael’s attempts to see what he cannot recognize without losing everything can be seen in his persistent concern for expressing Ahab’s inner side as well. In Chapter 41 (“Moby Dick”) Ishmael keeps trying to go into “Ahab’s larger, darker, deeper part” by ingeniously using the metaphor of the “Hotel de Cluny” (*MD* 185). The attempt to connect the past and the present in order to give meaning to the voyage also appears as an extensive series of chapters on cetology relative to whales.

Ishmael, being left all alone, tries to catch “that” voyage he definitely experienced yet already has passed, “that” crew who certainly lived together, and “that” white whale. *Moby-Dick* is a story in which Ishmael loses everything and nothing remains except the absolute fact that he experienced “that” voyage. He reminisces about the intolerable past at the beginning of Chapter 41: “I, Ishmael, was one of that crew; my shouts had gone up with the rest; my oath had been welded with theirs; and stronger I shouted, and more did I hammer an clinch my oath, because of the dread in my soul. A wild, mystical, sympathetical feeling was in me; Ahab’s quenchless feud seemed mine” (*MD* 179). These words illustrate that the voices of his crew are dissolved by Ishmael’s “shouts” and “oath.”

What remain in the scene are Ishmael’s voice and his feelings. We should not treat the fact lightly that only Ishmael survives, so as not to overlook descriptions no one can write except a person who lost everything after the voyage. If, as a previous study remarks, poetry can be considered “a force against effacement—not merely for individuals but for communities through time as well” (Stewart 2), it could be possible that the death or his past as a lost experience becomes a source for Ishmael’s use of the poetic diction. As I mentioned previously, the scene in Chapter 7 is a good example of the echoes of Ishmael’s poetic voice alone. It is the absolute fact that underscores the characteristics of Ishmael as a privileged narrator as well as a character who has gone through the voyage.

Moreover, the following passage in Chapter 13 (“Wheelbarrow”) conveys deeply the inner voice of Ishmael:

Huge hills and mountains ... ; while from others came a sound of carpenters and coopers, with blended noises of fires and

forges to melt the pitch, all betokening that new cruises were on the start; that one most perilous and long voyage ended, only begins a second; and a second ended, only begins a third, and so on, forever and for aye. Such is the endlessness, yea, the intolerableness of all earthly effort. (*MD* 60)

The language in this passage is monophonic as well. The words “hills” and “mountains,” “carpenters” and “coopers,” “noises” and “forges,” “endlessness” and “intolerableness” are rhymed, but rather it should be noted that only Ishmael’s voice echoes in the scene. Melville gives Ishmael the important role of telling about his past in “the intolerableness of all earthly effort” after he is left all alone. *Moby-Dick* is in this respect a text in which Ishmael re-experiences the sorrowful voyage again.

Fiction as Complementarity

To extend our discussion of the poetics in Ishmael’s oceanic imagination, I would like to supplement what we have discussed so far in terms of romance from a different perspective. I posit that Ishmael’s poetic perspective belongs to what Frank Kermode calls the “fictions of complementarity,” which attempt to evoke the “concord of past, present, and future” (Kermode 89) and serve to capture “the shape of life in relation to the perspectives of time” (Kermode 3). A reconsideration of Ishmael’s poetic practice in terms of its purpose for resolving the discord between mortality and eternity also provides us with a helpful perspective from which to examine Melville’s characterization of sailor poets in his later writings such as “John Marr” and his posthumously published novella *Billy Budd* (1924). Melville’s sailor poets seem to develop their poetic

imagination when seeking to convey personal emotions or subjective experience, particularly when facing their own or others' mortality.

Edgar A. Dryden's "Death and Literature: Melville and the Epitaph" (2006) is an extensive study on death in Melville's writing. Dryden seeks a common ground between Melville and William Wordsworth, arguing that the recollection of the dead is the subject of importance for "the surviving narrator or poet." Dryden claims that a sailor's act of mourning and recording a shipmate's death is "a process of substitution" that reflects the survivor's desire to prevent death (Dryden 299). However, I consider the act of recollecting the dead with reference to the concept of time, for it is associated with Ishmael's use of poetic dictions and the issue of mortality, a primary theme in *Moby-Dick*. It appears that Ishmael is not concerned with death itself; rather, as discussed earlier, he seems to be conscious of disharmony between the finiteness of human existence and the infiniteness of the world. Specifically, the circular ending of the novel evokes the fact that the world exists regardless of human deaths and that one must continue to live in this world even after the death of others.

The discussion of the concept of time in literary works is relevant to a better understanding of the ways in which Ishmael elucidates the meaning of life in relationship to perspectives of time. Literature's representation of time includes many perspectives across different periods. Generally, a literary work is based on tempo; it has a beginning, middle, and end. This is truer of prose than of verse as verse and prose have a different time-order; when examining the Latin terms *versus* and *prosa* in the etymology of "verse" and "prose," we see that verse originally indicated "to turn" or "to return," whereas prose indicated "to proceed" or to go "straight forward"

(*OED*).

A related but somewhat broader view of the concept of time is exhibited in Frank Kermode's *The Sense of Ending* (1967). To establish a connection between fiction, time, and apocalyptic modes of thought, Kermode considers poetry as "an art of the timeless prison" that "is intended to be outside time" (Kermode 174). Concerning this point, he explains in detail the term *ailon*, "a third intermediate order," which he adds to *chronos* (linear time) and *kairos* (recurrent time), with the following thought:

The concords of past, present, and future towards which the soul extends itself are out of time, and belong to the duration which was invented for angels when it seemed difficult to deny that the world in which men suffer their ends is dissonant in being eternal. To close that great gap we use *fictions of complementarity*. They may now be novels or philosophical poems, as they once were tragedies, and before that, angels.

(Kermode 89; emphasis added)

The last sentence of this passage indicates that the concept of "fictions of complementarity" is unsettled in light of genre. The quotation nevertheless clearly provides us with its function—that is, to serve as a possible means to bring about reconciliation with the fact that "the world in which men suffer their ends is dissonant in being eternal." In short, "fictions of complementarity" seek to resolve the discordance between mortality and eternity.

Within this context, Melville's reflection on time-order in a literary art form might be better understood through and is directly exemplified in a

passage in his sixth novel *Pierre: or, The Ambiguities* (1852). Although the novel is not directly associated with Melville's sea, a reconsideration of Melville's view on mortality and immortality or of the living and the dead indirectly helps us to clarify, to some degree, the perspectives of his sailor poets who survive shipwreck or recollect their old shipmates.

Plotinus Plinlimmon's pamphlet in a chapter titled XIV ("The Journey and the Pamphlet") says that "human life on this earth is but a state of probation"—"we mortals have only to do with things provisional" (*PE* 211).⁹ This reference to "human life" in "a state of a probation" is resonant with Kermode's view on humans, as he states in more detail:

Men, like poets, rush "into the midst," *in medias res*, when they are born; they also die *in mediis rebus*, and to make sense of their span they need fictive concords with origins and ends, such as give meaning to lives and to poems. The End they imagine will reflect their irreducibly intermediary preoccupations. (Kermode 7; italics in original)

This passage indicates that "fictions of complementarity" are no more than a means of providing a meaning to existence for humans who are suddenly born into this world and who die just as suddenly. It is within this framework that I wish to place Dryden's assessment that "memorializing the dead is the primary theme of the surviving narrator or poet." The act of recollecting the dead by Melville's sailor poets and the frequent use of shipwreck imagery in their imagination appear to derive from "irreducibly intermediary preoccupations" and the common urge to make sense of human existence in relation to time.

Melville's preoccupation with the characterization of sailor poets

suggests that they are undoubtedly at the center of his oceanic imagination, even later in his life. I wish to place those sailor poets, particularly John Marr (though he is an *ex*-sailor), next to Ishmael. Although little critical attention has yet been paid to Melville's sailor poets in terms of their poetical practice, I would like to emphasize that they inform us of the extent to which Melville was attempting to provide a reason for mortals' temporary status. This purpose might become clear, especially when considering the similarity between sailors in the poems and Ishmael, who is typical of the reminiscing sailor, as well as between the narrative frame of the sailor poems and the framework of *Moby-Dick*.

A striking feature of *Moby-Dick* is its circular structure. In the epilogue, Ishmael quotes a phrase from the Book of Job: "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee" (*MD* 573). This epigraph is suitable to Ishmael, who escaped death and was given the role of a narrator. It directly indicates Ishmael's intention to tell us the story of the dead and to restore his lost crew to life in a figurative sense. *Moby-Dick* has an ending in terms of form, but the text is indented to avoid ending and to return to its beginning, working against the linear movement of the prose. This recurrent narrative frame might be related to the circular image of a vortex wheeling in the epilogue.

Ishmael is acutely conscious of mortality and writes at the end of Chapter 60 ("The Line") as follows: "All are born with halters round their necks; but it is only when caught in the swift, sudden turn of death, that mortals realize the silent, subtle, ever-present perils of life" (*MD* 281). Ishmael's view of human existence is echoed with one of the central subjects that Kermode discusses in his argument, as mentioned earlier.

Ishmael informs the reader about human existence in the “ever-present perils of life” (*MD* 281) in a text that continues without end. A sign of harmony is seen between the theme and the structure of the text. One of the sea-pieces in *John Marr* titled “Far Off-Shore” could be read as the best example reflecting Ishmael’s view on life and death. It alludes to humans who are “caught in the swift, sudden turn of death,” as we shall see in the chapter on “John Marr.”

The thesis of this chapter is that Ishmael is a poet. As I have argued, Melville had long been conscious of what is poetical in his early career. His earliest ideas for developing poetical materials in a romance had been stimulated by his experience in Polynesia, and he believed that it was possible to write poetry in prose. His poetry is not always associated with verse making, but it is linked with his own notion of romance. Although Melville’s romance is almost the same as Hawthorne’s in that both of them have a function of connecting the past with the present, the relations between the past and the present are not exactly the same. Melville’s uniqueness is that he found the possibility of dealing with poetical materials in romance: a romance is the foundation for poetry in Melville’s mind. Melville believed that this was a problem he should tackle because he found that it had never been resolved. Melville’s letters and his essay tell us how much he had been trying to stick to the problem and how he had struggled with his belief that romance provides a narrative which Melville was trying to achieve especially from *Mardi* to *Moby-Dick*.

When we examine how Ishmael sways between the past and the present and when we try to understand how he touches “the truth of the

human heart” after his loss of the crew, we can understand why Melville gives Ishmael the role of a narrator and a character as one of the crew of the *Pequod*. Ishmael is a privileged narrator insofar as it is only Ishmael who only survived “that” voyage and who can tell the story. In this sense, it should be noted that there are many passages that could never be written except by one who survived the voyage and who has lost everything. For Ishmael the meaning of the past is too large, heavy, but memorable, to be told. Therefore Ishmael acts the role of a character in the story besides a narrator telling us the story of the *Pequod* and about his sorrowful past. There are also passages which reveal that Ishmael desires to be a poet or, rather, that he *is* a poet. Moreover, Ishmael’s status as “a poetic subject” appears in his use of language. The function of the language Ishmael uses is clearly peculiar to poetry in that he intentionally repeats voiced sound and meter in connecting the past and the present. Although *Moby-Dick* has been read as a polyphonic novel, Ishmael’s monophonic language figures largely when considered in light of a romance in which Ishmael re-experiences the voyage all over again.

Also, this chapter has engaged in the question of Melville’s concept of poems from a new approach of re-examining the sailors who are the central figures in his prose and poetry. It is not that Melville disregarded the importance of the difference between prose and poetry. Rather, as a next step, this chapter has examined the concept of time and mortality from the perspective of Melville’s sailor poets. Above all, what has been discussed here will throw fresh light on “John Marr” and *Billy Budd*, for the aged sailor, John Marr, inevitably recalls the figure of Ishmael, who is Melville’s representative reminiscing sailor and bespeaks his view of life. “John Marr”

demonstrates imaginative capacity as a means of integrating the past, present, and future. John Marr thus affirms a relationship of complementarity with the past. This affirmation is one of the essential aspects of Melville's sailor poems.

Chapter 3

Images of the Sea and Marriage: “The Scout toward Aldie” as a Ballad

The American Lyric-Epic

In this chapter, I would like to examine how Melville deals with the lyrical outpouring of personal emotion, generated by the darkly epic story of the Civil War, in “The Scout toward Aldie” (hereafter referred to as “Scout”), the longest narrative poem in Melville’s first published volume of poetry, *Battle-Pieces and the Aspects of the War* (1866). After providing a brief overview of Civil War literature and related historical specificities, this chapter focuses on the poem’s sea imagery, because the sea, although only implicitly represented, is a core image. In addition, I wish to consider Melville’s use of nuptial imagery and of the ballad as a frame for the poem, because both of these rhetorical choices seem necessary to express Melville’s view of the uncertain future of the United States after the American Civil War.

The interrelationship between epic and lyric in *Battle-Pieces* was not examined in detail until the 1990s. In “Melville and the Lyric History” (1997), Helen Vendler terms *Battle-Pieces* a “lyric-epic” (594) and notes how Melville created a hybrid of “philosophical reflection, brisk narrative, and closing grief” (587) to achieve “a lyric genre adequate to the complex feeling generated by the epic event of battle” (588). About a decade later, Virginia Jackson discussed “The Portent,” an opening poem of *Battle-Pieces*.

Jackson assesses Melville's techniques for developing the lyric dimension behind the Civil War's tragic period, mentioning in particular his "passively lingering, vagrant lyric parentheses," emphasizing that "the lines outside the parentheses" represent "not-yet-lyricized or at least differently lyricized genres" (Jackson 185). Both Vendler and Jackson persuasively trace some patterns in Melville's blending of lyric and epic materials in his war poems.

This issue seems to be at least partially connected with the representation of the sea. In a study of Walt Whitman, Wai Chee Dimock gives us a useful hint that the combination of "lyric and epic" can be considered "a sea-borne tradition" (34). In fact, James E. Miller's *The American Quest for a Supreme Fiction: Whitman's Legacy in the Personal Epic* (1979) devotes a chapter to "Original American Poetry: The Lyric Epic," in which he argues for Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855) as a landmark achievement in lyric-epic style, noting in this connection the important role of references to the sea in Whitman's work. The sea image in *Leaves of Grass*, claims Miller, "is established almost from the beginning as a major symbol" (101) and "the smaller units are connected to the whole poem not through a continuing narrative within the poem but rather through a single sensibility" (147).

Along with *Leaves of Grass*, another typical example of the lyric-epic is Hart Crane's first published poem, *The Bridge* (1930). Miller emphasizes Whitman's influence on this work, whereas Henry W. Wells argues that the figure of Melville as "the metaphysical prose-poet of the sea" (Wells 194) can be clearly recognized behind the lines of *The Bridge*. In fact, in Part III ("Cutty Sark") of *The Bridge*, Crane borrows the last two lines of Melville's poem "The Temeraire," from *Battle-Pieces*—"O, the navies old and oaken, /

O, the Temeraire no more!” (Crane 51; italics in original)—to express his lament for the loss of the era of the old wooden sailing ships, replaced by steam-powered ironclads beginning in the Civil War era. It may be true, as Wells points out, that Crane “found in Melville a kindred spirit” (194), and especially that Melville’s sea was on his mind. If so, it is highly likely that the sea provided Crane a stage to bring epic and lyric together in an age of new technologies.¹

Although neither Miller nor Wells mention Melville in relation to the lyric-epic, another literary scholar, R. W. B. Lewis, labels *Battle-Pieces* an “epic assembly of lyric” that directly influences Crane’s *The Bridge*. Lewis suggests that *Battle-Pieces* acts as a precursor to *The Bridge*, expensively addressing “the nature and presumptive purpose of America” as well as “the great apocalyptic alternatives the country must confront” (Lewis 203). Indeed, these previous studies suggest the possibility that we can place Melville next to Crane and Whitman and view them as poets who attempt to fuse the epic and lyric in the sea image.² How then, we should ask, does the sea serve as a privileged place for the fusion of epic and lyric in Melville?

I would like to propose that Melville’s real-life nautical experience is heavily involved in the interrelation between the two. In short, for Melville, the sea seems to be a rich topic for epic and lyric reflection, that is, for the contemplation of both history and the individual. As discussed in the previous chapter, on *Moby-Dick*, Ishmael, a poet in prose, seeks to convey the subjective experience and intense personal emotion (lyric) behind whale hunting as a national endeavor (epic). Insofar as “Scout” can be considered a parallel of *Moby-Dick*, it is possible that “Scout” contains to some degree the essence of the sea image that, like in *Moby-Dick*, provides a stage for

Melville to deepens his historical awareness and reflect upon the life and death of the individual in history. I argue that Melville's use of the ballad form may be evidence of the affinity between the sea and the lyric-epic, since ballads contains epic and lyric dimensions. For Melville, the ballad is the most familiar form of sea-poetry. Thus, I wish to emphasize that Melville adapts the ballad form to the composition of "Scout" with its sea imagery, a fact that has been almost overlooked so far.

Melville's Experience of War and "The Scout toward Aldie"

As Edmund Wilson mentions, during the Civil War "speeches and pamphlets, private letters and diaries, personal memories and journalistic reports" took on importance as major literary forms, as opposed to mere *belles-lettres* (Wilson ix). These works dealt with the war itself or issues related to the war, such as racial matters, and most of them can be characterized as a kind of "patriotic journalism" (Wilson 470). Among the writers of this period, Wilson appreciates Whitman's outstanding contribution to the literature of the Civil War primarily for the way it reflects his field hospital experience on the battlefield, not for his patriotism. Wilson remarks that this experience enabled Whitman to produce epic narrative poems about "a side of the war which was otherwise little reported" (Wilson 480).

For a nearly opposite reason, Wilson underestimates Melville's *Battle-Pieces* as the "emptiest verse" written by "an anxious middle aged non-combatant" although Wilson admits that the volume is composed of "a chronicle of patriotic feelings" (Wilson 479). *Battle-Pieces* is a substantial collection of seventy-two poems with relatively long notes (arranged

convincingly from *Notes*^a through *Notes*^x) and a final prose “Supplement” that deals with Melville’s view of America’s direction after the Civil War. In contrast to Whitman, Melville’s principal source for his war poems was a series of “newspaper accounts and official reports interspersed with verse and anecdotes” (Henning Cohen, Introduction 15) from the front, called *The Rebellion Record*. By means of these materials, Melville in *Battle-Pieces* frames and reconstructs the tension of wartime.

In Melville’s war poems, Jackson pays special attention to “the lyric in parentheses” because it indicates “a departure from the poetry everyone was reading during the war, an idea of poetic power that could only be read in retrospect or between brackets” (186).³ Certainly, this is one of the poems’ distinctive features. However, I wish to propose that “The Scout toward Aldie” constitutes a partial counterexample that displays Melville’s rhetorical use of the ballad form to develop the lyrical dimension in relation to (as opposed to alongside) the epic.

Among Melville’s war poems, as Wilson notes, “The Scout toward Aldie” is a “notable exception” (Wilson 479) because it is the only poem written from Melville’s firsthand experience of the Civil War. During April 18–20, 1864, Melville traveled with his brother Allan to the front of the Army of the Potomac to visit his cousin Colonel Henry Gansevoort stationed with the 13th New York Cavalry in Virginia.⁴ Gansevoort’s Cavalry was then assigned to operate against the Confederate John Singleton Mosby, commander of the 43rd Battalion of Virginia Cavalry. In 1863, the guerrillas of Mosby’s partisan ranger battalion conducted raids in northwestern Virginia. Mosby’s goal was to attack the Union army protecting Washington, D.C., so that the Federal authorities would move to

increase the city's defenses.

As Melville remarks in his note to "Scout," "it was unsafe to traverse the confine of a country except with an armed escort" (*PP* 179). Therefore, Melville accompanied Colonel Russell Lowell (Mosby's most successful opponent and a young brigade commander of the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry), who invited Melville to join a scouting mission in search of Mosby. Lowell became a principal character in "Scout." At that time, Melville knew that the Mosby was "legendary for his phantomlike harassment of the Union troops" and had such a good talent in military strategy that he was called "a master of psychological gamesmanship" (Parker, *A Biography* II: 566).

Melville's experience on this expedition against Mosby's rangers resulted in the main subject of "The Scout toward Aldie." However, the distinctiveness of the poem is not exactly in its historical or autobiographical attributes, but rather in its semi-fictional quality of blending fictional narrative with historical incidents and conditions of the Civil War. "Scout," in Stanton Garner's words, is "like his romances, literature woven out of fact" (319). Melville's real-life experience on the battlefield stimulates his imagination so that the poem is rightly called "a short story in verse" (Wilson 579) or "a small-scale version of *Moby-Dick*" (Wilson 319). In this respect, not only does the poem occupy a unique place among other Civil War writings written based on the patriotic sentiments, but also it differs from his other poems in *Battle-Pieces*. Thus, in what follows we are concerned particularly with Melville's mode of mixing fact and imagination.

From that perspective, we also need to pay special attention to the

fact that “Scout,” as Henning Cohen notes, is the first time Melville has chosen the literary ballad as a genre (Henning Cohen, Note 287). Before “Scout,” although Melville had attempted to intersperse a ballad into his prose narrative in *Mardi*, he has not previously employed the ballad as the main form for a single text. As already mentioned, the ballad is not only associated with both the epic and the lyric but also with the sea, with which Melville was of course preoccupied. Thus, it seems necessary to ask how Melville demonstrates the aptness of the ballad form (in combination with nuptial imagery) to dislocate the poem historically in the context of its relation to the epic and lyric. This is central to the investigation presented in the next section.

Mosby and the Colonel

“The Scout toward Aldie” is a 798-line poem composed of 114 stanzas of 7 verses each. Despite the limited previous criticism on the poem, which has tended to focus on details of its superficial deficits, “Scout” also contains notably fine lines evoking *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*.⁵ In addition, Wilson remarks that “Scout” is thematically linked with “Melville’s short stories in prose” (323) such as “Benito Cereno” and *Billy Budd*.

Above all, recent scholars have attempted to assess this poem by exploring the way in which Melville uses history, the archetypal quest myth, or the conventional frame of the chivalric romance.⁶ Joseph Fargnoli, for instance, reads “Scout” as a kind of “ballad romance” (335) that “transforms the traditional, romantic myth of war into a modern, realistic one” (334). As Megan Williams similarly notes, the poem displays “a

strange summary of the history of English literature” (105).

Certainly, as Fagnoli emphasizes, the Colonel’s “romantic and heroic qualities” (Fagnoli 335) contrast with Mosby’s role as “Melville’s typical modern anti-hero” (Fagnoli 345). This contrast, however, should be reconsidered, because it seems that Melville does not entirely depict the Colonel as a heroic character. Therefore, I wish to examine how Melville portrays the Colonel as *quasi-hero* in order to represent his critical view of the conventional conception of the Union and the Confederacy—that is, as we shall see, the conventional reunion romance of the North and the South.

The Union Colonel is at the center of the chivalric quest represented in the poem, and forms significant pairs with each of the other three characters: Mosby, the old Major, and the Colonel’s young bride. I wish to attempt to read “Scout” with a focus on how the Colonel pairs with these other characters, a matter which has not been adequately discussed.

The Confederate Mosby is the most outstanding figure in the poem: he is the central figure of the sea image, which in this poem is a metaphor for persistent reminder of horror; it never invokes nostalgia for a bygone age of sail or provides solace, unlike the “delightful sea” (*PP* 133) in another of Melville’s naval war poems, “A Requiem for Soldiers Lost in Ocean Transports.”

The lyrical aspect of Melville’s naval war poems manifests itself in several ways. Some poems lament the loss of old ships, and others mourn for dead soldiers. The sea in Melville’s war poems also serves as a ground for expressing the sense of loss stirred by battle. For example, “Requiem for Soldiers Lost in Ocean Transports” reflects on a soldiers’ death in a naval battle. Quite simply, because Melville deals with this kind of feeling in the

epic event of the Civil War, *Battle-Pieces* can be strongly associated with both the epical and lyrical dimensions. John Seelye points out that not only Melville's prose tales but also his poems "are seldom one-dimensional" (Seelye 132) in terms of the effect of irony. Although he compares "Scout" with Melville's narrative poem *Clarel* (1876) (Seelye 136–37), I wish to discuss the dual elements in "Scout" with a focus on the blend of epic and lyric created by the rhetorical use of a ballad.

In "Scout," Melville deliberately likens the sea to the disquieting woods to describe "a recapitulation of the tragedy with its penetration of Satan's wilderness of war" (Garner 425). This evil, permeating into the whole poem, is revealed by Melville's comparison of Mosby to a stealthy shark near the beginning of the poem, in the second stanza, which reads as follows:

Great trees the troopers felled, and leaned
 In antlered walls about their tents;
 Strict watch they kept; 'twas *Hark!* and *Mark!*
 Unarmed none cared to stir abroad
 For berries beyond their forest-fence:
 As glides in seas the shark,
 Rides Mosby through green dark.

(139: 8–14, italics original)⁷

Although William H. Shurr emphasizes the significance of the shark image in Melville's imagination particularly in *Moby-Dick*, he does not discuss "Scout."⁸ Yet, the image in "Scout" deserves more attention because it makes a contribution to the development of the terror of Mosby's guerilla tactics. In the last two lines of the stanza, Melville underlines the pervasive

malevolence of Mosby's looming figure, gliding about in leafy shadows, by comparing him to a shark. A vicious, gliding shark is one of Melville's major cautionary emblems for the sea, as depicted in *Moby-Dick*—"the white gliding ghostliness of repose," "silent stillness of death in this shark" (*MD* 190); "the infidel sharks in the audacious seas" (*MD* 223). Furthermore, the shark image appears as well in his naval war poem "Commemorative of a Naval Victory": "... The shark / Glides white through the phosphorus sea" (*PP* 136). In addition, Melville calls the shark "Pale ravener of horrible meat" (*PP* 236) in "The Maldiver Shark," published in *John Marr and Other Sailors With Some Sea-Pieces* (1886). These frequent uses of the shark image indicate that it occupied Melville's mind to some degree when he recollected the seascape, even in his later years.

The overt terror of guerrilla tactics expressed by the shark image is also symbolically reflected by an inscribed motto, "*Man must die*" (*PP* 161: 777; italics original), seemingly in common with *Moby-Dick*, and then by the recurrent refrain of the name "Mosby." Despite being the historically accurate name of a real person, the word "Mosby" echoes the name of Moby Dick, which suggests Melville's consciousness of the alignment between "Scout" and *Moby-Dick*, wherein the whole crew of the *Pequod* except Ishmael is swallowed by the sea. In place of the fictional white whale, Melville places Mosby, a figure at once personal and impersonal, and repeats his name obsessively in each stanza's last couplet. Mosby, like Moby Dick, pervades the entirety of the poem and its setting as a mythical figure, here representing the grimness of war, but never actually appears onstage. As I discuss in more detail later, the use of such a melodic refrain is a conventional practice in traditional ballads that creates lyrical

dimension. Melville's use of this refrain indicates the perpetual terror that Mosby's Confederate raiders evoked in the minds of his Union opponents. Thus, the sea in the poem is a central metaphor, a stage upon which Melville dramatizes the evil of guerrilla warfare in the Civil War.

Additionally, the refrain using the name "Mosby" evokes not only the Colonel's fear and repulsion toward him, but also an awe, as toward a legend. As Wilson argues, although the Colonel feels the threat of sudden attacks by Mosby's guerrillas, lurking in the forest, he is also drawn to Mosby "by a kind of spell that is somehow a good deal more powerful than the attraction which has drawn him to his bride" (Wilson 326). Through obsessive repetition of the name "Mosby," the complex, subjective feelings of fear and awe both enlarge and intermingle, representing the Union's attitude toward Mosby's raids. In short, the recurring name "Mosby" symbolically reflects the significant impact that partisan tactics had both on individuals (represented by the Colonel) and on the nation, and the Colonel's fear is at once personal and national. I insist that this integration of the expression of intense subjective emotion into the epic dimension is one of the most important qualities of "Scout" as lyric-epic.

Such ambivalent feelings also constitute one of the basic quest qualities of Melville's sea stories: one actor pursues another with a feeling both of repulsion and attraction, which connects them inescapably to one another. In this sense, although "Scout" is less allegorical than *Moby-Dick*, the ambivalent relationship between the Colonel and Mosby is of course analogous to that between Ahab and Moby Dick.⁹ Besides Captain Ahab and Moby Dick, Wilson argues that the Colonel–Mosby pair also parallels Claggart and Billy Budd in Melville's posthumously published *Billy Budd*

(1924), and Babo and Don Benito in his novella “Benito Cereno” (1855). However, as we shall see later, I would like to emphasize that the figures of a bridal and a bridegroom are central to Mosby and the Colonel.

Above all, the Colonel’s attraction to Mosby has a historical basis in the Confederate guerrilla’s legendary reputation among Union troops and also an autobiographical basis in Melville’s time spent with his cousin’s men. As Melville writes in his notes to the poem, he learned about Mosby’s reputation for “civility” to officers and “considerate kindness” to wounded captives (*PP* 179). Melville also explains that “the name of Mosby is invested with some of those associations with which the popular mind is familiar” (*PP* 179); according to Hershel Parker, the newspapers of Melville’s day were already calling Mosby “the Modern Rob Roy” (Parker, *A Biography* II: 566), after the famous Scottish folk hero of the early eighteenth century, fictionalized in *Rob Roy* (1817), a historical novel by Sir Walter Scott. Although it is uncertain whether Melville had read Scott’s *Rob Roy* or the newspaper accounts applying the term to Mosby at that time, there is clear evidence of his knowledge of the historical Robert Roy MacGregor and of Scott’s novel.¹⁰ In Chapter IV (“Jack Chase”) of his fifth novel, *White-Jacket* (1850), Melville’s narrator describes Jack Chase, a heroic and handsome sailor, and explicitly mentions Rob Roy, as well as Byron, to characterize Chase’s tastes in literature: “Jack had read all the verses of Byron, and all the romances of Scott. He talked of Rob Roy, Don Juan, and Pelham; Macbeth and Ulysses; but, above all things, was an ardent admirer of Camoens” (*WJ* 14).¹¹ John Singleton Mosby, like Melville, also “had a literary bent, having loved Byron’s poetry from childhood” (Parker, *A Biography* II: 566).

In this respect, it may be true, as previous critics have argued, that Melville in “Scout” is showing his admiration of Mosby, the Rebel partisan.¹² However, I would like to emphasize that by blurring the factual and fictional records, Melville still manages to place the heroic emphasis on the Colonel, rather than on Mosby. When read with reference to the young newlywed couple, the Colonel and his bride, the poem seems to make clear that Mosby is a less heroic and more complex and ambivalent character. The next section performs this reading.

The Colonel and His Bride

While the Colonel–Mosby pair represents one typical aspect of the chivalric quest based on Melville’s own expedition, the young newlywed couple provides another aspect: balladic romance.

The Colonel is portrayed mostly as a brave and heroic warrior. In a dialogue with the Major, for instance, the Colonel reveals that “the partisan’s blade he longed to win” (*PP* 145: 214). In Garner’s estimation, the “glory-hungry Colonel” (Garner 320) does not look anything like Charles Lowell but seems more like an analogue for Melville’s cousin Henry Gansevoort. However, it has been increasingly acknowledged that the model for the fictional Colonel was Lowell, who was “conducting himself with conspicuous bravery” (Melville, *PP* 669). Lowell was a person whom Melville favored.¹³ In addition, like the Colonel in “Scout,” Lowell also brought his young bride, Josephine Shaw Lowell, to a base camp.¹⁴ The Colonel and his bride are considered to have been modeled on the Lowells who were, for Melville, like the Hawthornes, a very “glamorous, intellectual, and chivalric pair” (Parker, *A Biography* II: 567). Thus, in

“Scout,” Melville provides them with a world where “love in a tent is a queenly thing” (*PP* 140: 46), and idealizes the married couple spending their honeymoon in this “bannered tent” (*PP* 161: 781).

The most important critical study dealing directly with the nuptial analogy is Grant Shreve’s essay, “The Shadows of Reconstruction: Marriage and Reunion in Melville’s ‘The Scout toward Aldie’” (2012). As Shreve summarizes, after the Civil War, writers began to use the image of marriage as a means to construct “a national narrative that mirrored a courtship plot” (10). According to Shreve, in antebellum reunion romances the nuptial analogy serves as a figure for the reunification of the North and South. However, “The Scout toward Aldie” shows Melville’s skeptical attitude toward the use of this sentimental figure of marriage by transforming it into an expression of “the uncertain and fragile process of reunion” (Shreve 11).

Melville was dubious that the conventional view of marriage served as a good metaphor for reunification, which is exemplified by the Colonel’s death and his widowed bride. The short marriage between the patriarchal Colonel and his nameless bride is foreshadowed by the following lines near the beginning of the poem—“His sunny bride is in the camp— / But Mosby—graves are beds of damp!” (*PP* 140: 41–2). Indeed, these lines might represent the “ironic contrast between the bridal bed and the grave” (Henning Cohen, Note 288); here, however, I would like to propose that the lines foreshadow the affinity, rather than the distinction, between the bridal image and Mosby, in company with whom, rather than with the Colonel, the bridal image appears.

Near the end of the poem, the ambitious Colonel is killed by an ambush, lying dead amid “wilding roses that shed their balm” (*PP* 159: 713).

The youthful colonel's corpse is carried back to his bride:

They buried him where the lone ones lie
 (Lone sentries shot on midnight post)—
 A green-wood grave-yard hid from ken,
 Where sweet-fern flings an odor nigh—
 Yet held in fear for the gleaming ghost!
 Though the bride should see threescore and ten,
 She will dream of Mosby and his men. (161: 785–91)

In contrast to the conventional use of nuptial images, the Colonel's early death here might epitomize the futility of war, and his grieving widow might be considered to embody the woe of the country. However, I wish to emphasize the affinity between the bride and Mosby, for the last line in the stanza shows that she "will dream of Mosby," not the Colonel. The line also reiterates the shadowiness of Mosby's figure, echoing the line "'Tis Mosby's homily—*Man must die*" (PP 161: 777). The figure of the widow bride, who will be haunted for the rest of her life by the ghostlike Mosby, illuminates Melville's mindset at the time he wrote his war poems. In "Supplement," he writes that "the glory of the war falls short of its pathos—a pathos which now at last ought to disarm all animosity" (Melville, "Supplement" 184). This pathos is, in Richard Harter Fogle's words, "the simple pathos of ballad-tragedy" (127).

Certainly, the young newlywed couple provides the nuptial image with its expected romantic quality. Notably, however, the displacement of the nuptial image seems intensified allusively by the Colonel–Mosby pair rather than the newlywed couple. Melville does not entirely celebrate the Colonel as a Union hero, not even giving him a name; so far, however, his

anonymity has seemingly been viewed as unimportant. Nor does Melville name the bride, or elaborate her character, although her model, Josephine Shaw Lowell, as already mentioned, was an ideal personage. In short, Melville consciously avoids depicting the couple in a conventional romantic way; instead, I argue, he turns his attention to another pair represented in terms of nuptial images, namely, the Union Colonel and Confederate Mosby.

Mosby as a Bride

As mentioned earlier, the Colonel–Mosby pair depicts one aspect of the Civil War and the preceding period, that is, the ambivalent relations between the North and the South, mingling repulsion and attraction together. Wilson profoundly suggests that the central North–South relationship is a “homosexual” (Wilson 328) one, an aspect already latent in “Scout,” for instance in the Union Colonel’s attraction to Mosby. Melville’s use of the basic quest pattern has historical significance because of its insight into this aspect of the Civil War.

However, even more important is the way the Confederate Mosby assumes a female, specifically a bridal, role, for it seems to exemplify Melville’s subversive use of the sentimental nuptial analogy. This is also evidence of the affinity (as opposed to than contrast) between Mosby and the Colonel conveyed in the lines earlier quoted (“His sunny bride is in the camp— / But Mosby—graves are beds of damp!”).

Melville seems to be describing the South as female. It is not that, as we shall see later, he is not still dependent on the conventional reunion romance. For example, as Shreve notes, the Colonel has a “conviction that

Mosby will appear in the form of a woman” (Shreve 20). The following quotation is from a subsequent scene where the Colonel’s troops encounter a veiled woman in a wagon.

While echoes ran, a wagon old,
 Under stout guard of Corporal Chew
 Came up; a lame horse, dingy white,
 With clouted harness; ropes in hand,
 Cringed the humped driver, black in hue;
 By him (for Mosby’s band a sight)
 A sister-rebel sat, her veil held tight. (150: 400–407)

The Colonel’s troops fail to recognize that the “sister-rebel” and “the humped driver” are Mosby’s men. When the Major later discovers this fact, he exclaims, “Every covert—find that lady! / And yet I may misjudge her—ay, / Women (like Mosby) mystify” (160: 733–35).

Furthermore, Melville seems more concerned with feminizing the South than with elaborating the figure of the Colonel’s bride. For example, the Colonel is also charmed by the veiled “sister-rebel” in the wagon; we will recall here Wilson’s claim that the Colonel is more attracted to Mosby than his bride, an observation that proves meaningful because it implies that one of the most notable aspects of Mosby’s ambiguous identity is femininity, and by figurative extension the role of the “bride” who effects a reunion with the Union Colonel.

Shreve observes that the Colonel “continuously speaks of Mosby as a bridal figure” (Shreve 16), and emphasizes that this way of representing Mosby owes much to the Colonel’s wish “to crop Mosby’s hair” and “to effeminize the Confederate guerrilla to transform him from a male

prisoner-of-war” to “a feminine captive” (Shreve 18). However, I argue that Melville does not use his sentimentalized male Union and female Confederacy in such a conventional way: Rather than focusing on the Colonel’s misrecognition of Mosby as a bride or his wish to unman him, we should instead concentrate on the fact that it is the bridal figure of Mosby who kills the bridegroom, the Colonel—whereby the Colonel–Mosby paring subverts the sentimental nuptial image prevalent in the period. In short, what is crucial in the Colonel–Mosby pair is that Mosby performs as a bridal figure who defeats and destroys her bridegroom, the Colonel.

Mosby, as a symbolic feminized figure, directs our attention to the dual nature of the Colonel’s chivalric quest; one purpose of the cavalry is to capture Mosby, but the Colonel’s other implicit purpose is to return safely to his young bride. When the Confederate Mosby also becomes the female Mosby, these two plots figuratively overlap, and Mosby and the bride intermingle into the single objective of the Colonel’s quest. However, the Colonel cannot achieve either purpose. On the contrary, the Colonel is defeated by Mosby—the male by the female, the Union by the Confederacy. From that perspective, the axial characters in “Scout” are the Colonel and Mosby-as-bride, in that they invert the historical and archetypal relationship between the actually victorious Union and the defeated Confederacy. Thus, by moving far from the conventional romantic, heroic image of the Union cavalry, the Colonel’s quest for Mosby inverts the nuptial analogy’s sentimental function within an archetypal quest romance.

Mosby himself is never much of a national hero, however, nor is he an anti-hero: he stands as a metaphor through which Melville transforms the conventional discourse of reunion during the Civil War, a story of “peculiar

entanglement with one another of American North and South” that became after the war “a formula of romantic fiction” wherein “two lovers, one Northern, one Southern, though destined for one another, are divided by their loyalties to their different flags” (Wilson 327). Mosby’s quasi-bridal figure illustrates Melville’s attempt to convert and co-opt nuptial imagery in order to express the pathos of the Civil War and the uncertain future of the nation.

In this way, “Scout” displays Melville’s prophetic vision of the uncertain future of postbellum America. The poem’s ending shows that Melville can see little hope of the reunion of the states. Although the effects of the sea imagery and the nuptial imagery differ, the figure of Mosby is the medium connecting the two. Thus, while in *The Bridge*, Crane uses the sea image as a symbol of “the dream of an ideal America” (Nilsen 49), Melville in “The Scout toward Aldie” uses sea imagery to highlight his disillusionment with America.

A Ballad

Finally, we need to pay attention to the fact that, in “Scout,” Melville for the first time chooses the ballad form to develop the archetype of the quest myth.¹⁵ The poem has previously been compared to “English lyrics and verse romances”;¹⁶ here, however, I wish to read “Scout” as a ballad in particular. Agnes D. Cannon makes a general remark on Melville’s ballads as follows: “[a]s Melville’s sense of the complexity of life increases, and his artistic purposes heighten, the significance of his use of ballads deepens” (Cannon, “Melville’s Use” 10). Unfortunately, though, little critical attention has yet been paid to the examination of Melville’s use of the

ballad form in “Scout.” Thus, I wish to demonstrate how “Scout” fits the ballad pattern in terms of form and content, with reference to the following definition: “popular balladry often dwelt on themes of chivalric quests, outlawed passions and personalities, uncanny events, and pathos-laden deaths.” Furthermore, “the popular ballad told a story that focused on a single dramatic incident; often incorporated dialogue into the narrative; featured an impersonal narrative voice; and utilized relatively simple diction. Originally meant to be sung, popular ballads included refrains and incremental repetitions” (Cook 73).

Whereas Cook concentrates his discussion on the similarities in setting, theme, and characterization between “Scout” and Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*. I wish to add that “Scout” fits closely the motifs of a traditional ballad, in particular in the following three respects.

First, “Scout” is narrated by an omnipresent third-person narrator, whom Melville seems to distance from both the Confederate Mosby and the Union Colonel. Perhaps this is in part because Melville has sympathy for both the North and the South. This ambivalent stance is also perhaps seen in the prose “Supplement” appended to the poems, where Melville shows his sympathy toward the mourners of the South who “bear flowers to the mounds of the Virginian and Georgian dead” as well as “those who go with similar offerings of tender grief and love into the cemeteries of our Northern martyrs” (Melville, Supplement 183). Besides including both the Southerners and Northerners, this phrase also equally commemorates the souls of the Civil War dead as well as to those who are grieved by their loss.

The third-person narrator in “Scout” reflects the poet’s attitude toward both sides in other ways as well. The poem depicts a notable scene

where one of the Confederate prisoners and the Union soldiers each sing a song to the other. The former sings, “*I’m for the South! says the leafage green*” (PP 153: 526);¹⁷ the latter sings a song beginning “*Nine Blue-coats went a-nutting*” (PP 153: 542).¹⁸ Their songs bring a sense of affinity, a “family likeness in every face” (PP 154: 557). Although previous critics focus little attention on the songs, the songs deserves attention because they exemplify, as it were, a poem within a poem.

Second, “Scout” clearly contains increscent repetitions of the name “Mosby,” a lyrical effect is enhanced by fact that the repetitions appear within the refrain.¹⁹ According to Jay Leyda, Melville was quite aware of the power of a melodic refrain. In 1862, Melville underscored a passage by Madame de Staël as follows: the effects of poetry “depend still more on the melody of words than on the ideas which they serve to express” (Leyda II: 647; underlines original). Melville also made a marginal comment on the passage as follows: “This is measurably true of all but *dramatic poetry*, and, perhaps, *narrative verse*” (Leyda II: 647; italics mine). Furthermore, Melville also marked the description of the power of the repeated refrain to cause “terror” (Leyda 647).²⁰ Melville’s heavy markings and annotations thus serve as indirect evidence of an important feature of “Scout”: the depiction of a modern war in the anachronistic framework of a chivalric romance, with the name “Mosby” repeated with the power of a refrain behind it.

Third, “Scout” is characterized by a simple dramatic incident: a Union cavalry expedition against Mosby. The action, the foray of a scouting party, also reflects the epic dimension of a ballad in that the action proceeds slowly and episodically. In addition, “Scout” depends on another condition

also applying in the popular ballad, where “the larger the scope of human interest and experience, the greater the success of the poem” (Gayley and Kurtz 424). This large scope is indicated by Melville’s closing remark in the “Supplement” that expresses his prayer for “Progress and Humanity” (Melville, “Supplement” 188).

Finally, I wish to reconsider the pair of the Colonel and the Major in light of the use of ballad conventions in the poem. They are often considered in light of the contrast between youth and old.²¹ Furthermore, it might be true, as Garner points out, that the Colonel can be considered “an innocent, unmaimed Ahab” while the major plays a role of “a respectful but skeptical Starbuck” (Garner 320). Here, however, I would like to emphasize that the Colonel–Major pair, “like sire and son” (*PP* 145: 218), constitute a key part of the conventional frame of the ballad romance. As already mentioned, the Colonel is the central character, the archetypal chivalric knight: “Mounted and armed he sits a king” (*PP* 140: 51). However, he does not entirely fit the image of an epic, victorious hero who represents a country. He is ambitious; but, unlike the real Lowell, he is inexperienced and “boyish” (*PP* 140: 54). The Colonel is then paired/contrasted with a more prudent, experienced combatant, the “grizzled” (*PP* 145: 216), middle-aged, veteran Major who makes up for the Colonel’s lack of nobility.²² Thus, the relations of the Colonel and the Major, which can be characterized in terms of the archetypal relation of knight and squire, are worthy of attention.

In view of these balladic aspects, we can recognize that for Melville in “Scout” the ballad genre is a useful frame for hybrid content: the lyric description of an epic event. In the poem, Melville describes the terrors and

suffering caused by Mosby's rangers, and the Colonel's efforts to combat him, through a lens at once personal and national, reflecting the terrible historic tragedy of the Civil War; and one of his major tools for doing so is the distancing melodic refrain. I wish to finally add that the war and the mythologized figure of Mosby also heighten the popular ballad's atmosphere and appeal.²³ Melville uses the anachronism of the ballad as a means of expressing subjective feeling evoked by the events and conditions of the day, that is to say, of discharging repressed emotions in the modern age. In this respect, Melville's idiosyncratic preference for and innovative use of the ballad is one of the most outstanding features of his later career. Consequently, "The Scout toward Aldie" is worth examining as a landmark ballad romance of Melville's later poetic career.

My primary concern in this chapter was to shed new light on "The Scout toward Aldie" by proposing that the poem depicts an uncertain future for the Union and an uncertain outcome for Reconstruction, using an archetypal chivalric ballad romance form characterized by nuptial and maritime analogies.

In "The Scout toward Aldie," the sea is a dominant image, though only implicitly represented. It functions essentially as a central metaphor for wartime's malign, evil power as exemplified by the figure of Mosby, at once personal and impersonal. Mosby turns our attention to how Melville folds personal tragedy or grief into a national narrative of historic tragedy. From a microcosmic point of view, the Civil War becomes not an epic, but a story of an individual's life and death. The blend of lyric and epic might also suggest that war's eruptions and disasters seem most spectacular when

they are most personal.

The epic dimension of "Scout" can be seen in both its theme and its form. The poem narrates the real-life partisan warfare waged by Mosby (and by extension, his Confederacy). Melville frames the narrative in the archetypal terms of a chivalric romance. Melville also uses a nuptial image alluding to reunion, but in a subversive way. This image penetrates both the individual and the national narrative, and projects a double plot: the story of the love and death of a honeymooning couple's too-brief marriage; but also a story of sentimental reunion displaced onto the Colonel and Mosby. These two plots are linked by Mosby's assumption of a feminized role. Rather than focusing on the breakup of a newlywed couple or the seemingly homoerotic relation between the Colonel and Mosby, we have instead concentrated on the symbolic relations between Mosby as a Confederate bride and the Colonel as a Union bridegroom. Thus, while the tragic story of the Colonel and his bereaved wife conveys the sorrows of Civil War widows, the patriarchal Colonel's defeat by the Mosby illuminates Melville's vision of the fate of the Union in the postwar era and the failure of Reconstruction.

One of Melville's chief accomplishments in "Scout" is the integration of personal wartime pathos into the historic national tragedy of the Civil War through the displacement of the nuptial analogy onto the ambivalent relation between the Union (the Colonel) and the Confederacy (Mosby). By presenting the grieving widow as an image underlying the historic battle, the poem helps us recognize that the abolition of slavery or the unity of the State are not the only potential outcomes of battle. In "Scout," Melville first employs the ballad form to associate the terrible historical narrative of the Civil War with a personal tragedy caused by it. Thus, the use of the balladic

romance style to relate the story of “The Scout toward Aldie” can be taken as Melville’s way of launching a marriage between the lyric and the epic, which he will pursue throughout the following years.

Chapter 4

Toward a Pre-Modern Paradise: An Outsider's Poetics in Melville's "John Marr"

An Outsider's Perspective

In this chapter, I aim to examine how Melville rhetorically uses prose and poetry beyond the confines of literary genres in "John Marr" from his third published volume of poetry, *John Marr and Other Sailors with Some Sea-Pieces* (1888). The title piece "John Marr" has previously been read, particularly in light of "monologue-narratives" (Shurr, "Melville's Poems" 359), as reflecting the condition of an elderly writer isolated from his social and political environment.¹ However, it deserves further study in light of its theme and structure as well as the interrelation between the two.

"John Marr" addresses the issue of America's pioneering history from the perspective of an ex-sailor named John Marr. In symbolic terms, he follows the Native American's experience of being dislocated by white settlers in a frontier prairie during the 1830s. Thus, the story is centered on an outsider's emotional response to civilized white pioneers. To recount the story in "John Marr," Melville combines a prose narrative and a lyric coda. The prose section describes how white pioneers exclude John Marr from their society, whereas the verse section focuses on his outpouring of subjective feelings generated by the alienation. Thus, I argue that Melville demonstrates his originality in merging the two interrelated aspects of historicity and emotionality into a single text from an outsider's

perspective.

I use the term “outsider” to describe the status of John Marr, who is portrayed as the Other marginalized from the structure of white civilized society. The prose section focuses on John Marr’s identification with the exterminated Native Americans, whereas the verse section shifts the focus of his sympathy from Native Americans to “Barbarians of man’s simple nature” (*PP* 200) who are suggestive of the original inhabitants of the South Seas. Thus, I would like to emphasize that John Marr’s perspective is dynamically extended to the celebration of a pre-modern paradise as opposed to the civilized United States, transgressing the boundary between prose and poetry. To demonstrate the significance of the dynamics beyond the generic limits, I provide a general account of Melville’s later years and then analyze in detail how John Marr is associated with the Native Americans in the prose section.

Melville in the 1880s

Throughout the 1880s, Melville devoted most of his writing time to poetry; however, little of it reached the public at that time. *John Marr* was privately printed in a limited edition of 25 copies only for relatives and a few friends. Partly for this reason, the poetry has been generally read as a “private, self-directed, and ironic art” (Dryden, “Poetry as Private Utterance” 326) written by an author forgotten by his contemporary literary world. Even a rumor of his suspected death was spread (Parker, *A Biography* II: 894). During this period, Melville was considered to lack energy and his career was thought to be in decline. For example, Raymond Weaver, a pioneering Melville scholar, devotes a chapter called “The Long Quietus”

(349–84) in his *Herman Melville: Mariner and Mystic* (1920) to discuss Melville's last decade. Weaver's assessment stuck to the subsequent critics' evaluations of Melville's reputation. For Leon Howard, *John Marr and Other Sailors* was "a book of scraps" (321). He harshly criticized Melville, accusing him of having neither the "incentive" nor the "energy" to ingeniously elaborate his works (Howard 321).

However, this view is not entirely correct. Melville's artistic production during his last decade was comparatively prolific—three volumes of poetry, some unpublished poems and prose sketches, and a posthumously published *Billy Budd, Sailor* (1924).² In addition, assessments of *John Marr* have also been significantly revised by more recent reconsiderations of Melville's compositional practices. *John Marr* is composed of three sections—four "Sailor-Poems," fourteen "Sea-Pieces," and an epigrammatic work in seven numbered sections called "Pebbles"—and features a wide variety of themes, such as alienation at sea and the fusion between past and present. William H. Shurr and Douglas Robillard note that the book displays a unity of theme, continuity of structure, and a deliberately varied tone in each poem.³ Some scholars have examined Melville's debts to William Shakespeare or Samuel Taylor Coleridge.⁴

Furthermore, contrary to the standard picture of Melville's solitary figure in the 1880s, it has been acknowledged that in *John Marr*, Melville is more committed to a public audience than a number of scholars had previously proposed.⁵ For example, it has become recognized that techniques such as using an apostrophe or a direct address clearly indicates the author's intention for his poems to be read by readers. "Far Off-Shore"

can be taken as a good example. The poem is considered as evidence of Melville's skillful use of poetic techniques and provides us with a helpful perspective from which to consider the significance of the sea in "John Marr." The poem is in two stanzas, each four lines long.

Look, the raft, a signal flying,
 Thin—a shred;
 None upon the lashed spars lying,
 Quick or dead.

Cries the sea-fowl, hovering over,
 "Crew, the crew?"
 And the billow, reckless, rover,
 Sweeps anew! (PP 229)

The quatrain shows a flawless scheme of *abab*, and the poem is written in complete rhyme. Thus, Sean Ford considers "Far Off-Shore" as "the most perfect poem" in form in *John Marr*.⁶ In the poem, Melville uses his favorite technique, duplicity. The opening enjoiner ("Look") involves readers in the scene of the poem. Although the narrator's point of view is distant from the object in his sight, he seeks to prompt the readers to observe it while limiting access to it. The expectation of the reader's participation (interaction) appears as the theme of "an imaginative urge to reach for truths that can be neither known nor expressed" (Ford 242). A form of writing, thus, is associated with the satiric and the ironic, and the notion of inaccessibility or the act of reading itself emerges as a primary theme in the poem. The last line "Sweeps anew!" suggests that the "billow" swallows ships again and again. Although Ford makes no reference to a

connection between the poem and *Moby-Dick*, I would like to highlight the adverb “anew” in the last line resonates with Ishmael’s view of life and death: “All are born with halters round their necks; but it is only when caught in *the swift, sudden turn of death*, that mortals realize the silent, subtle, *ever-present perils of life*” (*MD* 281; emphasis added).

In most of the *John Marr* poems, the sea is described as cruel, destructive of men and ships, unpredictable, alien to human beings, implacable, and inhuman (Robillard 198–99).⁷ Some poems, in contrast, depict the sea as healing and purifying, as in the final poem in “Pebbles,” and “John Marr” can be also read in this light. However, as we shall see later, Melville’s oceanic imagination in “John Marr” must be considered within a historical context.

Scholars have critically revitalized Melville’s silent years, especially by assessing his compositional practices. For example, Agnes D. Cannon remarks that “[a]s Melville’s sense of the complexity of life increases, and his artistic purposes heighten, the significance of his use of ballads deepens” (Cannon “Melville’s Use” 10). Wyn Kelly observes that Melville “seems to have explored a new way to tell stories that was neither wholly prose nor wholly lyric” (Kelly 160), bringing about “an organic relationship between prose and poetic narrative” in which “the prose explains, frames, but also gives way to the poem” (Kelly 162). In recent years, Robert Sandberg has classified such writing as the prose-and-verse writing that Melville performed in his later years from “John Marr” through *Billy Budd*.⁸ It may be true that Melville’s last decade was characterized by the binary composition defined by the “rhetorical ineluctability” (231) of thematic interrelations between the introductory narrative prose and the concluding

dramatic verse.

However, my primary concern here is to offer different perspectives than those given by previous scholars. First, although Kelly discusses “John Marr” from the perspective of “Melville’s innovative uses of *prose*” (Kelly 161; emphasis added), I would rather focus on his innovative uses of *poetry*. Second, I discuss this issue particularly in terms of a ballad. If, as Cannon argues, Melville was becoming more and more preoccupied with a ballad in his later years, it is highly likely that Melville’s prose-and-verse writing emerged in parallel with the innovative use of a ballad. In fact, as generally acknowledged, Melville’s *Billy Budd* is enlarged from a ballad into the final composition of a long prose headnotes attached with the concluding dramatic verse through a series of revisions.⁹ This compositional practice clearly demonstrates that Melville’s prose-and-verse writing is synonymous with an *extended ballad*. Both the prose and verse sections are associated with epic and lyrical aspects because both sections are parts of a ballad that contains the two different dimensions. Consequently, Melville’s innovative use of a ballad makes it possible to align poetry with prose in the same work beyond their generic differences.

In “John Marr,” Melville launches his new poetic practices of *prose-and-verse* writing through innovative uses of the ballad. With respect to the form, a previous critic notes that “John Marr” is a “vague anticipation of *Billy Budd*” (Buell 149). Parker also indicates the link between “John Marr” and *Billy Budd* in a similar way (Parker, *A Biography* II: 883). However, I argue that “John Marr” can be considered a prototype of *Billy Budd* because these works seek to convey the intense experience of subjects oppressed under the modern civilized society. Thus, “John Marr” deserves

more attention than it has previously received. *Billy Budd* is not necessarily a casual return to moderately long prose fiction but is a direct result of “John Marr.” With this in mind, I examine how the character of John Marr responds to the white civilized pioneers who displace him from their society.

Encounter with Civilized Landsmen

The prose section of “John Marr” recounts the story of John Marr’s encounter with white pioneers. He is a middle-aged sailor-poet, “born in America of a mother unknown,” “swarthy, and black-browed” (*PP* 195). After he retires to a provincial, landlocked Midwestern town, he earns a living as a carpenter. There he marries but his young wife and infant child die (the causes remain hidden). He buries them by himself and decides to settle there, hoping to cultivate “social relations” (196) with his neighbors. John Marr wishes to share his experiences at sea with neighbor pioneers; however, they are not at all interested in his story. Thus, John Marr is excluded by the white landsmen who do not understand his past experience and the value of a sailor’s life. Isolated from those around him, John Marr mourns not only his personal losses but also the loss of wilderness resulting from progressing civilization. John Marr’s isolation cannot be remedied by land-dwellers. This is exactly why he reminisces about his past and turns to “retrospective musings” (198) on his former shipmates. John Marr tries to conjure his former companion sailors, and his memory of “shadowy fellowship” (200) in a lyric coda. Through striving to reconstruct his former life, the past and his old shipmates become real to him, and the story ends with the sixty-two line verse section.

The most notable peculiarity in “John Marr” is that John Marr figuratively follows the Native American’s experience of encountering white pioneers. To my knowledge, Yukiko Oshima is the only scholar who directly discusses the issue of Native Americans in “John Marr” to demonstrate Melville’s view of the state at that time. It may be true, as she persuasively argues, that “John Marr” subversively dislocates the national ideology of white people that alleged the superiority of Western civilization over Native Americans to promote the westward exploitation.¹⁰ However, we are more concerned with how the Native Americans’ perspective varies in accordance with the compositional change. To discuss this matter, we need to consider to some degree the effect of the analogy between John Marr and Native Americans in the prose section, for the concluding verse emerges as a result of John Marr’s alienation from white civilized society on a frontier prairie. On the contrary, a detailed observation of John Marr’s response to white settlers will provide a perspective from which we can consider how John Marr presents his view on the fallaciousness of civilization in his verse.

When considering this issue, Lucy Maddox’s *Removals* (1991) is perhaps the most helpful book-length study of nineteenth-century American authors and the politics of Indian affairs in their works. Although Maddox does not discuss “John Marr,” the book, and her chapter on Melville in particular, can still serve as an informative guide for our discussion.

According to Maddox, most nineteenth-century writers participated in “a discourse that would eliminate or submerge oppositions” (Maddox 8), that is, a discourse of marginalizing Native Americans as if they were doomed to extinction even though they still survived. Melville, however,

does not directly deal with the binary argument of civilization or extinction with respect to Native Americans. Instead, to demonstrate how Native Americans had been culturally forced into silence, Melville addresses the “lie of emptiness” both by acknowledging the significance of the silence and by attempting to integrate it into “his revised version of the American story” (Maddox 52–53). Melville distrusted the effort to “supply a history or biography, even a mythic history, for those people whose real lives had remained inaccessible to white Americans, for whatever reason” (Maddox 57).

In his major writings, such as his first novel *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846), “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (1853), and “Benito Cereno” (1855), Melville represents confident white Americans who become deeply disturbed by the silent Other. By doing so, Melville provides a critical account of white Americans’ response to the encounter with the silent Other, that is, white Americans’ impulse to supply “a history or biography, even a mythic history” (Maddox 57). Thus, those texts demonstrate quite clearly that the silent Other remains inaccessible to white Americans.

Notably, however, what distinguishes “John Marr” as much as anything else from the other subversive texts mentioned above is that it is written from the perspective of the marginalized Other, especially Native Americans. In “John Marr,” Melville takes Native Americans’ side to offer a perspective from which we can consider their response when they encounter the Other. In short, Melville’s originality in “John Marr” addresses the issue of Native Americans from the perspective of the marginalized Other who encounters confident white Americans. We need to pay special attention to

this previously overlooked perspective. Significantly, however, Melville does not adopt Native Americans' viewpoint to give them a voice. Therefore, the process or vision inherently accentuated by the outsider's perspective through which we can examine civilized society is at stake.

The Double Images of John Marr and Native Americans

As Maddox observes, Melville is clearly "sympathetic with his primitives and incensed at the treatment they have frequently received from European intruders" (58). The third-person narrator in "John Marr" also undoubtedly sympathizes with native tribes and considers them and John Marr as relatively homogeneous. Not that John Marr is completely identified with them, but they share at least an important characteristic: the status of outsiders who are forced to be assimilated into the civilized American grain but do not fit into the social fabric. John Marr maintains this status in the verse section.

The narrator represents John Marr with obscure imagery of Native Americans dislocated from the structures of white American society. This analogy is provided by the introduction of John Marr at the story's beginning, as in the following passage:

After a variety of *removals*, at first as a sailmaker from seaport to seaport, then adventurously inland as a rough bench-carpenter, he [John Marr], finally, in the last-named capacity, settles down about the year 1838 upon what was then a frontier-prairie, sparsely sprinkled with small oak-groves and yet fewer log-houses of a little colony but recently from one of our elder inland States. Here, putting a period to his roving, he

marries. (*PP* 195; emphasis added)

This quotation shows that the narrator subtly attempts to connect John Marr with Native Americans, not white pioneers, employing the rhetoric of American history. Above all, as Oshima indicates, the word “removals” inevitably reminds us of the Indian Removal Act adopted by President Andrew Jackson on May 28, 1830.¹¹ Judging from the time setting, “a war waged by the Red Men for their native soil and natural rights” (*PP* 197) can be seen as the Black Hawk War in 1832, which was a conflict between the United States and Native Americans led by Black Hawk, a Sauk leader.¹² In addition, the exploitation coincided with the publicly neglected persecution conducted against Native Americans during the late 1830s, whose site is generally recognized as the “Trail of Tears.” Thus, the specific time setting of 1838 seems to be evidence of Melville’s clear vision to portray John Marr in a specific context highlighting the white civilization’s encroachment that caused the extermination of Native Americans.

In this historical context, the narrator emphasizes John Marr’s sympathy toward a perished tribe called the “Mound-Builders” twice in the prose section (*PP* 195, 197). The first time is when John Marr buries his beloved family not far from where “the Mound-Builders of a race only conjecturable” (195) had left their pottery and bones, implying that John Marr feels kinship with the tribe. The second time is when John Marr reflects on “a durable mark” that “the perished Mound-Builders” had left; therefore, the narrator contrasts the tribe’s remnant with “the apathy of Nature” of pioneers (197). However, the narrator does not necessarily express strong criticism against white settlers’ indifference to John Marr or to nature.

On the basis of sympathetic resonance between John Marr and the perished tribe, the narrator sharpens the contrast between those two and white settlers. Through references to its historical background, the prose narrative focuses on an ever-widening chasm between seamen and landmen (white pioneers): John Marr is “obstructed” in the frontier-prairie; “the past of John Marr was not the past of these pioneers. Their hands had rested on the plough-tail; his upon the ship’s helm”; John Marr finds that pioneers “knew but their own kind and their own usages”; landmen were “a staid people; staid through habituation to monotonous hardship” (*PP* 196). Among these contrasts, John Marr’s unwelcome situation in the frontier-prairie is most clearly presented in the following quotation.

They [pioneers] were kindly at need, after their fashion. But to a man wonted—as John Marr in his previous homeless sojournings could not but have been—to the free-and-easy tavern-clubs affording cheap recreation of an evening in certain old and comfortable sea-port towns of that time, and yet more familiar with the companionship afloat of the sailors of the same period, something was lacking. That something was *geniality, the flower of life* springing from some sense of joy in it, more or less. (*PP* 196; emphasis added)

This passage seems to express opposition to white settlers’ assumed superiority to native tribes by regarding the hard-working pioneers as lacking “geniality, the flower of life” (196).

Indeed, the narrator’s eye, which is critical of landmen in this passage, might be significant even when considering Melville’s frequent critique on the fallaciousness of Christian civilization in other writings, as

already mentioned. However, the narrator's overall tone does not express strong criticism against white settlers' indifference to John Marr as directly or harshly as in the earlier prose fictions mentioned already; rather, he describes the frontier prairie society, without "the flower of life" (*PP* 196), in an ironic way. From the perspective of outsiders who encounter white pioneers, the narrator only observes the inland social system that excludes outsiders while maintaining a slight distance from it. John Marr tends to think about the real meaning of the dead rather than the living. Therefore, he leaves behind the prosaic world of landsmen and returns to his beloved sea, though only in his imagination.

Inner Seascape: The Concluding Verse

As the prose narrative proceeds toward the lyric coda, the narrative that recounts the history of prairie pioneers intergrades into the sea narrative. This transition corresponds to John Marr's inner change. Because of alienation from the pioneers, he turns inward, and his mind comes to dwell on life at sea. The narrator writes that "a double exodus of man and beast left the plain a desert," and the prairie reminds John Marr of the sea. Thus, John Marr perceives the unmarked frontier-prairie as an ocean floor; "Blank stillness" and uninhibitedness are emphasized by his murmur, "It is the bed of a dried-up sea." The inland is empty of the stir of life ("the flower of life") that, in contrast, characterizes the sea. For John Marr, the "prairie-schooner" doubles as a sea vessel, and "the long green graduated swells" are as "smooth as those of ocean." The "glistening white canvas of the wagon" resembles "a far sail at sea" (*PP* 197–98).

As a result of these gradual shifts from landscape to inner seascape,

not only does the content change its focus from historical to lyrical narrative, but also John Marr assumes the narrator's position in the lyric coda. In addition, Melville's perspective comes closer to John Marr's. As already mentioned, the prose narrative focuses on the existence of an ever-widening chasm between John Marr and landmen in the Midwestern prairie, although the narrator does not directly criticize the civilized white pioneers nor does he supply a critical voice for John Marr. In contrast, the concluding verse focuses on the idealization of sailors' communion and John Marr's intense personal feelings caused by his displacement from the structure of white civilized society.

The untitled concluding verse is composed of sixty-two lines in seven stanzas. Most lines have end rhymes, though without regularity. Thus, they do not necessarily create an impression of unity throughout the poem's entirety. As Robillard observes, one of the primary sources of the dramatic verse is John Marr's "inland widower-hood and isolation" (Robillard 23). How then does John Marr express his grief in his verse? No critical attention has been paid to this issue in light of a poetic practice. Thus, I will analyze in detail how John Marr handles such a personal emotion by means of the rhetorical mode of poetry.

Poetic Practices

Living far from his beloved sea and his shipmates, John Marr attempts to remedy his isolation through retrospective musings on his shipmates, shown typically by his frequent use of the second-person pronoun. In invoking the visionary figure of his shipmates, John Marr repeats the second-person pronoun (including *ye*, *you*, *your*) as many as twenty-one

times. Thus, by reading the lyric coda with a focus on the second-person pronoun, I wish to examine how John Marr attempts to achieve reunion with long-separated sailor friends and how the relation between *you* and *I* develops.

The first stanza frames the stage where John Marr invokes the ghostly figures of his shipmates.

Since as in night's deck-watch ye show,

Why, lads, so silent here to me,

Your watchmate of times long ago? (*PP* 199)

The lyric poet begins this stanza by emphasizing the quiet figures of shipmates. In particular, the image of night in the first line (“night’s deck-watch”) is appropriate for evoking an image of his shipmates as “phantoms of the dead.” Some must be dead by this time, and others might be alive, but all of them are dead to him at least, because he is separated from them. Thus, John Marr’s shipmates essentially maintain a ghostly silence, but only when they are described in the present tense. However, when John Marr recollects them in the past tense, they are not mute, as in the next stanza.

The second stanza differs from others in that the present tense of verbs is not used; this stanza exclusively treats John Marr’s memory of the past, and here, the second-person pronouns appear most frequently.

Once, for all the darkling sea,

You your voices raised how clearly,

Striking in when tempest sung;

Hoisting up the storms-sail cheerly,

Life is storm:—let storm! you rung.

Taking things as fated merely,
 Child-like though the world ye spanned;
 Nor holding unto life too dearly,
 Ye who held your lives in hand;
 Skimmers, who on oceans four

Petrels were, and larks ashore. (*PP* 199; italics in original)

An earlier critic reads this stanza in reference to Melville's discontent with Christian faith (Stein 23–24). However, my deepest interest here is the effect of sounds conveyed in the past tense. Melville's skillful use of the past tense is evidenced by revision of this stanza in the final draft from "Ye who *hold* your lives in hand" to "Ye who *held* your lives in hand" (*PP* 688; emphasis added). Obviously, in contrast to the silent present, the past is full of sounds: "your voices raised how clearly," "tempest sung," and "you rung."

Along with these sounds, the second stanza also depicts a dynamic relation between sailors and nature. One of the most notable lines of this dynamism is the motto John Marr enunciates: "*Life is storm:—let storm!*" As we have seen in the prose preface, John Marr only casts an ironic eye on pioneers who are far from being in such a dynamic relation with people and nature because of their lack of "the flower of life springing from some sense of joy" (196). It seems that through this motto, the stanza essentially seeks to idealize the spirit of brotherhood John Marr experienced and the geniality, or "the flower of life." In this sense, although John Marr's personal alienation from civilized society and his grief for the loss of his family are both sources of the verse's creation, the lyric coda becomes more than personal grief or nostalgic elegy: John Marr's consciousness gradually

seems to expand to include *you*, the community of sailors.

In response to John Marr's frequent use of apostrophe, in the third stanza, his shipmates come to enfold him. We need to pay careful attention to the tenses here.

O, not from memory lightly *flung*,
Forgot, like strains no more availing,
 The heart to music haughtier *strung*;
 Nay, frequent near me, never staling,
 Whose good feeling *kept* ye young.
 Like tides that *enter* creek or stream,
 Ye *come*, ye *visit* me; or *seem*
 Swimming out from seas of faces,
 Alien myriads memory *traces*,
 To *enfold* me in a dream! (*PP* 199; emphasis added)

This stanza epitomizes one of Melville's poetic practices in the following three respects. First, it is crucial that the reunion is achieved through the creative use of verbs. John Marr attempts to re-establish close relations with his old shipmates through the rhetorical method of the past tense and the present tense. He uses the past tense and past participles (*flung*, *forgot*, *strung*, *kept*) in the first half of the stanza whereas the present tense (*enter*, *come*, *visit*, *seem*, *traces*, *enfold*) in the second half. The shift from the past tense to the present tense clearly indicates John Marr's awareness of bringing his old shipmates, "phantoms of the dead," from the distant past to the closer present. Notably, John Marr also uses the first-person pronoun (including *me*, *I*, and *mine*) only in lines with the present tense throughout the verse.¹³ This might be partly because the

first-person narrator, John Marr, is alive. In short, his use of the personal pronouns and the present tense verbs reflects his consciousness of distinction between *I*/present and *you*/past.

Second, when John Marr envisions fusion with his former shipmates, he also transforms the gap in time, to a gap in distance. His shipmates, separated in time, move steadily toward him in a geographical image, particularly, in the image of the sea (“Like tides that enter creek or stream, / Ye come, ye visit me; or seem / Swimming out from seas of faces”). The transformation of metaphor seems to be associated with the third and final point.

Finally, the third stanza is one of the most important parts of the poem because it features the sea image, a central metaphor in Melville’s writing. The last four lines in the third stanza mean that John Marr’s long-separated shipmates come to enfold him. His feeling of being enfolded, which is achieved through the metaphor of the sea, awakens his sense of solidarity in the fourth stanza, which is told in the past tense: “Twined we were, entwined” (199).

Indeed, the sea serves as a metaphor evoking a feeling of immediacy about reunion and a sense of reality more substantial than his present circumstances. As Robert A. Lee argues, the sea’s primary function in “John Marr” is to provide “the remembering stage” upon which he can invoke the phantoms of his spiritual companions, “the one vast aide-mémoire” (Lee 111). However, when read with reference to the figure of “Barbarians” (*PP* 200) in the fifth stanza, the sea image in “John Marr” proves to be specifically associated with the celebration of an utterly silent world or a pre-modern paradise in the South Seas.

Celebration of a Pre-Modern Paradise

The two most distinctive stanzas are the third and the fifth. While the third expresses the sea image as mentioned above, the fifth stanza reveals that sailors have the double image of phantoms of the dead and barbarians:

Nor less, as now, in eve's decline,
 Your shadowy fellowship is mine.
 Ye float around me, form and feature:—
Tattooings, ear-rings, love-locks curled;
Barbarians of man's simpler nature,
 Unworldly servers of the world.
 Yea, present all, and dear to me,
 Though shades, or scouring China's sea. (*PP* 200; emphasis

added)

This stanza might evidence sympathetic resonance between sailors and the marginalized Other in modern civilized society. The fourth and fifth lines in the stanza have drawn the attention of only a few critics. William B. Stein, for instance, remarks that the “primal innocence of man is inviolable at least in the nostalgic perspective of boredom and old age” (24). A. Robert Lee observes that each sailor's accessories—“Tattooings, ear-rings, love-locks curled”—represent both barbarian and sailordom in “a homocentric image” (113) of human shades. Oshima presents a more detailed reading, arguing that tattoos and locks of hair recall Native Americans (Oshima 495–96).

Although John Marr does not clarify which tribes “Barbarians of man's simpler nature” refer to, I would like to emphasize that they are

suggestive of the original inhabitants of the South Pacific Marquesas Islands, such as the Polynesians Melville describes in *Typee* and its sequel, *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Sea* (1847). In Chapter 22 of *Typee*, for example, Melville depicts a tattooed old warrior named Marheyo as in the following:

The old warrior himself was arranging in round balls *the two grey locks of hair* that were suffered to grow from the crown of his head; his *earrings* and spear, both well polished, lay beside him, while the highly decorative pair of shoes hung suspended from a projecting cane against the side of the house. (*TP* 160; emphasis added)

Marheyo's appearance is identical to the figure of barbarians in John Marr's mind except that Marheyo's locks of hair are not curled. In *Omoo*, Melville devotes all of Chapter 8 ("The Tattooers of la Dominica") to the description of tattooing as a barbarous practice of native tribes in the South Seas.

Furthermore, tattoos also remind us of the pagan harpooner Queequeg in *Moby-Dick*, who is a native of the fictional island "Rokovoko" in the South Sea (*MD* 55). Thus, barbarians in John Marr's mind are indicative of these uncivilized characters in the South Seas.

However, we should ask why John Marr imagines these barbarians of "man's simpler nature" in this stanza. In "John Marr," barbarians emerge in John Marr's mind as principal figures appropriate for the idealization of sailordom from the perspective of an outsider who cannot fit into the social fabric in the modern, civilized age. In the following section, I will demonstrate that we can construct such a historical narrative from John Marr's verse by focusing on the term "barbarians" and John Marr's

outsider's position. In doing so, we can understand that the verse is at once personal and historical, that is, lyric and epic.

The term *barbarian* is chosen because of its thematic value.

Barbarians are appropriate for describing John Marr's insight into the fallaciousness of civilization, which marginalized them from the structure of civilized society as in the prose narrative. Certainly, the image of shades lies at the center of the analogy between barbarians and John Marr's former shipmates as phantoms of the dead. The word *shade* denotes *phantom*, thus linking the two. Above all, I would like to stress that John Marr seems to be almost a phantom himself: he has roamed around on land, unable to settle at first, and when he does, his neighbors figuratively sense *kill* him by not listening to him and displacing him from the civilized society. In this sense, "John Marr" is a story of a ghost-like John Marr who invokes his phantom companions as a reminder of barbarians, another shaded figure, who are alienated from the civilized world. In this literal sense, innocent barbarians are familiar to John Marr, although they are absent and unknown, because they are similarly dislocated from white civilized society and forced to the universality of death.

John Marr does not use the sentimental allusion to barbarians as a vanishing tribe, such as Native Americans, who are doomed to extinction because of civilization. Rather, he celebrates the innocence of the original inhabitants of the South Seas with his cynical eye on civilized society. The white pioneers in "John Marr" are proud of their material progress in civilization; therefore, they feel superior to John Marr and displace him from the structure of civilized society. Nevertheless, John Marr does not make a critical remark about the white settlers' indifferent attitudes toward

him but instead turns his back to the inland, thus returning to the sea. In his imagination, the sea becomes the medium connecting his deceased shipmates with the original inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, who are the marginalized Others in the civilized modern age. The innocence of barbarians is to some degree analogous to Tahiti, which Melville employs as a metaphor of innocence in his earlier novel *Moby-Dick* (1851). He calls Tahiti a “verdant” land full of peace of joy in “the soul of man,” which is about to be lost because of civilization (*MD* 274).

It is important to note here that his celebration of the innocence of uncivilized inhabitants in the South Seas is clearly one of the principal themes that characterize Melville’s later poetry. For example, in “To Ned,” one of the poems in *John Marr*, nostalgia for the good old seafaring life in the South Sea is inextricably linked to a critique of modern civilized life and the idealization of the Marquesas Islands as “Authentic Edens in a Pagan sea” (*PP* 237).¹⁴ In “The Archipelago,” a quatrain in six stanzas in privately published poetry within *Timoleon* (1891), the poet also advocates an emphasis on Edenic islands: “’Tis Polynesia reft of palms, / Seaward no valley breathes her balms— / Not such as musk thy rings of calms, / Marquesas!” (*PP* 308). Furthermore, in *Billy Budd*, Melville ends the story with a ballad made by his fellow sailors to embrace the Polynesian-like innocence of Billy, “the young barbarian” (*BB* 12), in relation to the historical background.

In this regard, the lines wherein John Marr imagines “Barbarians of man’s simpler nature” implicitly represent Melville’s rebellious eyes on modern Western civilization. In this sense, John Marr’s retrospective musings become more than his personal elegy: his verse is both individual

and, in part, historical. From a macroscopic point of view, “John Marr” might appear to be characterized by the “dynamics of memory” (Lee 106) of a middle-aged ex-sailor. From a microscopic point of view, however, John Marr’s act of evoking the pagan figure of barbarians should be considered not only as his personal nostalgia for his sea-going past but also as the celebration of, or a historical nostalgia for, a Polynesian-like Eden.

In the prose section, Melville gives John Marr the role of following the Native Americans’ experience of being displaced from white civilized society to demonstrate how they are marginalized by the white pioneers. This historical dimension is in the foreground in the prose section but in the background in the verse section that addresses John Marr’s intense personal experience. Thus, reading the two different sections with reference to one another enhances the significance both of epic and lyrical aspects—a historical narrative and intense subjective experience.

In terms of content, prose and verse are consequently associated with one another beyond generic differences. Although “John Marr” is divided into prose and poetry, it is intended to assimilate them into a single *prose-and-verse* composition through the rhetorical mode of lyric and epic poetry. This composition seems to reflect Melville’s wish to align poetry with prose. In this composition, Melville uses the ballad to pursue a coherent strategy for bringing lyric and epic materials together to assess both the historical record and the value of the subjects’ experiences. Thus, the rhetorical method of a *prose-and-verse* writing is inseparably related to the innovative use of a ballad that is at once epic and lyric. John Marr is central to the investigation of the interrelation between the two. “John Marr” describes not only how white civilized society marginalizes him but also

how he expresses the intense subjective experience of being marginalized. For this reason, a reassessment of his outsider's perspective will help us clarify the rhetorical composition of a *prose-and-verse* form. After "John Marr," Melville stuck to the celebration of a Polynesian Eden or barbarous outsiders in his later years. This registration of an ideal pagan innocence, particularly in his *prose-and-verse* writing composed of the rhetoric use of a ballad, is one of Melville's creative achievements.

Toward *Billy Budd*

"John Marr" shifts its setting from the frontier prairie to the sea. In accordance with the shift, the narrative focus also shifts from an ironic historical narrator in the prose headnote to a lyrical, first-person narrator in the concluding verse. The prose introduction briefly outlines the history of pioneers, and the concluding verse focuses on the narrative of John Marr's subjective feeling, the idealization of oceanic brotherhood, or the submerged sentimentality of an ex-sailor poet. However, both sections are associated with the epic and lyrical dimensions. While Melville deliberately uses an analogy between John Marr and Native Americans, he compares John Marr's long-separated sailors and barbarians as shaded figures who stand outside the structure of white civilized society. The essential feature that connects John Marr and Native Americans/barbarians is the outsiders who are killed or forced to be displaced from the structure of the white civilized society.

John Marr is excluded by the white landmen who do not understand his past experience and the value of a sailor's life. In this respect, his status is parallel to that of the Native Americans. In the verse, by comparing his

old shipmates with barbarians, he celebrates sailors' bonded intimacy and the value of the pre-modern pagan paradise of the original inhabitants in the South Seas. Although John Marr himself is a white man born in America, his perspective has strong affinity with these outsiders who are marginalized in the modern age.

The analogy between the two is suggestive of Melville's serial, broader concerns for the celebration of the pre-modern paradise. Melville's originality in "John Marr" is that he connects historical narrative with an expression of personal feeling through an outsider's perspective in the historical background. Thus, a reconsideration of the rhetorical mode of binary composition in "John Marr" from the marginalized outsider's poetics makes it clear that "John Marr" constitutes the initial stage in Melville's creative progress toward *Billy Budd*.

Chapter 5

Epic and Lyric:

Melville's Use of the Folk Ballad in *Billy Budd*

Melville's posthumous novella, *Billy Budd, Sailor* (1924), stands out from the others in that the narrative prose attached, as in "John Marr," to the concluding verse is exceptionally enlarged from an original short introductory headnote through a series of revisions.¹ However, since the criticisms of *Billy Budd* began with E. L. Grant Watson's 1933 essay, "Melville's Testament of Acceptance," the critical attention has been focused extensively in thematic terms on Melville's intentions as revelatory of either conservative or liberal sympathies. Captain Vere has long been a center of controversy, and most scholars have addressed political issues related to the military code, especially in the polarized reading of Vere's decision to sentence Billy to death by hanging.²

However, we can reexamine the "rhetorical ineluctability of their thematic and dramatic interrelations" (Sandberg 231) that characterizes Melville's prose-and-verse writing. Considering that Melville deliberately chose the binary form appropriate for his final work, we can even propose that his prose-and-verse works "might then be best understood as the literary products of his experimenting with various types of mixed-form writing" (Sandberg 230).

Keeping this point in mind, this chapter focuses on the analysis of a ballad "Billy in the Darbies" to examine the rhetorical coherence of the epic

and the lyric in *Billy Budd*. When considering the interrelation between the epic and the lyric, I will introduce the notion of the ballad as being connected with the two modes of poetry. The ballad is connected with lyrical elements in that it is a song and an expression of an emotion, but at the same time, it is never unrelated to epical elements in that it contains history, myth, or story. Additionally, through reading the closing ballad with reference to the prose section, or more specifically, a pseudo-factual account in *News from the Mediterranean*, I will reveal that Melville reconstructs British justice in light of American cultural perspective. In terms of the dynamics of prose and poetry, Melville seems to use the ballad as an assertion of personal truth against an authorized, non-poetical publication.

Melville and Ballads

First, it would be helpful to consider Agnes D. Cannon's "Melville's Use of Sea Ballads and Songs" (1964). Presumably, this essay is the first detailed study of Melville's engagement with the ballad that provided us with a basis for understanding how Melville learned about the folk ballad and how he employed it in his works.

As Cannon examines in the essay, Melville learned about folk ballads and songs chiefly during his years at sea, either from hearing them sung by his fellow sailors or from the books that were popular during the nineteenth century (Cannon, "Sea Ballads and Songs" 1–4).³ One example is *The Poems and Ballads* written by J. C. F. Schiller, Melville's favorite philosopher and poet. Melville acquired the book in 1849 (Sealts 90–91), and his heavy markings in the copy show his particular concern with the

ballad.⁴ In fact, his strong interest in balladry is evidenced by his three sequential novels at that time: *Mardi* (1849), *Redburn* (1849), and *White-Jacket* (1850).

For example, in his third novel *Mardi*, Melville first tests generic limits by putting ballads into prose narrative and creates a minor character named Ned Ballad, who is a song-singing sailor aboard the *Arcturion*. In his fourth novel *Redburn*, Melville also describes sailor ballad-singers who sing their verses and beg people to buy printed copies of them (Chapter 39), which is a realistic description of traditional ballad makers—one of whom I will mention later in detail. Moreover, his fifth novel *White-Jacket* centers on a famous ballad-singer sailor named Jack Chase. Chase was modeled on a real person (John J. Chase), an intelligent English Captain of the Maintop with whom Melville served aboard the U. S. frigate *United States* between 1843 and 1844 (Parker, *A Biography* I: 271). Melville consulted his memory of Chase when he sketched the personality of Jack Roy in his later poem “Jack Roy”—a poem in his third volume of poetry, *John Marr and Other Sailors With Some Sea-Pieces* (1888). He also dedicated *Billy Budd*, the last novel that “he was working on when he died” (Parker, *A Biography* I: 303), to Jack Chase. Thus, there is no doubt that Chase remained one of the major figures who were invoked in Melville’s mind when he wrote about sailors of a man-of-war in relation to balladry even at the very end of his life. In fact, Cannon pays special attention to Chase and Billy as two “talented singers” (“Sea Ballads and Songs” 4) among Melville’s heroes.⁵

This evidence indicates that after *Mardi*, Melville had a continuing interest in ballads throughout his life. Above all, we should pay particular attention to his 1860 voyage to San Francisco on the clipper the *Meteor*.

Melville took many books of ballads and songs with him on the voyage, including his favorite, Schiller's *The Poems and Ballads* (Parker, *A Biography* II: 434). One of the most important ballads Melville took on the *Meteor* was *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), a collaboration by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth. Melville admired both of them. He read Wordsworth's *Complete Poetical Works* containing *Lyrical Ballads* in 1860 (Melville, *PP* 871) when he composed his first published volume of poems, *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866). Thomas F. Heffernan's "Melville and Wordsworth" (1977) first examined Wordsworth's literary influence on Melville and noted that Melville read many of Wordsworth's poems in the early 1850s (Heffernan 340). Unfortunately, though, their relationship in terms of the use of ballads has still not received enough attention.

The crucial point of the similarity between Melville and Wordsworth in *Lyrical Ballads* is the innovative use of the ballad. As John Blades notes in *Wordsworth and Coleridge* (2004), during the rising tide of print culture, the fashion in 1790s magazine writing was "the literary ballad with vivid storylines and character" (232). Like traditional folk ballads, this trend of art ballads in the 1790s is clearly exemplified by the long narrative in Coleridge's ballad "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," the opening poem of the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* published in 1798. Charles Mills Gayley and Kurtz Putnam Kurtz consider the poems to be "splendid transformations of the ballad" that "approach the popular form" (Gayley and Kurtz 443). The 658-line ballad relates the experiences of a sailor who has returned from a long voyage and explores a violation of nature and the resulting psychological effects on the mariner.

Because Melville refers to “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” in describing the whiteness of the whale in Chapter 41 of *Moby-Dick* (1851), it is widely known that he was interested in these subject matters and the narrative of the long ballad. However, critics have not made note of the fact that when the long ballad was revised in 1817, Coleridge attached a prose note to the ballad in hopes that readers could accept its supernatural aspects. Of this point, Coleridge himself writes in *Biographia Literaria* (1817) that he bore in mind “verse-text aided by prose-comment” (Coleridge I: 48). Melville read this book on January 8, 1848 (Sealts 52). In short, we may surmise that Melville learned the idea of “verse-text aided by prose-comment” through *Biographia Literaria* in 1848, and he learned that Coleridge practiced the concept in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” Melville’s experience of reading Coleridge’s works between 1848 and 1860 suggests the possibility that he might obtain helpful hints for the organic combination of prose-headnotes and verse-text in his prose-and-verse writing.

However, Wordsworth’s influence on Melville is more important when considering the effect of *Lyrical Ballads* on the issue of reviving the use of the folk ballad. *Lyrical Ballads* is regarded as a revolutionary poetry publication mainly because it combines two quite different types of poetry—lyric and ballad. This innovative use of the ballad is greatly indebted to Wordsworth’s concept of the ballad.

As I will mention in the next section, a traditional folk ballad originally contained lyrical elements. However, as its narrative content came to the front, its subject developed an impersonal and objective aspect to be possessed as common knowledge. Blades also explains this point with

an emphasis on its narrative elements, which were to be shared among a homogeneous, non-literary people as follows:

Folk ballads had long been a strong element of the oral tradition among the poor and laboring classes, a means of preserving and transmitting a shared mythology as well as oblique political protest, drawing on legend and local folklore. (Blade 231–32)

In other words, as F. W. Bateson sums up, an essential feature of the ballad was considered “the tragic story it [the ballad] narrated,” whereas the lyric was characterized by “the out-pouring of feelings,” and thus, the folk ballad came to be recognized as mutually exclusive from the lyric (Bateson 137).

As mentioned earlier, Wordsworth restored the lyrical elements of ballads. He combined the ballad and lyric together using the ballad as a means of expressing emotion rather than a narrative. Wordsworth explains this point in his famous preface in *Lyrical Ballads*, saying that he used the ballad as a means of conveying “more pathetic situations and sentiments, that is, those which have a greater proportion of pain connected with them” (Wordsworth 264).⁶ Patrick Campbell praised this innovative fusion of two exclusive genres—lyric and ballad—by calling it an “uneasy marriage” (Campbell 41).

In this way, the late eighteenth century was a revival period for the literary ballad form. Wordsworth’s attempt to bind lyric and ballad together is frequently considered “evidence of his distrust of the conventional boundaries of poetic genres” (Parish 45). Indeed, Melville was essentially in collusion with Wordsworth in reviving the use of the ballad for conveying its lyrical tune in that Melville used ballads not only for “a part of his realist description of life at sea” but also “to indicate the state of

mind or emotional mood of his character” (Cannon, “Sea Ballads and Songs” 2). However, while Wordsworth achieved an innovative fusion of lyric and ballad, Melville used the ballad as a means of achieving a “marriage” between two other different genres: lyric and epic. To argue this point, the next section examines the extent to which “Billy in the Darbies” is dependent on the traditional practice of the folk ballad.

Functions of “Billy in the Darbies”

According to Gayley and Kurtz, a popular or traditional ballad is “folk poetry” (605), which is generally defined as follows: (1) It is “both a recital, or saying, and a song” in its early stages but it “loses something of its lyrical tune while its narrative content comes to the front” in its later stages (440); (2) It is “handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation” (441). In contrast, art-ballads “are not preserved by word of mouth, but by writing and printing” (442–43); (3) A traditional or folk ballad is “an anonymous popular creation of an individual composer” or “of a singing, dancing, improvising crowd.” The narrative is “impersonal, objective, and concrete” (441). Commonly, the ballad maker’s “authorship is unregarded or forgotten” (606); (4) It has originated usually “in oral form among a homogeneous, non-literary people” (605) rather than the educated classes. The ballad maker is “the mouthpiece of the crowd; his subject is matter of common knowledge; and his production at once becomes the possession of the people” (605-06), celebrating “an event of common moment” (607). The subject of the ballad is “deeds, which may be historical, romantic, or mythical” (440); (5) A reference to “silk, gold, silver, precious gems, and other gorgeous array is characteristic of the simpleness of the

popular mind” (442).

According to these fundamental divisions of the folk ballad, we can understand that “Billy in the Darbies” owes much, if not everything, to the conventional practice of folk ballads for the following five reasons.

(1) Like a traditional folk ballad, narrative content is one of the main focuses of “Billy in the Darbies.” As Joseph Schiffman explains, we cannot read Melville’s ballad without reference to the tragic story it narrates: “Though hanged as a criminal, Billy is lovingly remembered for his martyrdom.... Billy dies in helpless defeat only to become ironically reincarnated as a living symbol for all sailors” (Schiffman 48). Although it is ironic that the place Billy is executed is converted into a monument, the ballad conveys the figure of Billy as a “living symbol” or a shared mythology.

However, I would like to stress that the ballad intends to revive the lyrical tune which declined through the development of the folk ballad. This intention is most clearly observed in the description of Billy as a singer. Billy has a defect of a stammer, but Melville gives him the ability to sing: “He was illiterate; he could not read, but he could sing, and like the illiterate nightingale was sometimes the composer of his own song” (*BB* 52). This image of a singing bird is reiterated during the climax scene where Billy utters his final words, “God bless Captain Vere!” Melville writes that “syllables” were “too delivered in the clear melody of a singing bird on the point of launching from the twig.” The utterance “had a phenomenal effect, not unenhanced by the rare personal beauty of the young sailor, spiritualized now through late experiences so poignantly profound” (*BB* 123). These characterizations make a direct contribution to creation of the

ballad that expresses Billy's personal emotions with "so poignantly profound" experiences during his last hours.

(2) While a traditional folk ballad is "handed down by word of mouth" (Gayley and Kurtz 441), "Billy in the Darbies" is intended rather to be preserved through writing and printing. Melville writes that "[t]he tarry hand made some lines which, after circulating among the shipboard crews for a while, finally got rudely printed at Portsmouth as a ballad" (*BB* 131). This passage clearly shows that Melville innovates the use of the traditional folk ballad by mixing it with that of the art ballad.

Through preservation in writing and printing, "Billy in the Darbies" enhances the contrast with *News from the Mediterranean*, an official naval document inserted in Chapter 29, which is another written document describing the figure of Billy from a different perspective, as I discuss in detail in the following sections.

(3) "Billy in the Darbies" is based on a conventional folk ballad in that it is "an anonymous popular creation" (Gayley and Kurtz 606). Billy is not the ballad maker. Melville gives Billy's fellow sailor on board the *Bellipotent* the role of making and singing the ballad, but Melville does not give the sailor-maker a name. Instead, Melville only introduces him as "another foretopman, one of his own watch," and adds that the sailor is "gifted, as some sailors are, with an artless *poetic* temperament" (*BB* 131, emphasis in original)

(4) Thus, as in a traditional folk ballad, the ballad maker of "Billy in the Darbies" is the mouthpiece of the crew who believe Billy is innocent. In this sense, Melville used the ballad as a means of memorizing "an event of common moment" among seamen—"a homogeneous, non-literary people"

(Gayley and Kurtz 605) rather than the educated classes. The unnamed ballad maker plays a crucial role as the spokesman who preserves the legendary or mythical figure of Billy as a “matter of common knowledge” to be remembered among his fellows. The figure of Billy as an innocent prisoner in the ballad is contrasted with that of Billy shown as an evident criminal in *News from the Mediterranean*.

(5) “Billy in the Darbies” is based on the traditional practice of a folk ballad with respect to word usage. Presumably, one of the most curious and vivid images of the ballad is that of Billy likened to “Pendant pearl from the yardarm-end / Like the eardrop I gave to Bristol Molly—.” Centering around this image, the wording of lines from 5 through 9—“silvers,” “jewel-block,” “Pendant pearl,” “eardrop”—is based on the conventional practice of a folk ballad, that is, appealing to the popular mind (*BB* 132).

These word choices seem to be effective at attracting the attention of readers to the hanged Billy. For example, connecting Billy with Christ in this scene, Cannon claims that Melville seeks to raise the issues about “the value of Christ’s death” (Cannon, “Sea Ballads and Songs” 13). However, when focusing on Melville’s use of the ballad, especially in connection with the practice of the folk ballad, we can understand that he also addresses something less allegorical, less celestial, and even less symbolic. The ballad makes a contribution to pass on a personal record of Billy, as a rich and strange legacy, for future generations.

An Inside Narrative and an Outside Narrative

Melville addressed not only the epic matter of history but also the lyric question of an individual in a state of national crisis, such as warfare.

As some scholars have noted, this approach is one of Melville's major concerns in *Battle-Pieces*. In the war poems, he uses "passively lingering, vagrant lyric parentheses" (Jackson 185) to develop the epic narrative. In "Melville and the Lyric of History" (1999), Helen Vendler praises Melville's achievement in inventing "a lyric genre adequate to the complex feeling generated by the epic event of battle" (Vendler 588), and she calls *Battle-Pieces* "the epic-lyric" (Vendler 594). Melville in the 1860s had already recognized the possibility of using the lyric in the context of an epic event when he composed the war poems. In this sense, it seems that the epic and the lyric were, at least for Melville, never mutually exclusive.

In *Billy Budd*, "Billy in the Darbies" is Melville's way of bringing the lyric and the epic together. As already mentioned, the ballad is related to both lyric and epic. "Billy in the Darbies" echoes the sentiments of crews, who believe in Billy's innocence, and preserves his personal experience as a tragic story to be shared among seamen. The ballad, like the traditional folk ballad, describes the development of the execution in a straightforward manner, such as the prayer of "the chaplain"; "the guard's cutlass" silvering; "the hoist and the belay" suspending Billy; a friend who "has promise to stand by the plank"; a recollection on another friend's death; the prisoner's corpse lashed "in hammock"; "Sentry" watching all of the details; and Billy's body tangled with "the oozy weeds" (*BB* 132).

Along with these objective descriptions, the ballad expresses Billy's feeling with emphasis on his innocence impressed by a play on words—"O, 'tis *me*, not the *sentence* they'll *suspend*"—or by lines where Billy expects that "They'll give me a nibble—bit o' biscuit ere I go" (*BB* 132; emphasis added). In this way, the ballad reiterates Billy's subjective

experience during the monologue, which indicates that Melville intends to revive the lyrical tune without dismissing the historical or mythical dimension inherent in the ballad. This is the innovative use of the folk ballad in *Billy Budd*.

“Billy in the Darbies” makes a sharp contrast with the prose account of Billy’s execution in *News from the Mediterranean*. It should be noted that the generically hybrid form of *Billy Budd* is designed to make readers look at the closing ballad in connection with the prose section. Indeed, when we read the concluding ballad separately from the prose narrative, the importance of the ballad might remain latent. However, when read in comparison with the prose section, the significance of Billy’s mythical and personal figure implicit in the ballad clearly emerges and illuminates the main theme of the entire text.

For example, we should not disregard the fact that Melville dares to add the intricate characterization of Vere. Without Vere’s dilemma over whether or not to hang Billy, the poignancy of “Billy in the Darbies” would decrease; without Billy’s innocence, doomed in the world of war, the intensity of his tragedy would likewise decrease. The highly complex characterization of Vere with his dilemma never gives unity to the plot of this novel; it distorts the harmonious balance between good (Billy) and evil (Claggart), and emphasizes the character of Billy as a pardonable prisoner who never realizes how he should appeal his objection to the execution by hanging because of his innocence.

In addition to Vere’s dilemma, we should place a special emphasis on *News from the Mediterranean* as a notable account in the prose section. As has often been noted by such scholars as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, John

Seeyle, and Sharon Baris, the text is essentially designed based on a series of balances.⁶ Among others, the juxtaposition of the ballad and the naval document is crucial, especially because the entire narrative is designed to be retold from these two perspectives near the end of the text.

Melville's purpose of putting "Billy in the Darbies" in contraposition with *News from the Mediterranean*, a British publication, is to describe Billy's life in a subversive way. As Paul Giles notes, the duplicate ending is considered as a means to "dislocate the central narrative" (Giles 245). Specifically, Melville's doubling method is used to reconstruct "British justice as a self-gratifying phenomenon, an objectification of imaginative desires rather than a statement of more substantial truths." In contrast with *News from the Mediterranean* as "a kind of masquerade," which is based on "an idea of impersonal truth," "Billy in the Darbies" is an assertion of "more substantial truths" presented as a counterpart to the British naval history (Giles 245–46).

A formal document is primarily supposed to transmit a correct account of history to future ages. Melville himself highlights this point as follows: the news account is "an *authorized* weekly publication, an account of the affair" and "*doubtless* for the most part written *in good faith*" (*BB* 130; emphasis added). He also writes that the news is "all that hitherto has stood in human record to attest what manner of men respectively were John Claggart and Billy Budd" (*BB* 131). However, the official naval record does not perform its original function. Melville carefully adds that *News from the Mediterranean*, characterized as "partly rumor," serves to "deflect and in part falsify" facts. In fact, the news account never tells us Billy is innocent, but only provides an impersonal piece of information, stressing Billy as a

foreign “assassin,” who embodies “the extreme depravity of the criminal” (*BB* 130).

“Billy in the Darbies,” by contrast, offers the most valuable evidence that Billy is innocent. The ballad, made from sailors’ perspective, makes it clear how *News from the Mediterranean* twists the personal truth into impersonal fiction, thereby exposing the injustice of the official document. In this respect, the ballad plays a pivotal role in providing a complementary perspective to impersonal accounts in naval history. In short, “Billy in the Darbies” is the epitome of an inside narrative, whereas *News from the Mediterranean* functions as an outside narrative. In this dialectic counterpart of verse and prose, we can accurately assess the legitimacy of history.

We can imagine with deep sympathy the sorrowfulness of Billy’s feelings in the execution scene. But anyone who has ever read the formal naval document would never imagine Billy’s naïveté or his innocence. The focus of the official document is on the fact that Claggart was “stabbed to the heart” by “the extreme depravity of the criminal” (*BB* 130). To the contrary, in accordance with Billy’s “unconscious simplicity” (*BB* 131) as expressed in his final words, the lines of verse created after Billy’s execution allow us to visualize in clear detail Billy’s intense experience. Without the verse, we can only vaguely or erroneously imagine Billy’s subjective experience. His humorous or innocent behavior and a play on words might even give readers a sense of relief. In fact, however, the poem instead provokes more pain in the reader, since it provides a human record of an individual whom Melville wishes to present correctly. As already mentioned, the ballad arises from Billy’s innocence. The narrator describes

what Billy was like when he was hanged:

True, Billy himself freely referred to his death as a thing close at hand; but it was something in the way that children will refer to death in general, who yet among their other sports will play a funeral with hearse and mourners. (*BB* 120)

With reference to this passage, I argue that Billy's final utterance, "God bless Captain Vere!" (*BB* 123), excludes condemnation of Vere's decision to hang Billy.

Dynamics of prose and poetry

Finally, I close the final section of this chapter by discussing the rhetorical transaction between prose and poetry. In the previous section, we observed the contrast between the prosaic *News from the Mediterranean* report and the concluding dramatic verse "Billy in the Darbies." The official news document provides an impersonal account, whereas the verse conveys a personal feeling. With this observation, however, I do not mean to imply that the contrast between the two pieces represents the rhetorical uses of prose and poetry, or of the epic and lyric forms. Instead, the contrast provides us with a perspective from which we can consider Melville's skillful way of telling us that the official record does not always convey the true story of a subjective experience. In order to explore the dynamics of prose and poetry, we need to examine these forms with reference to the concept of the ballad, which is associated with both the epic and the lyric. In short, the balladic element in *Billy Budd* does not just apply to the concluding verse, "Billy in the Darbies."

Since Melville required both prose and poetry to complete *Billy Budd*,

we should consider the entire text as an *extended ballad* or a *ballad novel*. In other words, a single ballad, containing both the epic and lyric aspects, is divided into two separate parts—one presented in prose, the other in poetry. In the prose section, the lyric component is in the background of the epic. In the verse section, the epic component is in the background of the lyric. In this regard, prose enhances the epic dimension, whereas verse intensifies the lyric. Notably, however, both sections are associated with both the epic and the lyric. This mode of writing, I argue, represents one of Melville's most ambitious attempts to align poetry with prose across generic limits.

The verse section, "Billy in the Darbies," not only focuses on intense subjective experience but also presents a historical narrative, even if incompletely. As already mentioned, the verse intends to revive the lyrical component by reiterating Billy's innocence. In this reiteration, the vertical image deserves attention because it evokes a sense of tension that the prose section does not focus on. In the verse, time goes toward dawn but shows no sign of sunrise, and falls into darkness. Line 19 ("A blur's in my eyes; it is dreaming that I am") suggests that Billy begins to fall into reverie; thus it may be reasonable to assume that the following lines do not reflect his real experience, but instead are penetrated with a dreamy tone. However, in their contrasting of light and shadow, the lines progress in a vertical direction, from the top down. The vertical image is important in that it corresponds closely to Billy's hanging. With these images, the verse depicts Billy's subjective experience by focusing on his innocence.

However, the epic aspects lie behind Billy's intense subjective experience. The verse does not describe why and how Billy is executed by hanging, because in the prose narrative the third-person narrator has

recounted the detailed process from an objective perspective. And yet, the epic aspect appears behind the intense lyricism in the verse section. As an example, we can construct, at least partially, a historical narrative from the concluding verse about an innocent sailor's execution at sea by such terms as "the port," "the guard cutlass," "the yardarm-end," "the hoist," "the belay," and "the drum roll" (*BB* 132). These words briefly explain that the setting of the verse is associated with a man-of-war, although the details of the time setting or the nationality of the naval ship remain hidden. These historical dimensions (the epic) are intensely developed in the prose section, but are essentially latent in the verse section. Thus, by referring back and forth between prose and poetry, we can recognize more clearly the intense subjective experience of the innocent Handsome Sailor.

The epic dimension of the prose section is displayed especially in the setting of the story and by Captain Vere's actions as presented in the prose. The story is based on an actual execution at sea, the *Somers* case of 1842, which came soon after the mutiny on the *Nore*. Melville's final revision adds the Nelson chapter to dramatize the character of Vere in light of this rebellion. Melville's perception of history is thus presented in the pivotal character, Captain Vere, around whom the story develops. However, the prose section not only develops the epic dimension but also contains lyric moments.

For instance, the characterization of Billy via the image of a singing bird is one of the lyrical dimensions presented in the prose section. Such an image lies in the background in the prose section but comes to the foreground in the verse section. The lyric aspects can also be seen in the characterization of Claggart. When Billy is wandering around the upper gun

deck in Chapter 17, Claggart casts an “unobserved glance” at Billy. Claggart’s eyes are filled with “incipient feverish tears” and assume “a settled meditative and melancholy expression,” which makes the narrator think that Claggart looks like a “man of sorrows.” In addition, the narrator depicts Claggart “as if [he] could even have loved Billy but for fate and ban” (*BB* 88). Claggart’s tears, thus, are indicative of an intense lyric emotion in him, as they embody his unrequited love.

The lyric aspects can be also seen in Captain Vere’s words at the point of his death in Chapter 28: “Billy Budd, Billy Budd.” The narrator seems consciously to conceal what the words mean; instead, he explains vaguely that the words were “inexplicable to his [Vere’s] attendant” and “not the accents of remorse” (*BB* 129). Nevertheless, the words seem to express his mixed feelings of helplessness, self-reproach, and sympathy, which have been one of the central issues in critical analyses of *Billy Budd*. Interestingly, just as Claggart’s eyes turn toward Billy, Vere’s words are directed to the young, innocent sailor who has been sentenced to death by hanging. Altogether, the lyric aspects in the prose section are developed, at least partially, in association with innocent Billy.

Thus, by the rhetorical use of balladic components, the prose and verse sections can be intermingled into a single text we might call an *extended ballad* or a *ballad novel*. In this respect, the prose section is part of the poetry, and the verse section is part of the prose. These dynamic interactions of prose and poetry indicate the distinctiveness of *Billy Budd* as an epitome of *prose-and-verse* writing. The rhetorical transactions of different genres can be considered as part of Melville’s idiosyncratic achievement, aligning poetry with prose by means of a rhetorical use of the

balladic form to disrupt generic differences.

Billy Budd can be considered in light of Melville's earlier attempt to compose *prose-and-verse* writing in "John Marr." *Billy Budd*, however, drastically differs from "John Marr" in that, in *Billy Budd*, the epic aspects in the prose section are enhanced by the elaboration of a main character, Captain Vere, thereby heightening Billy's lyricism in the verse section. Thus, *Billy Budd* seems to provide a more striking contrast between epic and lyric than does "John Marr." In this sense, *Billy Budd* may appear as a more mature example of *prose-and-verse* writing than "John Marr," which is also characterized by the rhetoric intermingling of prose and poetry.

While the narrative prose is based on the history of the community, the concluding ballad condenses the lyricism to the experiences of the victim of a questionable judgment by the military code. The lyric might have difficulty surviving in the epic because militarism in the revolutionary era was intrinsically aimed at achieving a sense of the unity of the whole, not the sovereignty of the individual. Thus, Billy is compelled to lose in that he is sentenced to die, which reveals that whoever would rebel (or kill someone) must be killed (or punished) in the militaristic era, or at any other time. *Billy Budd* might be read as the story of a handsome, innocent sailor destroyed by the military code. However, we can recognize Melville's creativity in the dialectic counterpoint between prose and verse, in which he presents the voice of the sailor in the form of a ballad, and relates it to naval history. Melville at least manages to adjust the uneven balance between the epic and the lyric, which is one of the principal aims of his *prose-and-verse* writing project.

In the course of this chapter, we have seen that Melville's experience of reading *Lyrical Ballads* teaches us the basis for his crossing of the conventional boundaries between epic and lyric via the innovative use of the ballad. Wordsworth achieved an innovative fusion of the two distinct genres, lyric and ballad, and his focus was centered on restoring lyricism to ballads. However, Melville reinvented the ballad as a means of achieving a marriage between the lyric and the epic.

"Billy in the Darbies" makes a contribution to the transmission of the narrative of an innocent sailor named Billy to posterity. For Melville, the ballad is a medium that is particularly suited to foregrounding the lyric (subjective experience) generated by the epic (historical narrative) in the age of mutinies. Thus, in *Billy Budd*, Melville not only revives the lyric latent in the ballad but also represents it in connection with the mythical story the ballad recounts.

It is noticeable how "Billy in the Darbies" serves as a dialectic counterpart to an official naval document, *News from the Mediterranean*. When read with reference to the news account, the ballad exposes injustice of naval history with the help of the dynamics of prose and poetry. In *Billy Budd*, Melville manages to adjust the uneven balance of the epic and the lyric, as well as that of individual subjectivity and impersonal history, an attempt that proves to be the crux of his idiosyncratic prose-and-verse writing project.

Conclusion

This study explored the ways in which the hybridity or mixture in Herman Melville's text, arising from his poetics, reveals itself beyond generic differences. Such poetics is significant in two ways: (1) the use of poetic diction in prose and (2) the binary form of the prose headnote and the concluding dramatic verse in the same text, which is achieved by the rhetorical use of a ballad. I examined the two poetic practices from two related perspectives. The first is the function of "the sea," and the second is the dialectic between epic and lyric. What I hoped emerges from the reconsideration of Melville's generic hybridity in terms of his poetics is a portrait of the artist as a prominent innovator of literary genres.

I have observed that Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Edgar Allan Poe, and Melville are all concerned with the fusion of literary genres. Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817) had significant influence on Melville, as well as on Poe. The two American writers cultivated their primary perceptions of extending the boundaries between prose and poetry. However, the difference in the perception of the epic created a discrepancy between Poe and Melville; Poe extensively discarded the epic and instead developed his poetics marked by the lyric—the intensity of subjective experience and personal emotion, whereas Melville attempted to bring epic and lyric together by the rhetorical use of a ballad in a single text. I have demonstrated that Melville's composition owes much to his reading of the *Lyrical Ballads*. More specifically, Wordsworth's preface that represents his concept of the alignment between two different genres (lyric and ballad) inspired Melville to cultivate the blending of epic and lyric by the

innovative use of a ballad.

Vital, moreover, is Melville's achievement of the rhetorical use of a ballad to explore a *prose-and-verse* writing form, a juxtaposition of the prose headnote and concluding dramatic verse in a single text. I emphasized that this writing mode appears as Melville's most courageous attempt to go beyond the traditional literary genres because his *prose-and-verse* writing serves as a means to integrate poetry and prose by combining the dialectic between epic and lyric. In stylistic terms, *prose-and-verse* writing is divided into two separate parts of prose and poetry, whereas in a thematic sense, the prose and verse sections are associated with epic and lyric poetry beyond generic differences. The historical dimension is in the foreground of the prose section but in the background of the verse section, whereas the lyric dimension is in the background of the prose section but in the foreground of the verse section. In this regard, such a composition is synonymous with an *extended ballad* that assimilates the epic and lyric materials into a single composition.

The examination of the ways in which Melville demonstrates such poetics has been central to the main body of this dissertation. Even in a prose fiction, however, the poet-novelist conducts his generic experimentation. That is why the narrator of Melville's masterpiece, *Moby-Dick*, reveals himself as a poet. The reconsideration of Ishmael's use of poetic diction in prose accounts for Melville's ultimate goal to invent a hybrid genre with the help of his oceanic imagination.

Although the sea in "The Scout toward Aldie" is implicitly represented, it provides a site for epic and lyric imaginings, i.e., for the contemplation of both history and individuals in it. In this respect, the sea

becomes an emblem of hybridity or heterogeneity, whose primary function is to fuse a historical awareness with the life and death of an individual that may otherwise go unrecorded in history. For Melville, a ballad is a way to blend epic and lyric together in the same text because it contains these two elements. Therefore, the most important aspect of “Scout” lies in the fact that Melville selected a ballad as a literary form of his own for the first time, and utilized it in combination with the sea imagery. “Scout” is evidence of Melville’s first step in launching the innovative use of a ballad, increasingly visible in his later works.

Generally, an epic expression is appropriate for objective descriptions regarding history, society, country, or myth to be shared among humans, whereas a lyric expression has affinity with intense personal feeling or subjective experience. As such, Melville pursued the possibility of conveying the lyric *and* the epic in the same text by the rhetorical use of poetic diction and a ballad. A *prose-and-verse* form, or an *extended ballad*, is a result of such a hybrid compositional attempt. To put it another way, Melville’s truly original text seeks to use poetry in/with prose rhetorically beyond their generic differences to assess the value of subjective experience and emotional memories *with reference to* historical incidents and conditions that would often exclude, oppress, or hide the intensity of personal lyricism.

In doing so, Melville employs a poetics of hybridity in his oceanic imaginings. Melville’s oceanic writing is based on his maritime experience as a sailor, and his innovative use of the ballad owes much to his actual experience because he was involved with sea ballads and songs on board at sea. Moreover, for Melville, much like a ballad, the sea itself is multivalent,

a place where he deepens his historical awareness and his need for conveying a personal record that tends to be erased in history. Melville's critical insight into the civilization that destroyed individual lives was encouraged by his oceanic experience. In this sense, the sea is intimately intertwined with Melville's textual strategies.

Unlike other writers, Melville had a keen sensitivity for the productive ambiguity of the sea. Furthermore, the sea has a metaphorical power for dissolving or transforming miscellaneous materials, as generally acknowledged in the concept of "sea-change" that defines Ariel's song, a quintessential lyric in Shakespeare's *Tempest* that clearly echoes in Melville's *Billy Budd*. Thus, for Melville, the sea serves as the foundation for poetic contemplation, encouraging him to cultivate his poetics that goes beyond generic limitations.

I will conclude this study by presenting possibilities for further examination of Melville's poetic use of hybridity as well as of his oceanic imagination. To this end, I introduce here a general account of what criticism has come to acknowledge as oceanic studies. In "The Prospect of Oceanic Studies" (2010), directing our attention to "fluidity as an oceanic figure," Hester Blum points out that in recent years, transnational studies in the field of humanities have focused exclusively on the issues of "empire, exchange, translation, and cosmopolitanism," which may or may not be relevant to the sea. On the other hand, Blum continues, "The sailor, both mythologized and consigned to invisibility, presents a challenge to these emerging fields." By this remark Blum means that oceanic studies invite us to reconsider the way in which we approach transnational studies,

demanding “a reorientation of critical perception, one that rhymes with the kind of perspectival and methodological shifts” (Blum, “The Prospect of Oceanic Studies” 670–71).

In this light, I wish to suggest that the present study of Melville’s oceanic imagination provides a constructive analytical perspective on the genealogy of oceanic studies. To this end, I will briefly consider, in chronological order, several great poets who were preoccupied with the sea and developed their oceanic imagination in their poems: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, and Hart Crane.

Coleridge’s “The Ancient Mariner” (1798) adds a fresh dimension to a reconsideration of Melville’s oceanic imagination. In this long ballad, the aged mariner, after a long voyage, recounts the story of his seagoing past to a person who is going to a wedding. The narrator-sailor resembles Ishmael in that both are survivors and poets who re-experience their past voyages by talking about their experiences at sea. Thus, both sailor-poets seek to connect the past to the present and play the role of conveying their experience to the future. Indeed, it is generally acknowledged that “The Ancient Mariner” inspired Melville to develop his imagination about the whiteness of the whale in Chapter 41 of *Moby-Dick*. However, the perspective of surviving sailor-poets is worth examining as a peculiarity unique to sailors, or more precisely, to surviving sailor-poets, which has not drawn any critical attention in studies of oceanic imagination.

In addition, although “The Ancient Mariner” is often compared with *Moby-Dick*, no critical attention has been paid to the thematic relation between “The Ancient Mariner” and Melville’s “The Scout toward Aldie.”

In fact, the influence of “The Ancient Mariner” on Melville can also be seen in “Scout” in two respects: the use of ballad as a literary form and the use of marital discourse. Like “Scout,” “The Ancient Mariner” is also two-dimensional: the ballad foregrounds the narrative aspect in that it focuses on the story of the aged mariner’s voyage. However, the poem is not exclusively an action narrative as it also highlights the mariner’s sense of guilt caused by his killing an albatross during the voyage.

With regard to the two works’ use of nuptial images, I argued that in “Scout,” Melville casts a critical eye on the conventional use of marriage as a festive image by destroying the relationship between two couples: first, the newlywed couple of the Colonel and his bride; second, the Union Colonel and, in a figurative sense, the Confederate Mosby as his bridal figure. Through the defeated figure of the Union Colonel, Melville describes the uncertain future of postbellum America. Although Melville’s war poems have often been compared with those of Whitman, the relationship between “Scout” and “The Ancient Mariner” offers much room for discussion with regard to issues of form and their sea imagery.

Second, Poe also deserves attention in the context of oceanic studies. Poe’s literary essays owe much to Coleridge’s development of literary criticism in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817), which was discussed in Chapter 1 of the present dissertation. Specifically, Poe, like Melville, was influenced by Coleridge’s perception of the fusion of prose and poetry. As I have noted earlier, the primary distinction between the two is that Poe dismissed epic poetry that was incompatible with his need for lyric intensity, whereas Wordsworth inspired Melville to fuse epic and lyric dimensions in a single text by the rhetorical use of a ballad. However, with regard to

oceanic imagination, as well as in his blending of prose and poetry, Poe proves much closer to Melville. For example, one critic points out that “Commemorative of a Naval Victory,” a naval war poem in Melville’s *Battle-Pieces*, generates “a significant image with echoes from *Pym* via *Redburn*” (Pollin 18).¹

For Poe, as for Melville, the sea is metaphorically heterogeneous—both epic and lyric—and these two elements are contrasted in Poe’s works that contain sea imagery. For example, the narrative dimension is central to his story of a sea adventure, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1837), whereas intense lyricism is foregrounded in his poem “Annabel Lee” (1849), which sings the first-person narrator’s love for a maiden by that name, as well as for the lost seaside kingdom. Poe developed both the epic and lyric dimensions of his works through oceanic imagery, although he, unlike Melville, had no maritime experience. In addition, “Annabel Lee,” reminiscent of a fairy tale, is characterized by the narrative aspect, as represented by the first lines of the poem: “It was many and many a year ago, / in a Kingdom by the sea” (Poe, *Selected Prose and Poetry* 477). At the same time, the name “Annabel Lee” is repeated in each stanza, reinforcing the lyric intensity of the narrator’s love. Repetition of the same words is one of Poe’s characteristic ways of expressing intense personal feelings, as also demonstrated by his repetition of the word “Nevermore” in another of his famous poems, “The Raven.” This poetic technique is echoed in Melville’s repetition of the word “Mosby” as a sort of refrain in “Scout.”

Third, Whitman also develops sea images in his poems. As mentioned in Chapter 3, *Leaves of Grass* (1855), full of sea imagery, is considered a

precursor of the American lyric-epic, and the sea image in *Leaves of Grass* “is established almost from the beginning as a major symbol” (Miller 101). Similarly, the seashore of Manhattan inspired Whitman to write a poem entitled “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.” Furthermore, in *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman devoted a section titled “Sea-Drift” to 11 sea-pieces. One of the most famous poems in that section, “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,” expresses a view of life and death by using sea imagery.

Finally, Crane was influenced by both Melville and Whitman. Crane was preoccupied with Melville’s writings on the sea. For example, in *The Bridge* (1930), he borrows the last two lines of Melville’s poem “The Temeraire” from *Battle-Pieces*—“*O, the navies old and oaken, / O, the Temeraire no more!*” (Crane 51; italics in original)—to express his lament over the demise of old-fashioned wooden sailing ships. It might be true, as a previous study points out, that the use of these lines points to Melville as “the metaphysical prose-poet of the sea” (Wells 194). However, the verses should also be considered as capturing the essence of the double dimension of a lyric-epic.

Also, another of Crane’s famous poems, “Voyages” (1926), strongly evokes the oceanic world of *Moby-Dick* when he writes: “The bottom of the sea is cruel” (Crane 25). In a letter to Yvor Winters, dated January 1927, Crane writes how he felt when marooned: “My eyes disgorged more than one smoky tear over the pages of *Moby Dick* [sic]—which I think saved my mind” (Crane 516). This passage indicates Crane’s special fondness for *Moby-Dick*. At the same time, for Crane, the sea serves as a place for cultivating love in a sequence of poems titled “Voyages,” which he referred to as “love poems” in a letter to his mother, dated November 1924 (Weber

192). Likewise, for Melville, especially in *Mardi*, the sea serves as the location of a developing romance. Furthermore, Crane paid homage to Melville by writing “At Melville’s Tomb” (1926) in which he refers to the sea as Melville’s final resting place.

In this dissertation, I have identified a new common ground by placing Melville alongside Crane as American lyric-epic poets. Crane can be considered a member of a successive generation to whom Melville’s oceanic imaginings were transmitted with profound effect. Given that Crane was inspired to develop his lyric-epic by oceanic imagery, further reflection on the resemblances or distinctions between these two poets is warranted.

In “Hawthorne and His Mosses” (1855), Melville writes that “It is not so much paucity, as superabundance of material that seems to incapacitate modern authors” (246). In terms of genre, “paucity” refers to a deficiency in American literature, whereas “superabundance” refers to that in traditional literary forms. In short, the problem was how modern authors treated the availability of abundant literary forms. To meet this challenge, some authors attempted to integrate prose and verse within various styles.

It is notable that in the preface to *Leaves of Grass* (1855), Whitman celebrates the value of “the perfume impalpable to form” and “silent defiance advancing from *new free forms*” (Whitman 714, 717; emphasis added). Whereas Whitman succeeded in demonstrating a free and new form by means of the integration of prose within poetry in his free verse, Melville achieved a similar integration through the alignment of poetry in prose (or of a poem within a poem) and by the rhetorical use of a ballad. These innovations marked attempts to reconcile prose and poetry, which had

traditionally been considered mutually exclusive.

In the present study, I have proposed that Melville's idiosyncratic poetics of hybridity reveals his desire to go beyond existing literary forms. Melville opens up new possibilities for combining epic and lyric through the use of sea imagery and the rhetorical use of poetry beyond the limits of conventional literary genres. I hope that the present study on Melville's poetics of hybridity in its relationship to his oceanic imagination will provide a broader context in which to locate the future of literary studies, one that simultaneously embraces the hard facts of history and the aesthetic depth of humanity.

Notes

Introduction

1. For the discussion concerning Melville's poems, see Matthiessen (488–99).

2. In response to Matthiessen's preface, Robert Penn Warren's "Melville the Poet" appeared in the *Kenyon Review* in 1946, four years before Newton Arvin placed Melville in the same line with Emerson and Dickinson (Arvin 262–63). Warren remarked that the defects in Melville's poems—"the violence, the distortions, the wrenchings in the versification"—are reinforced by his need for "a nervous, dramatic, masculine style" (Warren 210). Such a style, Laurence Barret proclaims, should be accomplished "not in verse but in prose" (Barrett 616), whereas he praises Warren's essay as "the first study of the poems long enough to hope covering the ground" (Barrett 606). Barrett asserts that the employment of a "highly personal symbolism" (610, 620) developed from metaphors derives from Melville's earlier works. Shurr also sees Melville's symbolism as that which could unify his writing ("Melville's Poems" 359–60). This interpretation is quite suggestive because, as is frequently pointed out, symbolism is one of the crucial elements around which Melville developed his creative imagination since his early works. In *Symbolism and American Literature*, an intensive study on symbolism, Charles Feidelson, Jr. clearly refers to Melville's poem only once, to remark, "neither *Billy Budd* nor the poetry of Melville's later years can be explained in terms so remote from his characteristic point of view" (Feidelson 212). Warren devoted detailed attention to Melville's distinctive qualities which could

compensate for the flaws. Shurr provides the history of criticism on Melville's poetry in an outline in "Melville's Poems: The Late Agenda" (1986).

3. Warren and Buell take the same viewpoint. Warren, for example, refers to the resemblance between Melville's war poems and Thomas Hardy's war poems "in tone and attitude" as follows:

Melville, like Hardy, whom he resembles in so many respects and with whose war poems his own war poems share so much in tone and attitude, proclaimed that he was neither an optimist nor a pessimist, and in some of his own work we find a kind of guarded "meliorism," like Hardy's, which manifests itself in the terms of destiny, fate, time, that is, in the historical process.

(Warren, "Melville the Poet" 219; emphasis added)

4. Parker considers that Melville had a strong interest in poetry, even in his early years. See *Melville: The Making of the Poet* (2008) and "*The Isle of the Cross and Poems: Lost Melville Books and the Indefinite Afterlife of Error*" (2013).

5. For example, Lawrence Barrett focuses on Melville's use of conventional poetic forms: "As would have been perfectly natural in his century, Melville seems to have come to think of metrics, rhyme, and poetic form in general as giving support to the content of a poem in a very literal way" (Barrett 617).

6. For a detailed account of the classical lyric and the modern lyric, Jonatan Culler's "Why Lyric?" (2008) may be relevant.

7. In his earlier essay, "Nathaniel Hawthorne" (1842), Poe mentions that "Epics were the offspring of an imperfect sense of Art, and their reign

is not more” (Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 571). He also briefly remarks on the epic and the length of poetry:

All high excitements are necessarily transient. Thus *a long poem is a paradox*. And without unity of impression, the deepest effects cannot be brought about. Epics were the offspring of an imperfect sense of Art, and their reign is no more. (Poe, *Essays and Reviews* 571; emphasis added)

8. See the following account by Virginia Jackson:

The notion that poetry is or ever was one genre is the primary symptom of the lyricization of poetry: the songs, riddles, epigrams, sonnets, epitaphs, *blasons*, lieder, elegies, marches, dialogues, conceits, ballads, epistles, hymns, odes, eclogues, and monodramas considered lyric in the Western tradition before the early nineteenth century were not lyric in the same sense as the poetry that we think of as lyric. (Jackson 183; italics in original)

9. Douglas Grant notes that “Waterfall” “preludes the nineteenth-century American lyric” (Grant 99).

10. Miller only suggests that “Poe gave him [Whitman] the clue for his basic structure of a *lyric epic*” (Miller 147; italics in original).

11. Blum only mentions “widely printed ballads” as one of the sea writings available in nineteenth-century America, such as “popular broadsides and shipwreck pamphlets, racy pirate novels,” and “nationalistic naval hymns and sea chanteys” (Blum, *The View from the Masthead* 5).

Chapter 1

Innovators of Literary Genres: Coleridge, Wordsworth, Poe, and Melville

1. See Robert Sattelemeyer and Joseph J. Moldenhauer for Wordsworth's influence on Thoreau.

2. For Emerson, poetry is to some degree intermingled with religious thought. For Emerson's idea of poetry, see the following passage in his essay "The Poet" (1844):

We are like persons who come out of a cave or cellar into the open air. This is the effect on us of tropes, fables, oracles, and all poetic forms. *Poets are thus liberating gods.* Men have really got a new sense, and found within their world, another world or nest of worlds; for the metamorphosis once seen, we divine that it does not stop. (Emerson III: 26; emphasis added)

3. Robert Sandberg picks up the following six works that belong to the prose-and-verse writing: "John Marr" in *John Marr*; "Parthenope" in *Timoleon* (1891); "Rammon," "Under the Rose," and "Rip Van Winkle's Lilac" in *Weeds and Wildings* (1924); and *Billy Budd* (1924) (Sandberg 230–31).

4. In Pound's essay "What I feel about Whitman" (1909), he identifies Whitman as his "spiritual father" (115) and celebrates his Americanness: "He [Whitman] *is* America. His crudity is an exceeding great stretch, but it *is* America" (Pound 115; italics in original).

5. A more specific study is Walter E. Bezanson's "Melville's Reading of Arnold's Poetry" (1954); more recent examples include Merton M. Sealts, Jr.'s *Melville's Reading* (1988). These catalogues indicate that Melville was much more preoccupied with reading poetry.

6. Melville considered that “imitation is often the first charge brought against real originality” (Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses” 246). By contrast, concerning the idea of originality, Emerson writes in his essay “Quotation and Originality” as follows:

The originals are not original. There is imitation, model and suggestion, to the very archangels, if we knew their history. The first book tyrannizes over the second. Read Tasso, and you think of Virgil, read Virgil, and you think of Homer; and Milton forces you to reflect how narrow are the limits of human invention. The ‘Paradise Lost’ had never existed but for these precursors. (Emerson VIII: 94–95).

7. See also the following famous passage for Melville’s celebration of Shakespeare:

But it is those deep far-away things in him; those occasional flashing-forth of the intuitive Truth in him; those short, quick probings at the very axis of reality;—these are the things that make Shakespeare, Shakespeare. But, as I before said, it is the least part of genius that attracts admiration. And so, much of the blind, unbridled admiration that has been heaped upon Shakespeare, has been lavished upon the least part of him.

(Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses” 244)

8. See Chapter 17: “*Between the language of prose and that of metrical composition, there neither is, nor can be any essential difference*” (Coleridge II: 55; italics in original).

9. For Melville’s reading of *Lyrical Ballads*, see Melville, *Published Poems* (871); Thomas F. Heffernan (340).

10. Regarding the detail of lyrical aspects of Wordsworthian ballads, see Stephen Parrish (106).

11. The lines continue as follows:

But much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of Fact, or Science. The only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre; nor is this, in truth, a *strict* antithesis, because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose, that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even were it desirable. (Wordsworth 252)

12. See, in particular, Cannon ("Melville's Concepts" 48).

13. For example, for discussion of the influence on Melville of Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), see Jeffrey Meyers (298).

14. Coleridge's text reads as follows:

A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having *this* object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the *whole*, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component *part*. (Coleridge II: 13; italics in original)

15. For study on Coleridge's influence on Poe, see Floyd Stovall and Alexander Schlutz.

16. For the ways in which Poe develops his perception of the effect of

unity, see the following passage:

We allude to the short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal. The ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length, for reasons already stated in substance. As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from *totality*. Worldly interests intervening during the pauses of perusal, modify, annual, or counteract, in a greater or less degree, the impressions of the book. But simple cessation in reading would, of itself, be sufficient to destroy the true unity. In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out the fullness of his intention, be it what it may. (Poe 572; italics original)

Chapter 2

Ishmael the Poet: *Moby-Dick* as a Romance, the Second Voyage

1. See also F. O. Matthiessen (421–31) and Samuel Otter (165).

Matthiessen offers the similar observations, whereas Samuel Otter emphasizes that Ishmael's tattoo can be considered as a reminder of the corporeality of the narrator himself.

2. For the distinction between the novel and the romance, see Richard Chase's *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (1957). Chase explains that the novel and the romance differ from one another "in the way in which they view reality": "The novel renders reality closely and in comprehensive detail," whereas the romance "feels free to render reality in less volume and detail. It tends to prefer action to character, and action will be freer in a romance than in a novel, encountering, as it were, less resistance from

reality” (Chase 12–13).

On one hand, Edward H. Rosenberry in “*Moby-Dick: Epic Romance*” (1975) calls our attention to the generic blend, as the title shows, of epic and romance. On the other hand, in “Threading the Labyrinth: *Moby-Dick* as Hybrid Epic” (2006), Christopher Sten rereads *Moby-Dick* with a focus on the intermingled aspects of “the ancient national epic of combat” and “the modern epic of spiritual quest” (Sten 404). However, I wish to add yet another perspective to these analyses of the generic hybridity of *Moby-Dick*: namely, the perspective from which to read *Moby-Dick* as a romance wherein Ishmael, as a poet, mourns the death of his crews.

3. For example, see Robert Penn Warren, “Melville’s Poems” (1967); Stanton Garner, *The Civil War World of Herman Melville* (1993); Lawrence Buell, “Melville the Poet” (1998).

4. Cody Marrs’s “A Wayward Art: Battle Pieces and Melville’s Poetic Turn” (2010) is a typical example.

5. Lawrence Buell, on the contrary, claims that “[t]he first experiment of which we can be certain was the score of lyrics he [Melville] interspersed throughout *Mardi*” (Buell 138).

6. According to Merton M. Sealts, Jr., Melville read *The House of the Seven Gables* on 11 April, 1851. See entry 246 of *Melville’s Reading*. After Melville first met Hawthorne on August 5, 1850, Melville was more influenced by him from the last few months of 1850 to 1851 (Turner 212–23).

7. Leavis adds: “In calling him [James] ‘poet-novelist’ I myself was intending to convey that the determining and controlling interests in his art engage what is ‘deepest in him’ (he being a man of exceptional capacity of

experience), and appeal to what is deepest in us” (Leavis 128).

8. In 1849, Melville wrote a letter to Lemuel Shaw:

Being books, then, written in this way, my only desire for their ‘success’ (as it is called) springs from my pocket, & not from my heart. So far as I am individually concerned, & independent of my pocket, it is my earnest desire to write those sorts of books which are said to ‘fail.’ —Pardon this egotism. (Melville, *Correspondence* 139)

9. For the context of ideas concerning “ideas celestial (chronometrical)” and “things terrestrial (horological),” see *Pierre* (210–15).

Chapter 3

Images of the Sea and Marriage: “The Scout toward Aldie” as a Ballad

1. For reference to the influence Crane received from Melville’s sea, see also John Unterecker (427). Melville’s sea in war poems is often discussed in the context of nostalgia for the bygone days of sail or lament over the loss of old ships and shipmates. See, for example, Richard H. Fogle and Mary Malloy.

2. Although there seems to be little evidence to connect Melville and Whitman directly, it is generally thought that Melville read a copy of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* in his brother-in-law Hoadley’s library. See Parker (*A Biography* II: 364). For an early comparison of Civil War poems by Whitman and Melville, see, for example, John P. McWilliams, Jr.’s “‘Drum Taps’ and *Battle-Pieces*: The Blossom of War” (1971).

3. For a reading of Melville’s *Battle-Pieces* in its popular context, see

also R. J. Scholnick.

4. For historical details of Mosby's Raiders and the biographical basis for "The Scout toward Aldie," see Wilson (323–29); Stanton Garner (304–23); Hershel Parker (*A Biography* II: 564–71, 581–83); Laurie Robertson-Lorant (469–72); Notes to "The Scout toward Aldie" in *Published Poems* (668–71). There are also several books and articles on his life by Mosby himself.

5. For the details of Melville's borrowing from Shakespeare, see Henning Cohen's "Notes" to "Scout." The passage in "Scout," "Gazing at heaven's all-cheering lamp" (*PP* 140: 38), echoes a line in *Romeo and Juliet*, I, I, 141: "so soon as the all-cheering sun..." (qtd. in Henning Cohen, Notes 288); and "A glance of mingled foul and fair" (*PP* 151: 430) resonates with a line in *Macbeth*, I, I, 11: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (qtd. in Henning Cohen, Notes 290).

6. For a detailed discussion on Melville's use of the archetypal quest myth in "Scout," see Joseph Fagnoli. Johnathan A. Cook similarly analyzes the poem in light of history, legend, and poetic tradition. Grant Shreve reads the poem in light of social discourses, focusing on the nuptial image as a metaphor of reunion in America at that time.

7. All quotations of the poem are according to page and line numbers from the Northwestern-Newberry edition of Melville's *Published Poems*.

8. Shurr suggests that the shark "is closely associated with what Pip glimpsed at the bottom of the sea" (*The Mystery of Iniquity* 35).

9. See Wilson 326.

10. For Melville's reading of Scott's works, see Sealts (92). He read *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1855), *Peveiril of the Peak* (1823), *Quentin*

Durward; a Romance (1823), and *Tales of a Grand-Father* (1833).

11. For detailed accounts of Melville's interest in the military heroes and his visit to the home of Sir Walter Scott in Edinburgh in 1856, see Parker (*A Biography* II: 296–97) and Robertson-Lorant (376). Above all, the following passage deserves attention: “Armories he[Melville] was always interested in, especially where he could see Rob Roy's gun, and the high wall on the eastern side of Abbotsford stuck in his memory” (Parker, *A Biography* II: 296–97).

12. See Wilson (326) and Fogle (127).

13. For a reference of Lowell as the model for the Colonel in “Scout,” see Robertson-Lorant (469, 472). According to Garner, Lowell “was an acquaintance and an admirer of Emerson and a reader of Matthew Arnold, Sir Thomas Browne, Byron, Carlyle, Cervantes, Hawthorne, Milton, and Shakespeare—a reading list after Herman's heart—and, like Herman, he was interested in Greek philosophy” (Garner 307). See also Parker (*A Biography* II: 567).

14. For a brief portrait of Josephine Shaw Lowell, see the following passage: “An energetic, fearless young woman who spoke three languages and rode horseback like a man, tended sick and wounded soldiers in the camp hospital and probably showed Herman and Allan through the wards while they were there. (Robertson-Lorant 469)

15. Both Fogle and Cook read “The Scout toward Aldie” in the tradition of English romantic poetry; they emphasize Melville's familiarity with Francis James Child's famous *English and Scottish Ballads* read by Melville in 1859 (Seals 50), and its influence on the poem (Fogle 127, Cook 73).

16. For a detailed account of these issues, see Fagnoli (335).

17. “[T]he song of Mosby’s man” reads as follows.

Spring is come; she shows her pass—

Wild violets cool!

South of woods a small close grass—

A vernal wool!

Leaves are a’bud on the sassafras—

They’ll soon be full;

Blessings on the friendly screen—

I’m for the South! says the leafage green.

Robins! fly, and take your fill

Of out-of-doors—

Garden, orchard, meadow, hill,

Barns and bowers;

Take your fill, and have your will—

Virginia’s yours!

But, bluebirds! keep away, and fear

The ambushade in bushes here. (PP 153; italics in original)

18. All of the lines read as follows:

Nine Blue-coats went a-nutting

Slyly in Tennessee—

Not for chestnuts—better than that—

Hugh, you bumble-bee!

Nutting, nutting—

All through the year there’s nutting!

A tree they spied so yellow,

*Rustling in motion queer;
 In they fired, and down they dropped—
 Butternuts, my dear!
 Nutting, nutting—
 Who'll 'list to go a-nutting? (PP 153–54; italics in original)*

19. See also the following passage about the effect of refrains: “The verse of the ballad is characteristically a simple measure, the lyrical effect of which is often heightened by a chorus, burden or refrain” (Gayley and Kurtz 440)

20. The passage reads as follows: “The ancients, and the poets of the middle ages, were well acquainted with the kind of terror caused in certain circumstances by the repetition of the same words; it seems to awaken the sentiment of inflexible necessity” (Leyda 647).

21. On the theme of youth and age in the Colonel–Major pair, see Fogle (128) and Cook (65–66).

22. For a comparison of the Colonel’s problem with that of Captain Delano in “Benito Cereno,” see Fagnoli (341).

23. According to Gayley and Kurtz, “[t]he war-ballad—historical and legendary, or mythical—is one of the most frequent and important varieties of the ballad.” “Scout” also fits the ballad pattern generally, in that “[a]dventures of love and outlawry and experiences of supernatural are also common subjects” (Gayley and Kurtz 440).

Chapter 4

Toward a Pre-Modern Paradise: An Outsider’s Poetics in Melville’s “John Marr”

1. Dryden reads “John Marr” in this context as a counterpart of Melville’s short story “The Piazza” (Dryden, “Poetry as Private Utterance” 331–33). In this chapter, however, I would like to underscore that, in both stories, the landscape evokes a double image of the seascape. See, for example, the description of the landscape in “The Piazza”: “the vastness and the lonesomeness are so *oceanic*, and the silence and the sameness, too, that the first peep of a strange house, rising beyond the trees, is for all the world like *spying, on the Barbary coast, an unknown sail.*” The first-person narrator in “The Piazza,” like John Marr, exercises his oceanic imagination: “And this recalls my *inland voyage* to fairy-land. *A true voyage*; but, take it all in all, interesting as if invented” (*PT* 3–4; emphasis added). For other critics who discuss “John Marr,” see Robillard (198–201), William B. Stein (22–26), and Kelly (161–66).

2. One of the most extensive studies on Melville’s late poetry is Stein’s *The Poetry of Melville’s Early Years* (1970). As for *John Marr*, refer to the opening section of the book (Stein 19–69).

3. For example, Robillard selects the following poems as the best examples displaying thematic unity: “The Maldiver Shark,” “The Berg,” “The Haglets,” and “Pebbles” (Robillard 198). For related perspectives on coherent sequence in the arrangement of “Pebble,” see Elizabeth Renker (*Strike through the Mask* 137) and Kelly (161).

4. See, for example, Shurr (“Melville’s Poems” 135); Stein (53); Ford (252–54); Renker (“Melville’s the Realist Poet” 488).

5. For the most recent discussion concerning the range of stances, speakers, and personae in *John Marr*, see Sean Ford, who provides a worthy and detailed account.

6. Ford suggests that “Far Off-Shore” offers “a key project” (241) of the *John Marr* volume—the limits of accessibility in a remote scene, by which *John Marr* engages readers in its action. He argues that “each odd line containing eight syllables and each even line three. Every line begins with a stressed monosyllable word, every odd line ends in a one-word trochee, and every even line follows the stressed monosyllable with a single iamb” (Ford 240).

7. As in “Far Off-Shore,” Melville’s sea-pieces in *John Marr* generally highlight, as a central theme, a lament for the passing of whaleships. Prior to *John Marr*, Melville employs the identical theme in “The Stone Fleet,” in his first published volume of poetry, *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866). The Civil War hastened the decline of the whaling business. In this respect, when Mary Malloy notes that “most writers did not share Melville’s sentimental view of the sinking of the vessels,” her remark is more suggestive because the subject of ships far at sea or retrospective musing on whaling voyages reflects a perspective unique to Melville who “had sensed the shift toward mechanization” (Malloy 634, 642) and often transformed his maritime experience as a sailor into the primary subject of his writing. She emphasizes the importance of “The Stone Fleet” because the “tone throughout is personal and sentimental, whereas that of the other poems in *Battle-Pieces* are delivered in the straightforward style of a journalist” (Malloy 634).

8. Robert Sandberg considers the following six works as prose-and-verse writing: “John Marr” in *John Marr* (1888); “Parthenope” in *Timoleon* (1891); “Rammon,” “Under the Rose,” and “Rip Van Winkle’s Lilac” in *Weeds and Wildings* (1924); and *Billy Budd* (1924) (Sandberg 230–

31).

9. For the growth of the manuscript and the publication history of its text, see Harrison Hayford and Merton M. Sealts, Jr. (1–24).

10. See also Stein for a profound observation of the subversive dimension of Melville's other poetry, such as his first published poem *Battle Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866) and his epic poem *Clarel* (1876).

11. See Oshima (495, 503).

12. See Oshima (498–99).

13. The lines are as follows: “Why, lads, so silent here to *me*” in the first stanza; “Nay frequent near *me*, never staling” and “To enfold *me* in a dream” in the third stanza; “Your shadowy fellowship is *mine* / Ye float around *me*, from and feature:—” and “Yea, present all, and dear to *me*” in the fifth stanza (*PP* 199–200; emphasis added).

14. “To Ned” is composed of thirty lines in five stanzas. For the celebration of the pagan paradise, see also the following lines in the final stanza.

But we, in anchor-watches calm,
 The Indian Psyche's languor won,
 And, musing, breathed primeval balm
 From Edens ere yet over-run;
 Marvelling mild if mortal twice,
 Here and hereafter, touch a Paradise. (*PP* 238)

Chapter 5

Epic and Lyric: Melville's Use of the Folk Ballad in *Billy Budd*

1. For the growth of the manuscript and the publication history of its text, see Harrison Hayford and Merton M. Sealts, Jr. (1–24).

2. For the dichotomous nature of the criticism, see Robert Milder (3–18). For the most compelling pro-Vere position, see Milton R. Stern (206–39). For the beginning of anti-Vere perspectives, see Joseph Schiffman’s interpretation of *Billy Budd* as “a tale of irony” (46). For the subsequent ironists’ interpretation of Billy’s exclamation, see, for example, Lawrence Thompson (406–9).

3. As for the list of ballads Melville read, see Merton M. Sealts, Jr.’s *Melville’s Reading*. For example, *English and Scottish Ballads* (1854–57) is listed as no. 143; *Froissart Ballads, and Other Poems* (1847) as no. 158; *Ballads* (1856) as no. 511; and *Lays and Legends; or Ballads of the New World* (1851) and *Songs of the Cavaliers and Roundheads, Jacobite Ballads, etc.* (1857) as no. 525.

4. For detail, see Cannon’s “Melville’s Concepts of the Poet and Poetry” (61–62).

5. In this chapter, I regard Billy as a sort of a tragic hero rather than an epic hero.

6. In *Billy Budd*, for example, two opposite ships with their differing directions—“a home-ward-bound English merchantman” and “a seventy-four outward bound, H. M. S. *Bellipotent*” (*BB* 44–45); while Billy at the *Rights of Man* is referred to as a “peacemaker” (*BB* 47), he turns into a prisoner at the *Bellipotent*; the radiant, innocent, young figure of Billy provides a sharp contrast with Claggart’s evil, darkness, and innate depravity; and Captain Vere’s two different faces—“The father” and “the military disciplinarian” (*BB*100). Sedgwick’s “Some Binarisms (I)” in

Epistemology of the Closet (1990) provides a comprehensive analysis of dichotomies in *Billy Budd* (Sedgwick 91–130). Baris mentions “the fundamental opposition of Billy as a text” (Baris 162).

Conclusion

1. Melville’s poem reads: “Elate he can never be; / He feels that spirits which glad had hailed his worth, / Sleep in oblivion. —The shark / Glides white through the phosphorus sea” (*PP* 136). Burton R. Pollin argues that the lines are indicative of the idea of “animal combustion” in Poe’s *Pym* that depicts “the rotting body of Augustus” that “becomes phosphorescent” (Pollin 9). See also Poe’s echo in Chapter 48 (“A Living Corpse”) of *Redburn* (1849): Melville describes a sailor’s dead body that looks “like a phosphorescent shark in a midnight sea” (*RD* 244).

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