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Darwin's The voyage of the Beagle and Melville's "The Encantadas"

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DARWIN'S THE VOYAGE OF THE BEAGLE

AND

MELVILLE'S "THE ENCANTADAS"

A Thesis

Submitted to

The Faculty of Montana State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Department of English

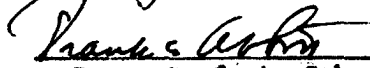
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INTRODUCTION

Six hundred and fifty miles west of Ecuador lie the Galapagos Islands, barren and scorched beneath the equatorial sun. The islands rise quickly from blue Pacific waters and white sand beaches to blank, grey cliffs and to cactus-covered and brush-spotted volcanic peaks. For three centuries after their discovery by Spanish explorers in the sixteenth century, the islands lay in primitive seclusion, visited only infrequently by buccaneers, pirates, and whalers, all seeking the abundant and economical source of food and fuel available on the island's shores--the giant tortoise, called galapago in Spanish.¹

In the nineteenth century, the separate visits of two men--one a young ship's scientist assigned to a British expedition ship, the other a common seaman aboard a New England whaler--attained for these Galapagos Islands an enduring importance in literature. The young scientist, Charles Darwin, recorded his visit of October 1835, in Chapter Seventeen of The Voyage of the Beagle, which was published in 1839. The seaman, Herman Melville, recorded his 1841 visit to the islands in "The Encantadas, or Enchanted Isles," one of The Piazza Tales, published in 1856.

¹"Galapagos Islands," Encyclopedia Britannica, IX, (14th ed., 1949), 968.

These two works are unique in the writings of their respective authors. The Voyage of the Beagle, the early long work of Darwin, contains the seeds of Darwin's later thoughts. It has been said that ". . . The Voyage of the Beagle . . . plainly foreshadows the revolutionary line along which Darwin's thought was to develop."² "The Encantadas" is unique in Melville's works because it represents Melville's only attempt at extended description for its own sake, and appears to be, as one early critic has said, "the supreme technical achievement of Melville as an artist."³

The very existence of these two works--the one by Britain's most celebrated nineteenth century naturalist, the other by America's foremost nineteenth century novelist--suggests a comparison of the two books to determine the divergent descriptive techniques of their respective authors and to judge the value of each in literature. Furthermore, the scope of this study will be expanded to include new and relevant material on the inter-relationship of these two books.

The first chapter of this study will include evidence to support the theory that, rather than being works

²Charles Darwin, The Voyage of the Beagle, intro. Leonard Engel (Garden City, New York: 1962), intro. IX.

³Herman Melville, The Shorter Novels of Herman Melville, intro. Raymond Weaver (New York: 1928), intro. XXV.

whose only common bond is their subject matter, the books have an inter-relationship springing from the apparent influence of The Voyage of the Beagle on "The Encantadas" and from the apparent influence of Darwin's mind upon Melville's. The evidence from the two works which supports this conjecture is threefold: the familiarity of Melville with The Voyage of the Beagle was such that he used it as a source book from which to draw information while writing "The Encantadas"; the ideas presented by Darwin in The Voyage of the Beagle are involved in the subject matter of Melville in "The Encantadas"; and the use of tables by Darwin is a target for the parody and humor of Melville.

Darwin's influence upon Melville is not confined to these two works. Evidence shows that Melville was very well read in the other works of Darwin, that Melville's writings before and after "The Encantadas" show a growing familiarity with Darwin's work, and that Melville's attitude toward that thought was one of frank disagreement.

Chapter Two of this study will attempt to show the relationship of The Voyage of the Beagle and "The Encantadas" to the two major books of their respective authors. Darwin's Origin of Species is based to a large extent upon the observations and records that Darwin made during his voyage. The Galapagos Islands, in particular, served as a laboratory for Darwin in his study of evolution. In a sense, "The Encantadas" (1856) and Moby Dick (1851) are

more closely related than are any other two of Melville's works. In "The Encantadas" we find the style of Melville's writing to be refined to the same level as Moby Dick, and we see the basic ideas of Melville being expressed simply in "The Encantadas," powerfully in Moby Dick. To put it in another way, Chapter Two will show Darwin in the workshop, ordering his ideas, discovering his theories, and Melville in two different books, exhibiting his refined vision of the world and polished literary style.

Chapter Three of this study will examine the two primary works for the mechanics of the description in each and will compare and contrast them on such considerations as the objectivity, humor, and themes in each. Because of the scientific intent of The Voyage of the Beagle, we must examine it to determine if Darwin was able to keep a clinical detachment from his subject. Darwin, we will notice, is often unable to be objective, rather reflects quite often exuberance and zeal. The humor in the two works will be confined to one or two anecdotes in The Voyage of the Beagle; but, in "The Encantadas," it will include such techniques of humor as hyperbole and parody, as well as anecdotes. Since The Voyage of the Beagle and "The Encantadas" are works of literature, they are the vehicles through which their authors express themes. We will find that Charles Darwin attempts to show the struggle of life against an impossible environment; Herman Melville tries to

show the ultimate to which existence can sink yet still survive. In their respective themes the men are similar; they differ only in that Darwin sees existence on the ascent, generating itself from almost nothing; Melville sees existence on the descent, degenerating from something worthwhile to something worthless.

CHAPTER I

THE INFLUENCE OF DARWIN ON MELVILLE

The story of Herman Melville's life aboard the whaler Acushnet is a familiar tale. The voyage began from Fairhaven in January or February of 1841. It was an erratic journey: The Acushnet sailed directly from New England to Cape Horn, then roamed the Pacific, searching for, locating, and pursuing sperm whale.¹ Sometime between November, 1841, and February, 1842, the Acushnet sailed extensively in the vicinity of the Galapagos Islands, and Herman Melville had time to spend some days ashore.² The voyage ended for Melville in July, 1842, when, sickened by inadequate rations and by cramped, dirty sleeping quarters, and tired of his captain's tyrannical rule, seaman Melville jumped ship at the Marquesas Islands.³

The story of Darwin's life aboard the Beagle, by contrast with Melville's aboard the Acushnet, is markedly different. Darwin's voyage was a carefully planned, pleasant cruise, punctuated by frequent stops at ports and islands in both oceans. During these stops while the Beagle's stores were being replenished, the inquisitive

¹Charles Anderson, Melville in the South Seas (New York: 1939), pp. 47-48.

²Anderson, p. 49.

³Anderson, p. 69-70.

Darwin found much time for scientific study and exploration.⁴

Because the two cruises occurred six years apart-- Darwin's in 1835 and Melville's in 1841, the paths of the Acushnet and Beagle did not cross, at least not while Darwin and Melville were aboard.⁵ But interestingly enough, it appears that they did meet on a more significant level through the pages of The Voyage of the Beagle; Melville, it seems, read The Voyage of the Beagle before he wrote his "The Encantadas." The evidence supporting this conjecture is threefold: recent research⁶ shows not only that Melville served on a ship that had a library containing The Voyage of the Beagle but that he bought the volume shortly after he returned from the Marquesas; a systematic study of portions of the Darwin and Melville texts reveals a marked similarity of diction between the passages; and a glance at two of Melville's other works, Mardi and Clarel, shows Melville not only discussing evolution in general but mentioning Darwin by name and discussing Darwinism specifically.

Melville returned to New England from the Marquesas and Tahiti aboard the U.S. Frigate United States, signing aboard the vessel in August, 1843, leaving it at Boston on

⁴Beagle, passim.

⁵Anderson, p. 47; cf. Beagle, intro. XVI.

⁶This research is part of Jay Leyda's The Melville Log.

October 14, 1844. On July 6, 1844, eleven months after Melville signed aboard, it was recorded that the following book was transferred, along with some others, from the United States to the U.S. Frigate Savannah:

Voyages of H.B.M. Ships "Adventure and Beagle"⁷

The book referred to as being in the library of the United States is the three-volume set of the scientific study Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of His Majesty's Ships Adventure and Beagle.⁸ Of these volumes, the first two were written by the captain of the Beagle, Fitz Roy, and by the captain of an earlier surveying ship Adventure, Philip Parker King. These first two volumes met with the usual fate of scientific logs by being relegated to the literary limbo of library shelves; volume three by Darwin was an immediate popular success.⁹

Whether or not Melville read the Darwin volume at this time is not known; however, Melville, as a youth, was a voracious reader; thus it would seem likely that during

⁷Jay Leyda, The Melville Log, I (New York: 1951), 180.

⁸Anderson, p. 50

⁹Beagle, intro. XVI. According to Leonard Engels, two additional printings of this edition were made during 1839, the book's first year on the market. In 1845 a new edition was brought out which, although not identical to the 1839 version, is now the book known as The Voyage of the Beagle and is the edition used in this study. The difference between the 1839 and 1845 editions is primarily one of organization. Darwin consolidated certain

his stay aboard the United States, he would have had ample time to read books of tremendous significance to his life and time. But it is not necessary to speculate as to whether Melville did or did not read The Voyage of the Beagle aboard the United States. On April 10, 1847, Melville bought the following volumes at Gowan's Bookstore in New York:¹⁰

1 Webster's Dictionary	\$2.80
1 (Benjamin) Morrell's (Narrative of Four) Voyages	1.20
1 (Thomas J.) Jacobs' Scenes (Incidents, and Adventures in the Pacific Ocean)	1.00
1 Darwin's Voyage (of H.M.S. Beagle)	.72
3 Vols. Family Library @ .36	1.08

Melville, then, did have Darwin's The Voyage of the Beagle in his possession at the time he wrote his "Encantadas."¹¹

To be sure, Melville himself did have first-hand knowledge of his subject; however, his original stay at the

repetitious portions of his narrative, deleted some trivia, and added extra data from his scientific notes. The total effect was the reduction of the work from a length of 224,000 words to 213,000 words.

The edition aboard the United States in 1844 would have been the 1839 edition; however, the one Melville bought later at Gowan's Bookstore, since it was purchased in 1847, could have been the 1845 edition.

¹⁰Leyda, p. 240

¹¹In the introductory section of Moby Dick called "Extracts," Melville quotes from what he calls "Darwin's Voyage of a Naturalist." The quotation is taken directly from The Voyage of the Beagle, Chapter 10, p. 224.

Galapagos must have been of short duration. The Acushnet cruised in the vicinity of the Galapagos for an extended time, but actual landings by Melville must have been few, and these were no doubt landings for the purpose of procuring tortoises for feeding the crew. Melville admits his indebtedness to two contemporary voyagers for their accurate descriptions of the isles; he cites the two as David Porter and James Colnet.¹² He might have included the name of Charles Darwin with these two, but did not.

Here let it be said that you have but three eyewitness authorities worth mentioning touching the Enchanted Isles--Cowley, the buccaneer (1684); Colnet, the whaling-ground explorer (1798); Porter, the post-captain (1813). Other than these you have but barren, bootless allusions from some few passing voyagers or compilers.¹³

Just exactly why Melville failed to mention Darwin, to whom, as we shall see, he was so indebted for his material, is difficult to determine. It could be that Melville could not bring himself to cite a source that was so close to his own in technique yet so far away in basic philosophy.

But does this lack of awareness by Melville that Darwin was a visitor to "The Enchanted Isles" prove conclusively that Melville disregarded the existence of Darwin's The Voyage of the Beagle? No such superficial judgment can be made, if we are to examine textual evidence.

¹²Herman Melville, Selected Tales and Poems, ed. Richard Chase (New York: 1950), p. 252.

¹³Tales, p. 252.

To examine the descriptive techniques, diction, and phraseology of the two books is to see some essential relationships.

Darwin observes with clinical objectivity but with poetic power in speaking of the Galapagos Islands

that the entire surface of this part of the island seems to be permeated, like a sieve, by the subterranean vapors: . . . lava . . . has been blown into great bubbles; and . . . the tops of caverns . . . have fallen in, leaving circular pits . . . ; they give to the country an artificial appearance, which vividly reminds me of parts of Staffordshire, where the great iron-foundries are; . . . It is a strange cyclopean scene.¹⁴

When Herman Melville treats a similar scene, he finds the diction and the images of Darwin to be particularly apt for his heavily imagistic prose. He sees

. . . tumbled masses of blackish or greenish stuff like dross from an iron-furnace, forming dark clefts and caves. . . . It is a most Plutonian sight . . . , one seamed clinker from top to bottom; abounding in black caves like smithies; its central volcanoes standing like a gigantic chimney-stack.¹⁵

The similarity of language, of course, is apparent in these two selections; the caverns, the clefts, the pits, the caves are perhaps coincidental usages. But the similarity of dominant impression and of fundamental images is not natural. The suggestion of an association with intense heat--clinkers, smithies' fires, iron foundaries, chimney stacks--forces each man to a dominant impression of some

¹⁴Beagle, p. 375.

¹⁵Tales, p. 252.

Vulcan's underworld of Pluto and Cyclops.

Another instance of the literary affinity which is too clearly similar to be merely accidental occurs in the two descriptions of the large tortoises of the island.

Darwin relates that he

. . . met two large tortoises. These huge reptiles . . . seemed . . . like some antediluvian animals.¹⁶

Melville, in the same wording, says that one day three large antediluvian-looking tortoises were landed on deck.¹⁷

On the same subject, Darwin observes further that the tortoises, therefore, . . . when thirsty, are obliged to travel from a long distance. Hence broad and well-beaten paths branch off in every direction from the wells down to the sea-coast.¹⁸

Echoing the terminology and ideas of Darwin, Melville says that he

. . . again . . . beheld the vitreous inland rocks worn down and grooved into deep ruts by ages and ages of the slow-draggings of tortoises in quest of pools of scanty water . . .¹⁹

The mention that Darwin makes of the tortoises journeying slowly to water over "well-beaten" paths must have appealed to Melville's creative imagination, for it is an excellent lead for him to express his ideas about timelessness and to philosophize about endurance, resolution, and heroic toil. Biological timelessness and philosophical

¹⁶Beagle, pp. 375-376.

¹⁷Tales, p. 236.

¹⁸Beagle, p. 383.

¹⁹Tales, p. 234.

timelessness here strike a common chord in the ponderous, plodding tortoises that Charles Darwin and Herman Melville create.

A final interesting example of the proximity of these two writers in descriptive techniques and ideas occurs in the following passages. The special significance of these quotes is not so much in the similarity of diction--although that too is there--but in the similarity of organization. Darwin is very careful, in cataloging the birds of the islands, to place them in their proper biological classification; Melville very neatly parallels this technique by placing the birds of the islands on the rock ledges or shelves of Rock Rodondo.

According to Darwin,

The natural history of these islands is eminently curious, and well-deserves attention. Most of the organic productions are aboriginal. . . . The twenty-five birds consist, firstly, of a hawk, curiously intermediate in structure between the buzzard and the American group of carrion-feeding polybori. . . . Secondly, there are two owls, representing the short eared and white barn-owls of Europe. Thirdly, a wren, three tyrant fly-catchers (two of them species of *Pyrocephalus*) and a dove. Fourthly, a swallow . . . differing from *Progne purpurea* . . .²⁰

Melville, less scientifically inclined, does not use the biological shelving of birds that Darwin uses; however, he definitely observes the structure from shelf to shelf.

I know not where one can better study the natural history of strange sea-fowl than on Rodondo. It is the

²⁰Beagle, p. 379.

aviary of the ocean. Birds light here which have never touched mast or tree; hermit birds, which ever fly alone; cloud birds, familiar with unpierced zones of air.²¹

As we ascend from shelf to shelf [on the rock tower, Rodondo], we find tenants of the tower aerially disposed in order of their magnitude: --- gannets, black and speckled haglets, jays, sea-hens, sperm-whale-birds, gulls of all varieties. . . .²²

In these two quotes I believe we find the most remarkable of all the similarities in Darwin and Melville. In the first sentences of the two passages, the men agree that the natural history of the islands is very worthy of study.²³ In this same quotation Melville neatly parallels the scientific classification system employed by Darwin. Where Darwin attempts to place his birds on the branches of genus and species, Melville places his birds into the shelves of Rock Rodondo, serializing them almost as neatly as they could be by Latin appellation.

On the subject of common ideas dealt with by the two authors in these two works, I will have much to say in

²¹Tales, p. 242.

²²Tales, p. 242.

²³Darwin proceeds to mention, as he does so often in this work, that most of the organic productions on the islands are aboriginal; perhaps most strikingly so, as a group, are the land birds. Melville, almost in reply to that very assertion by Darwin, states that he knows of birds on Rock Rodondo that have "never touched mast or tree." This observation is indeed strange for Melville to make; what possible group of birds has never touched tree or mast? Either Melville agreed that some of the birds were aboriginal, or he was again poking fun at Darwin, asking him from where in the world such unknown birds could have come.

Chapter Two of this thesis. For the present let it suffice for me to mention that there is considerable overlapping of ideas in these two works. When the men mention the tortoise, they think of time; when they see the iguanas, they visualize prehistoric monsters reduced to this latter-day species; when they think of climate, they see life and death; and when they see human inhabitants on the islands, they see poverty and crime, cruelty and human suffering. On these islands, Darwin and Melville find a host of ideas that feeds the interests of each.

The evidence supporting the conjecture that the Darwin work influenced Melville, however, is extensive within "The Encantadas." The reaction of Melville to Darwin's writing is twofold: Melville responds both to Darwin's descriptive techniques and to Darwin's ideas. For example, Melville was evidently not at all impressed by Darwin's technique of using tables to illustrate some of his points. In fact, he found the technique worthy of ridicule. Let us examine the uses to which Darwin and Melville put the table.

At one point in The Voyage of the Beagle, Darwin found that the use of a table was an expedient method for showing his lay readers the numbers of species of plants on the islands. His table in Chapter Seventeen is this:²⁴

²⁴Beagle, p. 396.

Name of island	Total no. of species	No. of species found in other parts of the world	No. of species confined to the Galapagos Archipelago	No. confined to the one island	No. of species confined to the Galapagos Archipelago, but found on more than one island
James Island	71	33	38	30	8
Albemarle Island	46	18	26	22	4
Chatham Island	32	16	16	12	4
Charles Island	68	39 (or 29, if the probably imported plants be subtracted)	29	21	8

Darwin, of course, meant this table to be a quick reference for his reader: the reader has only to scan the table to determine the total numbers of species on each island in the first column, then to check the next four columns to see the breakdown of the total into numbers of "aboriginal" and non-"aboriginal" species.

The table serves an even broader, and certainly more significant, purpose for Darwin: it shows very dramatically in columns three, four, and five that certain plants existing on these islands were completely unknown elsewhere in the world; it shows, by these "aboriginal" species of plant life, that these islands possessed a kind of "creative

force."²⁵ Darwin also found a similar condition among the species of animal life on the islands, especially among the birds. Although he uses no table to show it, he determines that what at first appeared to be an abundance of new genera of bird life was in reality an abundance of mutations forming many species of a few genera. These mutations were formed because of the strange nature of the islands; birds adapting to different islands were forced to change--in structure of bill and in dietary habits--in order to survive in their new environments. Putting it simply, Darwin had found a natural laboratory for the study of evolution.²⁶

In marked contrast to Darwin's serious purpose of using the tables to illustrate a prime point is Melville's attempt. Melville drew up a table of his own in "The Encantadas," a table showing the population of Albemarle Island. Melville's table,²⁷ of course, is pure nonsense and humor; it also seems to be parody.

²⁵Beagle, p. 398.

²⁶Beagle, pp. 380-381.

²⁷Tales, pp. 247-248.

Men,	none
Ant-eaters,	unknown
Man-haters,	unknown
Lizards,	500,000
Snakes,	500,000
Spiders,	10,000,000
Salamanders,	unknown
Devils,	<u>do.</u>
making a clean total of	11,000,000,
exclusive of an incomputable host of fiends, ant-eaters, man-haters, and salamanders.	

The first striking feature of this table is Melville's use of numerical totals. Darwin gives exact totals for his species; for instance, he lists the total number of species on James Island as seventy-one, not "about seventy." Melville's table gives a humorously developed list of "species" and numerical totals, wherever he can "determine" the totals, just as Darwin does; and Melville is forced to qualify his total just as Darwin does one of his. But, unlike Darwin, Melville adds what numbers he has--three out of a possible eight--and finds a rather absurd total of eleven million inhabitants on the island. He appears to be mocking the certainty that Darwin has that his numbers are correct. Melville lists in his table ant-eaters, man-haters, and salamanders as existing on the island, but in

unknown numbers. He recognizes also that devils populate the island, but uses the abbreviation for ditto instead of the number of their population evidently to show that they, like the salamanders, are of more than ten million in number and thus are incomputable. But of the number of men on the island, Melville is sure: there are none. Perhaps he is conceding the possibility to Darwin that this "host of fiends" could be the product of some sublimely negative "life force" on the island.

I believe, then, that Melville did react to the techniques of Darwin's description. In the case of the tables, it seems to have been an unfavorable satiric reaction.

But Melville appears also to have reacted favorably to some of Darwin. Specifically, Melville seems to have been so impressed by parts of Darwin's Chapter Seventeen of The Voyage of the Beagle that he used these passages as guides to similar descriptions in "The Encantadas."

Having seen the similarities that exist within the two works, and Melville's satiric reaction as well, let us proceed to our final consideration of this chapter: the evidence supporting the assertion that there is an inter-relationship between Darwin and Melville exists in other Melville works in the form of references to evolution and to Darwin himself. I shall here confine my documentation to those passages reflecting Melville's interest in the

theory of evolution--and in Darwin's work on that subject--that occur in two of Melville's works created at about the same time as "The Encantadas." These two are the novel, Mardi, and the long poem, Clarel. I do not mean to suggest that these works are the only ones, outside of "The Encantadas," in which Melville deals with some of Darwin's thinking; I mean here to demonstrate only that Melville's apparent interest in Darwin and evolution is not confined solely to the one work, but that it permeates others of his writings.

We have seen that in Melville's apparent use of Darwin's observations from The Voyage of the Beagle, Melville never mentions Darwin by name nor does he acknowledge the existence of Darwin's pet theory, evolution.²⁸ It would have been impossible for Melville to speak with certainty about a Darwinian theory of evolution, since Darwin did not publish it as a theory until 1859.²⁹ As a matter of fact, Darwin, at the time Melville wrote "The Encantadas," was just formulating his theory from data gathered primarily from the Galapagos Islands. However, the theory of evolution was current and popular before the Darwin interpretation, and Melville had some familiarity with it

²⁸See note 13.

²⁹Darwin and His Critics, ed. Bernard R. Kogan (San Francisco: 1960), intro. p. I.

even before he wrote "The Encantadas," as we shall see in a passage from Mardi. Before we move on to an examination of the evidence external to "The Encantadas" that shows Melville confronted by evolution and by Darwin, we perhaps had better consider the books relative to our examination.

Let us examine the dates of publication of these works of Darwin and Melville to determine whether the element of time of publication is a factor in the study.

The most prolific phase of Melville's literary career was the 1840's and 1850's. In succession he published Omoo (1847), Mardi (1849), Redburn (1849), White-Jacket (1850), Moby Dick (1851), Fierre (1852), and the Piazza Tales (1856).³⁰ All of the works post-date the first edition of The Voyage of the Beagle (1839) and the second, more popular edition (1845), but all of them also pre-date Darwin's major work, Origin of Species (1859). Of these writings of Melville before 1859, only one, Mardi, was found to contain a reference to evolution; none mentions Darwin. However, after 1859, one little-read, but important, work was turned out by Melville--that was his six-hundred page poem, Clarel. Clarel was published in 1876, but it was perhaps begun as early as 1859.³¹ Mrs. Melville, in a letter to her mother in 1859, mentioned that

³⁰Anderson, intro. p. 5.

³¹William Ellery Sedgwick, Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind (Cambridge: 1945), pp. 202-203.

"Herman has taken to writing poetry."³² This date, although it proves nothing, helps establish one fact--that Clarel was being written by Melville during the 1860's, a period when Darwin's name was on every lip, from the streets of New England to the House of Lords of old England. Melville's interest in Darwin is reflected in Clarel to a large extent.

Melville had, of course, been reared on the pre-Darwin interpretation of the Bible. The allusions and allegories in most of his writings are founded solidly upon the Old Testament. He believed that Adam was the first man, created by God, the forebear of all men.³³ He believed this so strongly that even though he disagreed with evolution from the first, his early mention of it is light and humorous. Consider this quote:

Babalanja--

But my ancestors were kangaroos, not monkeys, as old Boddoo erroneously opined. . . .³⁴ Among the earliest discovered land fossils, the relics of kangaroos are discernible, but not the relics of men. Hence, there were no giants in those days; but, on the contrary, kangaroos formed the first edition of mankind, since revised and corrected. . . .³⁵

³²Sedgwick, loc cit.

³³Newton Arvin, Herman Melville (New York: 1950), p. 181.

³⁴James Burnet (1714-1799), Lord Monboddoo, developed the theory that man had slowly risen from an animal condition, and he included man in the same species with the orangoutang.

³⁵Herman Melville, Mardi, II (London: 1922), 218.

The implication of the tone of this quote is that Melville saw evolution as some passing scientific fad. This light treatment is significant in its marked contrast with later discussions of evolution by Melville. By the time he had finished reading Darwin and writing Clarel, Melville's approach was no longer light and scoffing, but serious and concerned.

The seemingly nonsensical passage on kangaroos just quoted from Mardi perhaps masks the reason for Melville's disbelief in evolution; for Melville, in his argument for kangaroos as the ancestors of mankind, has committed, evidently knowingly, the logical fallacy post hoc ergo propter hoc--after this, therefore because of it. Thus, he seems to be ridiculing one evolutionist by telling him that because men appeared on earth after some other form of animal--be it orangoutang or kangaroo--is not sufficient grounds for assuming that man evolved from any of those other forms.

Melville, then, had some knowledge of evolution before he wrote either "The Encantadas" or Clarel. But passages in Clarel make us certain that Melville knew Darwin well at the latter date. He says specifically that

Darwin quotes
From Shelley, that forever floats
Over all desert places known,
Mysterious doubt --- an awful one.
He quotes, adopts it.³⁶

³⁶Herman Melville, Clarel, I (London: 1924), 215.

"Darwin quotes from Shelley"--these are not the words of a man who quickly perused the writings of another. The casual way in which they are introduced into the flow of the poem, the assurance of Melville that Darwin adopted the Shelley idea betray a man vitally familiar with the writings of another, a man who has studied those writings and has reflected upon them.

A few pages later in Clarel, Melville again mentions Darwin. And, again, Melville attempts to play down the importance of Darwin by showing his ideas to be nothing new, only old ones in newer, better statement. Melville's words are to the point.

. . . Derwent said,
 '. . . science has her eagles too.'
 Here musefully Rolfe hung his head;
 Then lifted: 'Eagles? ay; but few.
 And search we in their aeries lone
 What find we, pray? perchance, a bone.'
 'A very cheerful point of view.'
 'Tis as one takes it. Not unknown
 That even in physics much late lore
 But drudges after Plato's theme;
 Or supplements--but little more--
 Some Hindoo's speculative dream
 Of thousand years ago. And, own,
 Darwin is but his grandsire's³⁷ son.'³⁸

At the very end of Clarel, when attempting to answer

³⁷Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), poet and scientist, was the grandfather of Charles Darwin. His one long scientific work, Zoonomia (1794-96), expressed the view that all warm-blooded animals may have evolved over the ages from one living filament, which received its life from the First Cause.

³⁸Clarel, I, p. 252.

the question that has plagued him throughout the poem, "science and faith, can these two unite?" Melville writes the following philosophical passage and again refers to Darwin.

If Luther's day expand to Darwin's year,
 Shall that exclude the hope--foreclose the fear?
 Yea, ape and angel,³⁹ strife and old debate--
 The harps of heaven and dreary songs of hell;
 Science the feud can only aggravate--
 The running battle of star and clod
 Shall run on forever, if there be no God.⁴⁰

The conclusions, I think, are inescapable: Melville was challenged by Darwin and responded to him in a later stage of Melville's career. That is not conjecture. By reading the influence back, before this stage, we can conclude that Melville knew Darwin at an earlier date. And, indeed, internal evidence as particularly provided by the tables confirms the earliest connection, "The Encantadas" and Darwin's The Voyage of the Beagle. That Melville was both aided and challenged early is clear both from the descriptive sources he appropriated from The Voyage of the Beagle and from the satiric use that Melville makes of some Darwin materials. Moreover, the particular line along

³⁹Clarel was first begun by Melville in 1866. Two years before that, in a speech at Oxford, Benjamin Disraeli said of Darwinism:

What is the question now placed before society with glib assurance the most astounding? The question is this--Is man an ape or an angel? My Lord, I am on the side of the angels.

⁴⁰Clarel, II, 297.

which Melville's thought first developed in "The Encantadas" seems to be the result of the challenge first found in The Voyage of the Beagle.

CHAPTER II

THE INFLUENCE OF THE VOYAGE OF THE BEAGLE ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN "THE ENCANTADAS" AND MOBY DICK

In a sense, "The Encantadas" and The Voyage of the Beagle are closely related to their authors' more ambitious works. From his observations during the voyage of the HMS Beagle, Darwin took a germ of an idea about organic evolution, building it and refining it into his Origin of Species. In his short work, "The Encantadas," Melville employed a number of writing devices and many ideas which he had used on a grander scale in Moby Dick. Just how these experiences in The Voyage of the Beagle became the Origin of Species and how these writing devices and the ideas of "The Encantadas" were used in Moby Dick, it will be the task of this chapter to ascertain.

Showing that the observations recorded by Darwin in The Voyage of the Beagle, particularly those at the Galapagos Islands, form the base for the Origin of Species is not a difficult task. Not only are there numerous references to the Galapagos Islands throughout the Origin of Species, but also there are a number of major ideas within the Origin of Species that can be traced directly to the pages of The Voyage of the Beagle. In addition to this textual material, two bits of testimony from Darwin's own

letters and from the introduction to the Origin of Species are extant, establishing, in Darwin's own words, the importance of his 1835 experiences to the creation of Origin of Species.

The second task of this chapter will be to attempt to establish a special relationship between Melville's "The Encantadas" and Moby Dick. This task is the more difficult of the two because there exists no testimony by Melville establishing an affinity between the two works. However, the textual evidence supporting such an assertion is abundant.

The Origin of Species was published in 1859, exactly twenty years after The Voyage of the Beagle was first published and twenty-four years after Darwin's visit to the Galapagos Islands.¹ During the decade between the two publication dates, Darwin was "patiently accumulating and reflecting on all sorts of facts which could possibly have any bearing on it [the Origin of Species]." ² Many of these "facts" were evidently part of The Voyage of the Beagle, for within the Origin of Species there are many passages which either come directly from the early book, or are based upon material in that book. For example, in speaking of the definitions of variety and species as they are to be

¹Supra, intro. p. 1; p. 21.

²Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species and Descent of Man (New York: NPD), p. 11.

understood by the reader of Origin of Species, Darwin is reminded that

When comparing, and seeing others compare, the birds from closely neighboring islands of the Galapagos archipelago, I was much struck how entirely vague and arbitrary the distinction between species and varieties.³

In case after case the Galapagos Islands provided a wealth of examples which could be fitted into the discussions within the Origin of Species as the above example.

The most extended use of the Galapagos Islands that Darwin employs is found in Chapter XIII of the Origin of Species. It is in this chapter, while discussing the inhabitants of oceanic islands, that Darwin deals with his experiences on the Galapagos at length, using the pages of The Voyage of the Beagle as his source book. In this chapter he discusses a number of theories that are also found in The Voyage of the Beagle, such as: modifications of species of birds, the deficiency of certain classes of life on the islands, and the relationship of species inhabiting different islands within a group of islands. In dealing with these rather broad subjects Darwin continually uses facts about the Galapagos Islands, often modifying those facts from what they were in the original work. A case in point is concerned with the different kinds of birds inhabiting the islands. In The Voyage of the Beagle Darwin

³Origin, p. 42.

recorded, on the spot, that he "obtained twenty-six kinds (of land-birds) all peculiar to the group and found nowhere else."⁴ In the Origin of Species he writes that "in the Galapagos Islands there are 26 land-birds; of these 21 (or perhaps 23) are peculiar. . . ."⁵ In regards to marine birds, whereas in The Voyage of the Beagle he reported that of the eleven kinds three were new species,⁶ in the Origin of Species he modifies this latter figure to just two new species.⁷ Darwin, then, although he makes extensive use of The Voyage of the Beagle for information about the origin and distribution of species, is not afraid to alter this information, evidently in the light of new discoveries about the information.

Another important theory that was expressed in The Voyage of the Beagle is that there is a relationship between species inhabiting an island group and those inhabiting the nearest mainland. Darwin had observed at the Galapagos Islands that the species there were only modified members of the species he had seen on the mainland of South America.⁸ After discussing this theory in the Origin of Species, Darwin comes to the obvious conclusion about this phenomenon that, even though the conditions for life

⁴Beagle, p. 379.

⁵Origin, p. 305.

⁶Beagle, p. 381.

⁷Origin, p. 305.

⁸Beagle, p. 393.

are remarkably different between the Galapagos Islands and the mainland of South America, the only means by which inhabitants could occur upon the islands would have been by migration of species from the mainland to the islands.⁹

This conclusion of Darwin's concerning the transporting of species of a mainland to an island group assumes a greater importance than just completing a theory, for it uncovers again the central concept of the Origin of Species: natural selection at work in a natural laboratory. Just as Darwin could discern, through the principle of inheritance, the original birthplace of the Galapagean species of life,¹⁰ so too could he see at the Galapagos, these species being modified into varieties by a process of natural selection. His observation that six variations of bill structure could be found among the birds of the islands forced him to conclude, even in The Voyage of the Beagle, that "one species had been taken and modified for different ends."¹¹ Although Darwin perhaps did not realize the full significance of this statement when he wrote it, the observation seems only a little less apt an illustration of natural selection than is his example of the varieties of pigeons that he uses in the Origin of Species to show the process of natural selection. The only significant advantage of the second example

⁹Origin, p. 310.

¹⁰Origin, p. 310.

¹¹Beagle, p. 381.

over the first is that the second is an experiment produced under careful laboratory control, whereas the first proceeded as an uncontrolled reaction in nature's laboratory, the Galapagos Islands.

Two statements by Darwin himself establish the importance of his experiences at the Galapagos Islands to the creation of the Origin of Species. In his own introduction to the work, Darwin writes that

When on board the HMS 'Beagle' as a naturalist, I was much struck with certain facts in the distribution of the organic being inhabiting South America, and in the geological relations of the present to the past inhabitants of that continent.¹²

Where this quote refers but generally to the entire voyage and to the continent of South America, the following quote refers specifically to the Galapagos Islands as the important experience of the cruise:

It would have been a strange fact if I had overlooked the importance of isolation, seeing that it was such cases as that of the Galapagos archipelago, which led me to study the origin of species.¹³

That Darwin's experiences at the Galapagos Islands as recorded in The Voyage of the Beagle served as an important base to the Origin of Species seems an inescapable conclusion. The textual evidence as well as Darwin's own testimony about the importance of these experiences points

¹²Origin, p. 11.

¹³Francis Darwin, Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, III (London: 1888), 59.

directly to the conclusion that the Galapagos Islands served as a natural laboratory for Darwin in his theories about organic evolution.

Although it was published after Moby Dick, "The Encantadas" appears to be a sort of capsule Moby Dick. Although one cannot say that the materials and the experiences that Melville acquired at the Galapagos Islands served as the base for Moby Dick, one can show that there is an affinity between these two works that is apparent both in Melville's writing style and in Melville's ideas and themes.

In attempting to show this affinity, this chapter will compare and contrast my critical evaluations of "The Encantadas" with those of Newton Arvin, Milton R. Stern, and R. E. Watters on the entire Moby Dick, and of Sherman Paul and Don Geiger on "The Towns-Ho's Story." This chapter will deal with the poetic devices of style such as alliteration and rhythm and metaphorical language, with the technique of reinforcement, and with the scientific portions of both works. In ideas and themes, the chapter will deal with characterization, comparing the Chola Widow with Steelkilt and Oberlus with Ahab, and with the similarity of Melville's attitude toward nature as it is reflected in "The Encantadas" and Moby Dick. In no way is this chapter intended to be an exhaustive study of the relationship between the two Melville works; rather it is intended only to give a suggestion of the affinity of the Melville of

"The Encantadas" to the Melville of Moby Dick.

One of the immediate, striking similarities between the styles of writing in "The Encantadas" and Moby Dick is Melville's use of comparison. The comparisons in the following quotations are both psychological and geographical. In attempting to establish the effect of the solitary desolation of the Galapagos upon the mind of the observer, Melville says, in "The Encantadas":

. . . as for solitariness; the great forests of the north, the expanses of un navigated waters, the Greenland ice-fields, are the profoundest of solitudes to a human observer; still the magic of their changeable tides and season mitigates their terror. . . .

But the special curse . . . of the Encantadas, that which exalts them in desolation above Idumea and the Pole, is, that to them change never comes. . . .¹⁴

The mere suggestion of solitude and desolation calls up geographical comparisons in Melville's mind--"great forests," "un navigated waters," and "Greenland ice-fields."

In Moby Dick, Melville uses the same technique of comparison.

To the native Indians of Peru, the continued sight of the snowcapped Andes conveys naught of dread, except, perhaps, in the mere fancying of the eternal frosted desolateness reigning at such vast altitudes, and the natural conceit of what a fearfulness it would be to lose oneself in such inhuman solitude. Much the same is it with the backwoodsman of the West, who with comparative indifference views on unbounded prairie sheeted with driven snow, no shadow of tree or twig to break the fixed trance of whiteness.¹⁵

¹⁴ Tales, p. 231.

¹⁵ Herman Melville, Moby Dick (New York: 1945), p. 205.

Because Melville's purposes in the two passages are quite similar, it is natural that his techniques in developing the passages should be the same.

Another characteristic of the styles of these two works in their closeness to poetry in rhythm and alliteration. In describing a moon-lit night, in "The Encantadas," Melville writes:

The great full moon burnt in the low west like a half spent beacon, casting a soft mellow tinge upon the sea like that cast by a waning fire of embers upon a midnight hearth. . . . The wind was light; the waves languid; the stars twinkled with a faint effulgence; all nature seemed supine with the long night watch, and half-suspended in jaded expectation of the sun.¹⁶

The beauty of this poetic passage is seen both in its variety of rhythm and in its variety of alliteration. The rhythm is in the shift from the long, smooth subordinations of the first sentence to the short independent clauses of the first part of the second sentence and then back to the flowing rhythm of the second half of sentence two. The alliteration in this passage is intricate as well as various. Melville uses combinations of no less than eleven beginning consonants; notice just the repetition of the s and w sounds--spent, soft, sea, stars, seemed, supine, suspended, sun, and west, waning, wind, was, waves, with, watch. The passage is very carefully worded.

The same techniques are apparent in Moby Dick. For

¹⁶Tales, p. 240.

example, in a passage from it, again about a moonlit night, Melville writes:

. . . One serene and moonlight night, . . . all the waves rolled by like scrolls of silver; and, by their soft, suffusing seethings, made what seemed a silvery silence, not a solitude; on such a silent night a silvery jet was seen far in advance of the white bubbles at the bow.¹⁷

Again the alliteration of s sounds; perhaps Melville's attempt here and in the first passage is to lend to his description a tone of quietness through these sounds. But whatever the aim may be, the importance of this technique for our purposes is that it shows a stylistic relationship between "The Encantadas" and Moby Dick.

Melville, throughout all of his writing, relies heavily upon metaphorical language to keep his imagery from becoming too narrow. He never allows his reader to forget the primary image, the picture before him; but he is always conscious of the possibilities of expanding that picture, of giving his reader the wider view.¹⁸ Newton Arvin, in writing on this subject, points out that "we are repeatedly put in mind of royalty or imperial dignity, of Czars and Sultans; or of the great figures of legend or history . . . , or of Biblical story." Arvin states further that many of Melville's metaphors are related to "architectural or monumental grandeur (the ruins of Lima, 'the great dome of St.

¹⁷Moby Dick, p. 248.

¹⁸Arvin, p. 159.

Peter's,' . . .) or to naturalistic power and beauty ('the unabated Hudson,' . . . 'the flame Baltic of Hell,' . . .)." ¹⁹ To these metaphors from nature, one might add others from Moby Dick, such as "Virginia's Natural Bridge," the "Mystical bower of Crete," and "Virginia's Dismal Swamp," for the book contains a multitude of them.

In "The Encantadas," Melville is also conscious of metaphor, particularly metaphors of nature which spring easily from his subject matter. Such comparisons as those to the "wastes of weedy Babylon," the Adirondack Mountains, the Roman Coliseum, the Bell Tower of St. Mark, and "boundless . . . Kentucky" are but a few of the many employed in the shorter work.

For the most part the metaphors that involve legend, history, the Bible, and nature are but passing, brief references in the pages of Moby Dick and "The Encantadas"; however, there are places in both books where Melville pauses and dwells upon a particular metaphor, making it symbolic in the process. Three parallel instances in the books are concerned with fire, with color in the whale and tortoise, and with age and size of the two animals.

The metaphors concerned with fire form a major portion of the secondary imagery of "The Encantadas." Not only is the reader kept ever conscious of fire by Melville's

¹⁹Arvin, p. 160.

constant use of such words as cinders, torrid, burnt, furnace, ashes, and charred, but he is forced to keep the word in mind by such phrases as "lees of fire," "marks of fire," "ball-room blaze," and "penal conflagration." The extension of the fire imagery produces the effect of transforming the Galapagos Islands into a symbol of Hell.

In Moby Dick Melville extends the fire metaphor even further than he does in "The Encantadas." Two such instances are in "The Try-Works" and "The Candles."

In the chapter called "The Try-Works," Melville is very close to the fire metaphor of "The Encantadas." The midnight scene of the try-works in full operation is a re-creation of a scene from Hell. In Melville's words:

. . . the snaky flames darted. . . . The smoke rolled away in sullen heaps. . . . Here lounged the watch . . ., looking into the red heat of the fire, till their eyes felt scorched in their heads. Their tawny features, . . . all begrimed with smoke and sweat, their matted beards, and . . . barbaric brilliancy of their teeth, all . . . were strangely revealed. to and fro . . . the harpooners wildly gesticulated with their huge pronged forks . . ., as the wind howled on, and the sea leaped, and the ship groaned and dived, and yet steadfastly shot her red hell further and further into the blackness of the sea and the night. . . .²⁰

"The Candles," the example we will next examine, represents a completely different approach to the fire metaphor from anything that he tries in "The Encantadas."

The candles, or "corpusants" as Melville also calls

²⁰Moby Dick, p. 455.

them, seem the exact opposite, symbolically, of Hell; they appear, like the tongues of fire of the New Testament, to be a sign from God, a symbol of supernatural power. Rising straight into the night, "tipped with pallid fire . . . , like three gigantic wax tapers before an altar," they are seen clearly by Ahab as the spirit which is the object of his defiance. In this metaphorical use of fire, then, Melville reaches beyond the immediate association he employs in "The Encantadas" to a metaphor more abstract yet more grand.

There seems to be a similarity between "The Encantadas" and Moby Dick in the way that Melville is impressed by two rather fabulous creatures--the tortoise and the whale. In "The Encantadas" Melville continually points to the tortoise as a beast worthy of envy and of pity because of its age. In one sentence Melville can speak of the tortoise as expressing "lasting sorrow and penal hopelessness," but at the same time possessing "wonderful longevity." He sees them as "wondrous," "mystic," "enchanted," and "incredible" because of their age. Melville calls them "dateless," "antediluvian," "mystic" creatures.

By the same token, the whale's size is a continuing source of wonder and amazement to Melville. What reader can forget the sight of the Pequod leaning heavily over in the water as the whaler's crew strips the blankets of blubber from the whale's body. Its size is such that, even

in partially raising the leviathan from the sea, the ship nearly capsizes. Or who can forget, after reading Moby Dick, the armada of whales lying peacefully in the Straits of Sinda. Even the day-old suckling infant whale "measured some fourteen feet in length, and some six-feet in girth." The amazed Melville seemed to stand in awe at the size of the whales in Moby Dick just as he does at the age of the tortoise of "The Encantadas." That there is a similarity between tortoises and whales occurred also to Melville himself, for he writes at one point about some of the more renowned whales of history, saying of one:

Was it not so, O Don Miguel! thou Chilian whale,
marked like an old tortoise with mystic hieroglyphics
upon his back.²¹

The tortoise and the whale fascinated Melville perhaps because they are set apart so definitely by their extraordinary age and size, characteristics which make them worthwhile subjects of extraordinary books.

A final instance of similar use of metaphor in "The Encantadas" and Moby Dick is also concerned directly with tortoises and whales. Much has been said and written about Melville's chapter in Moby Dick on "The Whiteness of the Whale," and to be sure, it is a chapter which is central to the theme of Moby Dick. However, by introducing this chapter Melville only extends one of the central metaphors

²¹Moby Dick, p. 218.

of "The Encantadas." That metaphor is contained in the title of Sketch Second, "Two Sides to a Tortoise." It is here that Melville, in discussing the duality of the Galapagos Islands, finds himself drawn naturally into a comparison of the islands with the tortoise. The passage seems to be pointed to directly by Newton Arvin's statement, about Moby Dick, that

Melville's imagination was obsessed by the spectacle of a natural and human scene . . . in which goodness and evil, beneficence and destructiveness, light and darkness, seem bafflingly intermixed.²²

Notice how well the Arvin statement applies to "The Encantadas" even though it was intended to apply to Moby Dick.

. . . even the tortoise, dark and melancholy as it is up the back, still possesses a bright side. . . . Moreover, every one knows that tortoises . . . are of such a make, that if you put them on their backs you thereby expose their bright sides without possibility of their recovering themselves, and turning into view the other. But after . . . and because you have done this, you should not swear that the tortoise has no dark side. Enjoy the bright, keep it turned up perpetually if you can; but be honest, and don't deny the black. The tortoise is both black and bright.²³

With much the same underlying theme, the whiteness of the whale is exposed by Melville for its mixed quality. As he points out that

for all these accumulated associations (of whiteness), with whatever is sweet, and honorable, and sublime, there yet lurks an elusive something in the innermost idea of the hue, which strikes . . . panic to the soul. . . .²⁴

²²Arvin, p. 183.

²³Tales, p. 236.

²⁴Moby Dick, p. 200.

The intermixing of opposites--the black with the bright, the sweet with the terrorizing--seems truly a side of the Melville mind not only in Moby Dick, as Arvin pointed out, but in "The Encantadas" as well.

Another technique of Melville's writing that is apparent in both "The Encantadas" and Moby Dick is one that I have labeled repetition as it appears in "The Encantadas." This same technique--called reinforcement--is discussed by one critic in connection with Moby Dick. Milton R. Stern writes that

the simplest instrument Melville uses, this [reinforcement] is almost a Dreiseresque repetition of similar details which, by quantitative intensification, becomes a vehicle for the expression of a controlling theme.²⁵

Stern's statement--valid, perhaps for Moby Dick--applies to any Melville work, "The Encantadas" included; however, the repetition in "The Encantadas," remains as the most serious defect of an otherwise outstanding piece of fiction, although it is true that much of the repetition used in "The Encantadas" does aid in "the expression of a controlling theme."²⁶

One final similarity in the two works lies in their common use of scientific material. Perhaps partly as the result of Melville's interest in Darwin's work, "The

²⁵Milton R. Stern, "Some Techniques of Melville's Perception," PMLA, LXXIII (June, 1958), 252.

²⁶Stern, loc. cit.

Encantadas" is padded heavily with information about the animal life on the Galapagos--information that reveals Melville as an amateur naturalist. This interest on the part of Melville in matters scientific is felt quite strongly by any reader of Moby Dick, for in the "Cetology" chapter alone the careful, though sometimes humorous, classification of the types of whales betrays a Melville who is perhaps even more interested in the material of the naturalist than he is in "The Encantadas."

In the area of themes, Moby Dick and "The Encantadas" also have much in common. Some of the common themes that occur are in the tales within tales, in his discussions of pride, and in his use of multiple reactions to nature.

The two most polished tales within "The Encantadas" and Moby Dick are "The Chola Widow of Norfolk Isle" and "The Town-ho's Story." Hunilla, the Chola Widow, and Steelkilt, the central figure in the Town-ho's Story, have a good deal in common. In these stories, as he later does in Billy Budd, Melville probes into the question of divine judgment. Steelkilt and Hunilla represent humanity unjustly punished, yet humanity able to stand up to the punishment with Christ-like passivity. There is, at the center of these stories, what Sherman Paul calls "an affirmation of the sanctity of personality and of the kind of democracy

that recognizes kings in commoners."²⁷

Both Hunilla and Steelkilt fall into their respective hells through the treachery of other humans. Although Hunilla is made an Isolato by the deaths of her husband and her brother at sea, still the basic reason for her confinement upon Norfolk Island is that the ship that brought her to the island fails to return. Hunilla is betrayed by a stranger's "unkept promises of joy." Steelkilt in a parallel way is betrayed by Radney, whose attempt to "sting and insult" him provokes Steelkilt's wrath and leads to Steelkilt's confinement in the "fetid closeness" of the forecastle.

Just as Hunilla and Steelkilt both fall into their hells in similar fashion, so too are they saved in a parallel way--through the intervention of God. Steelkilt, on the verge of destroying himself by murdering Radney, is saved in this way: "Heaven itself seemed to step in to take out of his hands and into its own the damning thing he would have done."²⁸ Moby Dick appears near the ship, and it is he who kills Radney. Don Gieger points out that "the whale becomes the symbol of divine justice. . . ." In Hunilla's case, another type of divine justice occurs. Hunilla's dwelling upon Norfolk Island is on the opposite

²⁷Sherman Paul, "Melville's "The Town-Ho's Story'," American Literature, XLI (1946), 212.

²⁸Moby Dick, p. 274.

side of the island from where Melville's ship is at anchor. Thus because of the size of the island, it would seem impossible that Hunilla could know that the ship is there. How does she know of the ship? In her own words, ". . . Something came flitting by me. It touched my cheek, my heart. . . ." Truly, the salvation of Hunilla by a mysterious "something" seems equally as strange as the salvation of Steelkilt by the whale. Just as Hunilla and Steelkilt seem on the verge of becoming completely tragic figures, destroyed by something beyond them as Billy Budd is destroyed, they both receive a reprieve by God and are saved, reaffirming the reader's faith in "divine justice."

Pride is a recurring virtue and vice in the characters created by Melville. He raises Hunilla as an object of worship because of her unflinching right pride. But wrong pride is the vice of Ahab. R. E. Watters says that the quality that makes Ahab an Isolato is his pride and vanity, for in the end he reveals only "self-centered egotism."²⁹ In the words of Newton Arvin, Ahab's tragic flaw is his pride, his "inflated arrogance," his "conviction of his superiority to the mass of ordinary men."³⁰

Who, after reading the comments of Watters and Arvin, can help but recall another man guilty of the same

²⁹R. E. Watters, "Melville's 'Isolatoos,'" PMLA, LX (1945), 1140.

³⁰Arvin, p. 179.

sin--Oberlus, the hermit of "The Encantadas." Note some of the phrases that Melville uses in describing Oberlus: "selfish ambition," "the love of rule for its own sake," "a vast idea of his own importance," "a pure animal . . . scorn for all the rest of the universe." The ease with which one could fit these phrases into a description of Ahab perhaps reveals that Melville, even five years after Moby Dick, could still see the image of Ahab at the back of his writing desk.

Newton Arvin records that "after he had written Moby Dick, Melville was sufficiently struck by a sentence of Spinoza's, quoted by Matthew Arnold, to mark the passage in his copy of Arnold's essays. The sentence is this: 'Our desire is not that nature may obey us, but on the contrary, that we may obey nature.'"³¹ The quotation is an interesting one, expressing what Melville had already experimented with in both "The Encantadas" and Moby Dick. Melville's studies of the Dog-King, the Chola Widow, and Oberlus the Hermit in "The Encantadas" and of Ahab in Moby Dick seem a carefully planned experiment into the relative strengths of man and nature. One can almost picture Melville as the scientist, first attempting the enormous experiment: a truly large human, armed with man's best weapons, confronting nature. The man is Ahab; the struggle, the

³¹Arvin, p. 192.

experiment, proceeds in Moby Dick. But the power of nature proves too great. As Alfred Kazin puts it, ". . . [against] the awesomeness of power . . . Ahab's challenge is utterly vain. . . ." ³² Then Melville tries others, smaller experiments in "The Encantadas," first, he thrusts the Dog-King up against overwhelming nature and sees him defeated; next, he matches Oberlus with nature and sees him come off second best; and finally, he challenges nature with Hunilla and sees the standoff.

The Voyage of the Beagle was a useful stepping stone for Darwin, leading him to the Origin of Species. The contribution that The Voyage of the Beagle made to Darwin's work is one of experience: Darwin found, specifically at the Galapagos Islands, many thought-provoking processes being carried out in nature, and he found many examples that aided him in supporting his theories in the Origin of Species. This kind of contribution would seem to have been indispensable in the formulation of Darwin's theories on the origin of species and in the creation of the Origin of Species.

For the student of Melville, the affinity between "The Encantadas" and Moby Dick is one of polished techniques and refined ideas. In the area of technique Melville

³²Herman Melville, Moby Dick, intro. Alfred Kazin (Boston: 1956), intro. XIII.

employed many of the devices of Moby Dick very effectively in "The Encantadas," devices both of literary style and of character development. In themes he was very close to Moby Dick when he wrote "The Encantadas," particularly when dealing with pride and with nature.

Even though The Voyage of the Beagle and "The Encantadas" are important to their respective authors' total works, especially to the Origin of Species and Moby Dick respectively, these two early works also have literary merits of their own, which shall be defined in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

A COMPARISON OF TECHNIQUES

Against the perspective of influences and subsequent developments, we may now compare and study the two early works in themselves.

The Voyage of the Beagle and "The Encantadas" have been considered, for the most part, to be books of lesser importance in the works of Darwin and Melville. The books have not been examined by critics seeking their value as serious, finished contributions to literature. However, the books do have the merits of technical polish and thematic totality. The attempt will be made to define the respective literary merits of the two books and to judge their importance to the literature.

The very existence of The Voyage of the Beagle and "The Encantadas"--the one by Britain's famous nineteenth century naturalist, the other by America's foremost nineteenth century novelist--might be ample reason for a comparison of the men's descriptive techniques; but since the Darwin book appears, at first glance, to be primarily a scientific treatise, would the comparison have any value? Can Darwin's writings be classified as literary at all?

The answer to this question has, of course, been given many times before. Darwin is a literary writer as well as a scientific writer. In the words of one Darwin

critic, Theodore Baird, "Darwin's subject--the face of the earth, the processes of nature--had long been within the scope of literature, and in his attitude there was nothing consciously novel."¹ Baird says further that the earth and nature are mysterious or beautiful or violent; the response of the literary writer is fear or awe or shock. The writer, says Baird, paints the scene for the reader, then communicates the effect of loveliness, awe, or horror, making the literary experience complete--the writer sees, reacts; the reader sees the re-creation of the writer's experience and the reader reacts. The cycle described by Baird is, as he says, the exact cycle that Darwin sets in motion on every page of The Voyage of the Beagle.²

Darwin, himself, in his preface to the 1845 edition of his study, states that he has "largely condensed and corrected some parts, and [has] added a little to others, in order to render the volume more fitted for popular reading. . . ." ³ Darwin's style then, at his own admission, is directed, not to the particular, scientific-minded reader, but to the general, unscientific-minded one. His stated intention is a reality to anyone who reads Chapter Seventeen

¹Theodore Baird, "Darwin and the Tangled Bank," reprinted from American Scholar, Autumn, 1946 in A Science Reader, ed. Lawrence V. Ryan (New York: 1959), p. 30.

²Baird, p. 31.

³Beagle, intro. XXIII.

of The Voyage of the Beagle, for Darwin makes little attempt to keep a strict scientific detachment from his materials, and is rather so enthusiastic toward the Galapagos Islands and their strange, enlightening forms of life that much of his description is pervaded by feelings of sensitivity and zeal.

The critics have shown interest in both The Voyage of the Beagle and "The Encantadas." Most recognize the importance of The Voyage of the Beagle as the forerunner of Origin of Species. One critic says that "The Voyage . . . plainly foreshadows the revolutionary line along which Darwin thought was to develop."⁴ Another recent critic sees the artistic beauty of the work in the simplicity and modesty of the language Darwin uses to record his emotional reaction to his subject.⁵ Jacques Barzun calls the book the best introduction to Darwin's mind and work. He says, further, that Darwin, in The Voyage of the Beagle, is "an acute observer, a meticulous narrator of details, a mildly speculative mind."⁶

"The Encantadas" has long been considered as half-finished sketches which Melville had hoped to polish into

⁴Beagle, intro. IX.

⁵Baird, loc. cit.

⁶Jacques Barzun, Darwin, Marx, Wagner (Garden City, New York: 1958), pp. 71-72.

one or more longer works.⁷ However, in recent years a few critics have seen these sketches as a well-integrated unit. Among the early critics, Michael Sadlier, sees the beauty of "The Encantadas" as "the essence of Melville's supreme artistry," the highest technical level of his writing.⁸

John Freeman is no less positive in his praise when he says that "The Encantadas" are only "a little less wonderful" than another of The Piazza Tales, "Benito Cereno."⁹

Richard Chase is so impressed by "The Encantadas" that he places the work on the same plane with Moby Dick. Chase says that it is in the "beautifully conceived and executed" sketches called "The Encantadas" that Melville is again [next to Moby Dick] at his best.¹⁰ A recent critical opinion says that the "most unusual of all Melville's short works is 'The Encantadas.'"¹¹

The techniques employed by Darwin and Melville differ greatly. Perhaps the most immediate, striking difference is in the over-all organization of the two descriptions. Both

⁷Carl Van Doren, "A Note of Confession," Nation, CXXVII, Dec. 5, 1928, p. 622.

⁸Michael Sadlier, Excursions in Victorian Bibliography (London: 1922), p. 220.

⁹John Freeman, Herman Melville (New York: 1926), p. 61.

¹⁰Tales, intro. XII.

¹¹James E. Miller, Jr., A Reader's Guide to Herman Melville (New York: 1962), p. 61.

are carefully laid out; each has an organization fitted to its author's purpose.

Chapter Seventeen of The Voyage of the Beagle is based upon Darwin's diary kept during the voyage. The Voyage of the Beagle has retained one structural link with its parent form: it has a rough diary organization. The principle effect of this influence is the imparting to Chapter Seventeen of a time order, a skeleton narrative structure. This time order, coupled with the conventional space order of descriptive writing, gives the Darwin book an uncomplicated structure which makes the presentation of event, scene, and idea beautiful by its directness and lucid by its simplicity.

By comparison, "The Encantadas" is the more complex in organization. Melville's line of description at first seems to unfold with maximum indirection; however, after careful analysis, one sees that the sketches are grouped rather carefully. The pattern of development is general to specific: in other words, Sketch one contains a broad description of the archipelago; as its title says, it concerns "The Isles at Large." Sketches six, seven, eight, and nine contain descriptions of the particular islands Barrington, Charles, Norfolk, and Hood. A secondary grouping of the sketches involves subject matter: the first five sketches are devoted almost entirely to descriptions of nature--descriptions of the landscape and seascape, and

to descriptions of the animal and plant life on the islands; the final five sketches are devoted primarily to relating short tales about people on the islands.

A final structural element in "The Encantadas" is the poetry. Introducing each of the ten sketches, Melville has used poems, taken from Spenser's Faerie Queen and from other sources,¹² to set the subject and the mood of the sketch that follows.

For instance, the subject in Sketch First, as I have said, is the islands in general, especially their strange aura of enchantment; the mood is the dreariness of desolation and loneliness. Melville's poetic selection, adapted from The Faerie Queen,¹³ points most explicitly to both subject and mood. The poem states that the islands

Are not firme land . . . ,
 But stragling plots which to and fro do ronne;
 . . . therefore are they hight
 The wandering Islands; therefore do them shonne;
 For they have oft drawne many a wandering wight
 Into most deadly daunger and distressed plight.¹⁴

The mood is set with these lines:

Darke, doleful, dreary, like a greedy grave,
 That still for carrion carcasses doth crave;

¹²Leon Howard and Russell Thomas have identified all but one of the twenty-four poems. Twenty are by Spenser, one by Collins, one by Chatterton, and one (perhaps) by Melville himself. Poem three introducing Sketch Sixth is unidentified.

¹³Faerie Queen, Book II, Canto XII, Stanza 11, lines 4-9; Book I, Canto IX, Stanza 33, lines 4-7, 9.

¹⁴Tales, p. 230.

On top . . . dwelt the ghastly owl,
 Shrieking his baleful note, . . .
 And all about it wandering ghosts did wayle and howle.¹⁵

In Sketch Ninth, the narrative of the Hermit Oberlus of Hood's Isle, the introductory poem¹⁶ sets the mood of wretchedness and corruption; the subject of course is the life of a misanthrope,

That darkesome glen they enter, where they find
 That cursed man low sitting on the ground,
 Musing full sadly in his sullein mind;
 His grisly locks long grown . . . ,
 Disordered hong . . .
 And hid his face . . . ; his hollow eyne
 Looked deadly dull. . . .¹⁷

This pattern of an introductory poem is carried throughout the ten sketches as a sort of imaginative table of contents for each selection.

After examining the over-all organization of the two works, one must look to another aspect of description--the selection and use of details. It is in the choice of the right details and in the use of those choices that an author gives character, focus, and depth to his description. One might expect to find Darwin being the more camera-like in accuracy of description, since he is the scientist and should lean toward exactness. Melville, as the creative writer, might be expected to select only those

¹⁵Tales, loc. cit.

¹⁶Faerie Queen, Book I, Canto IX, Stanza 35, lines 1-7.

¹⁷Tales, p. 274.

details which are dramatic and which do most to give the islands individuality. Neither speculation is supported by textual evidence.

In choice of details, there is little difference between The Voyage of the Beagle and "The Encantadas." Darwin and Melville both choose only the characteristic details of the islands--the black barrenness of the land, the volcanic peaks, the hot, dry climate, the strange animal life.¹⁸ It is in the methodology that the difference lies. Darwin is careful in describing various details simply, directly, and modestly. He follows a step by step pattern, taking each detail in turn without repeating or laboring any one in particular. As a result, his description has an economy, both appealing and lasting. Melville, on the other hand, extends and repeats certain details to a point where the beauty of his language and imagery is no longer sufficient to save the passage sometimes from being tedious. Indeed, if use of details is a basis for comparative judgment about description, the Darwin work is the more excellent of the two.

Description depends for its ultimate success upon its most basic ingredient--words. The most notable difference between the descriptions of Darwin and Melville in their respective technical attributes lies in their style.

¹⁸Beagle and Tales, passim.

Darwin employs the simple modest language of classicism; Melville, the ornate, sensuous diction of Romanticism.

The artistic difference between the two styles is the difference between a "first draft" and a polished essay. In his actual literary expression the early Darwin is the laborer, adequate but pedestrian; the later Melville is refined and powerful in his language. One example from each man's work is enough to make the point. Darwin, in describing the general scene, writes:

Some of the craters, surmounting the larger islands, are of immense size, and they rise to a height of between three and four thousand feet. Their flanks are studded by innumerable smaller orifices. I scarcely hesitate to affirm, that there must be in the whole archipelago at least two thousand craters. These consist either of lava and scorio, or of finely-stratified, sandstone-like tuff. Most of the latter are beautifully symmetrical;¹⁹

Darwin re-creates the scene; it is not vivid, but it is clear.

Melville, on the other hand, is poetic in his re-creation of the general view of the Galapagos.

How often, standing at the foremost head at sunrise, with our patent prow pointed in between these isles, did I gaze upon that land, not of cakes, but of clinkers, not of streams of sparkling water, but arrested torrents of tormented lava.²⁰

The refinements of writing technique are, in this sentence, quite apparent. Melville's diction is carefully chosen: the words are specific and connotative, and are

¹⁹Beagle, pp. 373-374.

²⁰Tales, p. 248.

chosen for their alliteration and assonance. The arrangement of the words and phrases is a careful one; Melville has paid strict attention to sentence balance. But what is not quite so apparent a technique, yet is nonetheless what makes the passage come alive, is the skillful way in which Melville draws the reader into the scene. The reader cannot help finding himself "standing at the foremast head," gazing at the black volcanic isles which rise bleakly in the morning sun. The major technique that Melville uses to draw his reader into the scene is rhythm. Notice the rocking, rolling rhythm of the sentence, a rhythm clearly that of a ship at anchor:

How of-ten, stand-ing at the fore-mast head at sun-
rise, with our pa-tient prow point ed in be-tween these
isles, . . .²¹

In the descriptive passages of The Voyage of the Beagle and "The Encantadas" Melville is, in general, less scientific, more metaphoric, in his writing than is Darwin.²² Accepting the word scientific as meaning an exactness characterized by measurements and technical terms, the

²¹The reader may notice the affinity of rhythmic effect between this Melville sentence and the first few lines of Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking."

²²Neither man is limited in his descriptive technique. Melville often uses measurements in his descriptions, uses them as effectively as does Darwin. Melville writes that Rock Rodondo is

Some two hundred and fifty feet high, rising straight from the sea ten miles from land. . . .(Tales, p. 240.)

reader can readily see the difference between the writings of the two men in this respect. Darwin, very exactly, records that:

On two days, the thermometer within the tent stood at 93°, but in the open air, in the wind and sun, at only 85°. The sand was extremely hot; the thermometer placed in some of a brown color immediately rose to 137°. . . .²³

Melville's way of discussing the heat is unscientific but pointed.

Like split Syrian gourds left withering in the sun, they [~~the islands~~] are cracked by an everlasting drought beneath a torrid sky.²⁴

The most detracting aspect of Darwin's description is related to exactness of wording: this aspect is his listing of all the animals, plants, and insects that he finds on the island by Latin name, by numbers of species, and by their relationships to other species both on the islands and in other parts of the world. Such passages as the following example are far more distracting and tiring

We stand now ten miles from the equator. Yonder to the East, some six hundred miles, lies the continent; this Rock being just about on the parallel of Quito. (Tales, p. 244.)

Just as Melville in these passages is quite exact in the measurements in his description, so too is Darwin sometimes metaphoric in his. For example, note the following simile from The Voyage of the Beagle.

. . . deluges of black naked lava . . . have flowed . . . over the rims of the great cauldrons, like pitch over the rim of a pot in which it has been boiled. (Beagle, p. 377.)

²³Beagle, p. 378.

²⁴Tales, p. 231.

to the reader than all of the repeated descriptive passages in "The Encantadas."

Even in the upper regions I procured . . . few [insects] excepting some minute Diptera and Hymenoptera. . . . Of beetles I collected twenty-five species (excluding a Dermestes and Corynetes . . .); of these, two belong to the Harpalide, two to the Hydrophilidae, nine to . . . the Heteromera. . . .²⁵

Even though the primary purpose of The Voyage of the Beagle is scientific, Darwin's intention, by his own admission,²⁶ was to produce a work suited for popular reading. Such passages do little more than confuse the reader who is not well-schooled in biology.

Before any judgment can be made about the total significance of these two works organically, Melville's work must be examined in its narrative sections, the final five sketches. Of these selections, the important ones would seem to be the stories of the Dog-King, contained in "Sketch Seventh"; of the Chola Widow, in "Sketch Eighth"; and of the Hermit Oberlus, in "Sketch Ninth."

The story of the Creole mercenary, known as the Dog-King of Charles' Island, is an interesting satire on tyranny and human oppression. Less specific in his satiric attack in "The Encantadas" than he was in Mardi, Melville nonetheless does appear to be attacking several abuses of his day. The most obvious abuse, of course, is the indiscriminate practice of awarding lands as payments for

²⁵Beagle, p. 392.

²⁶Cf. note 13.

services rendered to a government by a mercenary. The mercenary is then free to set himself up as owner not only of the land but of the people thereon as well. More broadly, however, Melville may be directing his satiric pen toward governments that attempt to force conformity of manner, language, and religion upon the natives who people colonized lands. His experiences with this behavior in the south sea islands as recorded in Typee and Mardi suggest this interpretation of his satire.

The Dog-King himself is an interesting study of human nature. Brave enough to be awarded an entire island for his services to Peru, he is so debased that he surrounds himself with an aristocracy of dogs which he considers socially far above the enslaved populace of the island. As he degenerates from monarch to tyrant, his fears for his life lead him first to killing men whose only crime is their desire for freedom, then to tricking gullible sailors away from their ships into slavery on his island.

No character in Melville can match the Hermit Oberlus for sheer depravity, including Claggert, evil as he is, in Billy Budd. Oberlus seems to be the composite of all that is base in human nature. He states that his mother was Sycorax, the foul witch of The Tempest, the mother of Caliban. A creature of vanity, possessed by "a pure animal scorn for the rest of the universe,"²⁷

²⁷Tales, p. 277.

Oberlus brought to Hood's Island "qualities more diabolical than are to be found among any of the surrounding cannibals."²⁸ He shares his lot grudgingly with his sole companions, the tortoises, to which he is superior only by dint of his possessing "a larger capacity of degradation."²⁹ Oberlus is not transformed by the islands into anything more base than he was when he came to the Galapagos; the degeneration that marked the short reign of Dog-King is not found in Oberlus. Oberlus is part of the islands, completely evil. In appearance, he matches the islands, looking as though "he were a volcanic creature thrown up by the same convulsion which exploded into sight the isle."³⁰ The sterile "black lava" of the islands is no more desolate than is the nature of Oberlus in his misanthropy nor more black than is the soul of Oberlus in his cruelty, vanity, and corruption.

The third and final story in "The Encantadas" is the most captivating of the three because of its central character, Hunilla the Chola Widow. In Hunilla, we find a character of basic goodness who brings only goodness of heart to the islands; a character with strength of will who departs the islands unchanged by their maddening solitariness; a character plagued by life's worst suffering, yet

²⁸Tales, p. 275.

²⁹Tales, p. 276.

³⁰Tales, p. 275.

one who endures that suffering stoically. By the first quality, basic goodness, she is diametrically different from Oberlus; by the second, strength of will, she is the exact opposite of the Dog-King; in her suffering she is very Christ-like.

Hunilla possesses a pride that keeps despair away, even after enduring one hundred-eighty days of near death from starvation and thirst, after slowly seeing hope fade that a ship might chance to see her signal from the beach, and after suffering the loss of her husband and her brother by drowning, a tragedy which left her alone on the island. Her generosity is such that, even when her life depends upon collecting and storing all of the moisture she can, she still shares her water with the ten small dogs that share her plight. Her humility wins her the silent reverence and open tears of a whaler's hardened crew, and prompts Melville to remark, "Humanity . . . I worship thee, not in the laureled victor, but in this vanquished one."³¹ These are the qualities that reflect the basic goodness of Hunilla.

She is unchanged in her nature after her contact with the islands. Even after spending the long days in the nearly unbearable heat and desolation of the islands and the long nights and days of lonely helplessness, she

³¹Tales, p. 267.

endures.

Pride's height in vain abased to proneness on the rack;
nature's pride subduing nature's torture.³²

In the final scene of the story, Hunilla passes into town, "riding upon a small gray ass; and before her on the ass's shoulders, she eyed the jointed workings of the beast's armorial cross."³³ When others might have felt forsaken by God in the situation she endures, Hunilla holds fast to a faith, praying to the "Holy Virgin" for aid³⁴ and plying a crucifix until it is "worn featureless."³⁵ The Hunilla who leaves the islands after nearly one-half year their prisoner is the same Hunilla who originally went to the islands, not debased by them but, if anything, ennobled by them.

The stories of the hermit, the Dog-King, and the Chola Widow are good pieces of fiction when read separately--as they often are. However, as sketches in the longer work, "The Encantadas," they are obviously meant to be read as part of the whole, and it is this integration of the stories with each other and with the early physical descriptions of the islands that makes the stories excellent. After creating the islands as a kind of Hell, Melville injects three very different, but representative, types, into this creation and allows the reaction of character with environment to proceed. For the weak Dog-King,

³²Tales, p. 272.

³⁴Tales, p. 267.

³³Tales, p. 274.

³⁵Tales, p. 272.

environment is too powerful; he degenerates and matches the islands. For the already degenerate Oberlus, the islands' effect is neutral; he remains, throughout his existence there, "a mongrel."³⁶ For Hunilla, the islands' effect is strange; she cannot be broken by the islands, nor can she in any way shape the islands to fit her strong will. However, the ensuing stand-off between human and environment must be considered a victory for goodness, an ennobling of humanity.

On a subsidiary matter of humor, we find both Darwin and Melville expanding the appeal of their writing by developing comic devices, especially humorous anecdotes.

Although he is never intentionally humorous, Darwin is, at times, quite light-hearted in some portions of The Voyage of the Beagle. His light-heartedness is reflected most clearly in his occasional aside. Consider the following account of a ride on a tortoise's shell:

I was always amused when overtaking one of these great monsters, as it was quietly pacing along, to see how suddenly, the instant I passed, it would draw in its head and legs, and uttering a deep hiss fall to the ground with a heavy sound as if struck dead. I frequently got on their backs, and then giving a few raps on the hinder part of their shells, they would rise up and walk away;--but I found it very difficult to keep my balance.³⁷

In another--similar--anecdote, Darwin describes the lizard in the act of making a burrow. The light-hearted tone is

³⁶Tales, p. 283.

³⁷Beagle, p. 385.

again very evident.

This animal [the lizard], when making its burrow, works alternately the opposite sides of its body. One front leg for a short time scratches up the soil, and throws it towards the hind foot, which is well placed so as to heave it beyond the mouth of the hole. That side of the body being tired, the other takes up the task. . . . I watched one for a long time, till half its body was buried; I then walked up and pulled its tail; at this it was greatly astonished, and soon shuffled up to see what was the matter; and then stared me in the face, as much as to say, 'What made you pull my tail?'³⁸

The popular appeal of Darwin's Voyage of the Beagle is reflected in these passages and in others of a similar nature. Darwin is very human in his response to the islands. His writing flows along, sentence after sentence exposing him as the mature, scientific explorer; then, without warning, Darwin changes to the most naive of discoverers, becomes almost child-like in his reactions, is seemingly amazed by the productions of nature. That Darwin, in the midst of his serious, scientific examination of the Galapagos Islands, could indulge his desire to ride a tortoise and pinch a lizard's tail is not only quite refreshing but humorously satisfying to the reader.

Herman Melville uses much humor in his "The Encantadas." Nearly every page contains at least one anecdote that has some humorous touches. In addition to these anecdotes, Melville's writing contains such other humorous devices as parody (obviously, his treatment of Darwin's

³⁸Beagle, pp. 388-389.

tables is parody)³⁹ and hyperbole.

Melville employs hyperbole to good humorous effect in the following anecdote about the multitude of fish near the islands.

Our anglers would cautiously assay to drop their lines down to these . . . larger fish. But in vain; there was no passing the uppermost zone. No sooner did the hook touch the sea, than a hundred infatuates contended for the honor of capture.⁴⁰

Even more exaggerated than the "hundred infatuates" of Melville's fish story is the hyperbole in this following advice to the man who would scale Rock Rodondo:

If you seek to ascend Rock Rodondo, take the following prescription. Go three voyages round the world as a main-royal-man of the tallest frigate that floats; then serve a year or two apprenticeship to the guides who conduct strangers up the Peak of Teneriffe; and as many more respectively to a rope-dancer, and a chamois.⁴¹

It is perhaps fitting both because of the "uninhabitableness" of the islands and because of the humorous way in which Melville describes the uninhabitableness that the ending of the tenth and final sketch should be a humorous, philosophic poem. The poem, allegedly written by some poor wretch whose misfortune it was to be cast-away and to die upon the islands, is a humorous epitaph both for the passing of the unfortunate, unmourned sailor and for the conclusion of Melville's description of nature's abortion--the

³⁹Cf. pp. 5-8.

⁴⁰Tales, p. 243.

⁴¹Tales, p. 244.

Galapagos Islands. The poem reads as follows:

Oh, Brother Jack, as you pass by,
 As you are now, so once was I.
 Just so game, and just so gay,
 But now, alack, they've stopped my pay.
 No more I peep out of my blinkers,
 Here I be--tucked in with clinkers.⁴²

Just as Darwin and Melville tend at times to treat their subject with light-heartedness and humor, so too do they show a common awareness of matters more cosmic. Not the least among these is their common consciousness of time or of timelessness. The idea of the islands reflecting a closeness to time recurs as a theme in both of the works.

Darwin is aware of a relationship between the animals of the islands and the animals of prehistoric times. Perhaps because the islands continue to remind him that the early phases of evolution are there occurring, Darwin is led to mention that the lizards and tortoises call to mind "secondary epochs, when lizards . . . of dimensions comparable only with our existing whales were on the land and in the sea."⁴³ However, the relationship of the islands with primordial lands does not lead Darwin to conclude that the islands are old. On the contrary, he states that "seeing every height crowned with its crater, and the boundaries of most of the lava stream still distinct, we are led to believe that within a period

⁴²Tales, p. 288.

⁴³Beagle, p. 390.

geologically recent, the unbroken ocean was here spread out."⁴⁴

Melville, by contrast, sees time as tortoises. "I no more saw three tortoises," he writes; "they expanded-- became transfigured. I seemed to see three Roman Coliseums in magnificent decay."⁴⁵ These tortoises of the Galapagos represent for Melville the apex of endurance, resolution, and inflexibility in a world of weakness, indecision, and compromise. In a tribute to these creatures, Melville says that

The great feeling inspired by these creatures was that of age:--dateless, indefinite endurance. And in fact that any other creature can live and breathe as long as the tortoise of the Encantadas, I will not readily believe. . . . consider the impregnable armor of their living mail. What other bodily being possesses such a citadel wherein to resist the assaults of time?⁴⁶

The overwhelming theme that underlies both The Voyage of the Beagle and "The Encantadas" is that the life on the Galapagos Islands is not just existing there but is struggling dramatically to survive there. On page after page Darwin and Melville capture the bleak landscape of the islands, each in his own descriptive way. Then they re-create the life on the islands--the tortoise, the lizard, the bird-life, and the occasional human--and ask with amazement, "How can these creatures sustain their

⁴⁴Beagle, p. 379.

⁴⁵Tales, p. 237.

⁴⁶Tales, loc. cit.

existence?"

With confidence Darwin answers that the creatures thrive because they represent organically evolved species, holding tenaciously to their hard-won life. He goes on to say that "one is astonished at the amount of creative force . . . displayed by these small, barren and rocky islands."⁴⁷ Darwin records explicitly that

both in space and time, we seem to be brought somewhat nearer to that great fact--the mystery of mysteries--the first appearance of new beings on this earth.⁴⁸

Thus, the Galapagos represent, for Darwin, the process of organic evolution in motion.

When one considers that Darwin and Melville are describing the same group of islands, it seems strange that they should differ so markedly in their attitudes toward their common subject, especially in view of the close correspondence of their dominant impressions of the islands. Darwin sees the barren lifelessness of the Galapagos and presents it forcefully.

Nothing could be less inviting than the first appearance. A broken field of black basaltic lava, thrown into the most rugged waves, and crossed by great fissures, is everywhere covered by stunted, sunburnt brushwood, which shows little signs of life. The dry and parched surface, being heated by the noonday sun, gave to the air a close and sultry feeling, like that from a stove. We fancied even that the bushes smelt unpleasantly.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Beagle, p. 398.

⁴⁸Beagle, p. 379.

⁴⁹Beagle, pp. 374-375.

The directness and the simplicity of Darwin's descriptions make the passage a powerful picture of the sterility of the Galapagos Islands.

Although Herman Melville's descriptive phrasing leans more heavily upon the dramatic than does Charles Darwin's, the dominant impression of the sterile land that Darwin described is quite clear in Melville's opening paragraph from "The Encantadas."

Take five-and-twenty heaps of cinders dumped here and there in an outside city lot; imagine some of them magnified into mountains, and the vacant lot the sea; and you will have a fit idea of the general aspect of the Encantadas, or Enchanted Isles. A group rather of extinct volcanoes than of isles; looking much as the world at large might, after a penal conflagration.⁵⁰

Anyone reading either of these descriptions of the Galapagos might immediately conclude that the authors of the passages saw the islands as a bad place. Darwin would say that, on the contrary, far from being bad, the islands are quite good; Melville would say that the islands are not merely bad, they are terrible.

Darwin goes on in his work to show that even though the vegetation and the animal life are sparse, the islands do possess life. What made the fact of existing life so remarkable and meaningful to Darwin and, consequently, what influenced his attitude toward the islands is the fact that he was acute enough to see that the most basic processes of

⁵⁰Tales, loc. cit.

nature were being carried out there on the Galapagos Islands, before his very eyes. Darwin knows that the hiss is fittingly the chief sound, for in the hiss of tortoise and lizard he sees life in evolution, now slithering on its belly, soon to be standing on two feet. Although Darwin sees that nature is cruel and often horrible in its rigid balance, still he sees nature as inherently creative, and this view ultimately shapes his attitude toward the Galapagos Islands.

By contrast, Melville sees the islands as not only terrible in appearance, but terrible in their reflection of the evil side of nature. He sees their "desolateness" as worse than that of the "Dead Sea,"⁵¹ their solitariness as greater than "unnavigated waters" or "the Greenland ice-fields,"⁵² their "desolation" above that of "Idumea" or "the Pole."⁵³ In their "emphatic uninhabitableness," says Melville, they are worse than the "weedy wastes of Babylon";⁵⁴ for in Babylon, the jackal at least would den. On the Galapagos, little life save the reptiles is found.⁵⁵

The effect of Melville's description is the creation of an Inferno to rival Dante's. And into that Inferno, in the final five sketches of "The Encantadas," Melville places

⁵¹Tales, p. 231.

⁵²Tales, loc. cit.

⁵³Tales, loc. cit.

⁵⁴Tales, loc. cit.

⁵⁵Tales, loc. cit.

the suffering of mankind--the murdering buccaneers, the dictatorial Dog-King, the saintly Chola Widow, and the depraved Hermit Oberlus. These people find themselves in the hell known to Melville as the Encantadas. Hell on the Galapagos means that in their aridity and desolateness, the islands have barely enough water and food to sustain the life of the castaway whose misfortune it is to seek safety on their shores, and that in their solitariness, the islands have only the scant variation necessary to sustain the sanity of that castaway.

Melville wonders if life on the Galapagos only gives an illusion of thriving. He is sure that life is held tenaciously, but the tenacity is perhaps only the last strength of a degenerate, dying world. Melville looks to the islands themselves and points out that "in no world but a fallen one could such lands [as the islands] exist,"⁵⁶ that the islands "suggest the aspect of once living things malignly crumbled from ruddiness into ashes,"⁵⁷ that "they . . . appear . . . fixed, cast, glued into the very body of cadaverous death."⁵⁸ Surely, says Melville, these islands cannot but be the refuge of a finished world. Darwin and Melville, then although they see the same struggle--environment in conflict with life--interpret the struggle as differently, perhaps, as is possible.

⁵⁶Tales, p. 232.

⁵⁷Tales, p. 233.

⁵⁸Tales, p. 233-234.

Conclusions as to the importance of these two works are, I think, apparent in the material presented in this chapter. As serious contributions to literature in general and to the literary works of Darwin and Melville, The Voyage of the Beagle and "The Encantadas" have their respective strengths and weaknesses.

The Voyage of the Beagle is strong in its simplicity of diction and organization. In its light-hearted, enthusiastic tone, the work reflects a side of Darwin that has appeal and vitality. The theme of the work is also one of its strong points. However, The Voyage of the Beagle is also weak in two major aspects. In the technical level of writing refinements, Darwin's work is very low. Many of the passages in the book have a definite "first-draft" quality about them. The other weakness is Darwin's emphasis upon biological classifications, lists, and numerical totals of the wildlife and vegetation on the islands. As relevant material in a scientific work this exactness is necessary, but in a work produced for the general, unscientific-minded reader,⁵⁹ this exactness has no place, and rather is so obscure and distracting for the general reader that, the critic Baird aside, it destroys the work, in itself, as a serious contribution to literature.

In its complex organization, its mixed humorous and serious tone, its high level of writing refinements, its

⁵⁹ See p. 1.

themes, "The Encantadas" represents one of Melville's finest achievements. The lone weakness of the work is the repetitious, labored quality of some of his descriptions.

"The Encantadas," then, is excellent as a total attempt at description for its own sake and as unified description and character sketches. Even in its separate parts the work has merit, especially in "Sketch First," "The Isles at Large" and "Sketch Eighth," "Norfolk Isle and the Chola Widow." The first is as fine a work of description as can be found in literature; the second as a character sketch set against a descriptive backdrop is as beautifully conceived and finely polished as anything in Melville's work.

In addition to being a work of real merit in literature, "The Encantadas," by its very uniqueness, is an essential part of the total works of Melville.

One must remember, however, that The Voyage of the Beagle is one of Charles Darwin's early works, whereas "The Encantadas" is one of Herman Melville's more mature pieces.

CONCLUSION

That Charles Darwin's Voyage of the Beagle influenced Herman Melville in writing "The Encantadas" seems a certainty. The fact that the two works have a common subject for description cannot be sufficient reason for the close proximity of the diction, the selection of details, and the dominant impressions of the Galapagos Islands that occurs in the two works. The parodying by Melville of Darwin's use of tables is too direct to be accidental. That Melville had a knowledge of evolution as seen in Mardi, that he alludes directly to Darwin and his work as pointed out in Clarel, and that he had access to copies of The Voyage of the Beagle both during his return from the South Seas and during the period just prior to the writing of "The Encantadas" seems to point directly to one conclusion: Herman Melville, when he wrote "The Encantadas" was aided and challenged by Charles Darwin's The Voyage of the Beagle.

Chapter II of this study attempted to establish that between The Voyage of the Beagle and Origin of Species and between "The Encantadas" and Moby Dick there exists a rather special relationship. The Voyage of the Beagle, as was shown, is the seed from which Origin of Species grew. Not only does Darwin utilize in Origin of Species the many examples of his theory that he relates in The Voyage of the Beagle, but he also expands and supports in the Origin of Species many of the theories and ideas

that are but fleeting comments in The Voyage of the Beagle. Although it is true that a relationship exists between the Origin of Species and other Darwin books, e.g. Descent of Man, the relationship between The Voyage of the Beagle and Origin of Species is the special one, for it shows the growth of a theory from small, narrow comments in the first work to large, general assertions in the later work. Where Descent of Man represents but a further application of a completed theory, The Voyage of the Beagle represents the true beginnings of that theory.

When viewed as a part of the total Melville work, "The Encantadas" takes on an added importance through its kinship with Moby Dick. In Chapter II, it has been shown that Melville's writing characteristics, as they are used in Moby Dick, are very apparent in "The Encantadas." The poetic devices of "The Encantadas," especially alliteration and rhythm, are the same as those of Moby Dick. Melville's consciousness of comparisons--particularly metaphorical comparisons--is reflected equally in the two works in such specific cases as the discussions of fire and of tortoises and whales as well as in others. In addition to these techniques, there is also a common bond between the two works in their quasi-scientific orientation.

Nor are the ideas and themes of "The Encantadas" and Moby Dick dissimilar. The characters have common attributes and shortcomings: the good pride and strength

of Hunilla and Steerkilt, the strength of Ahab, and the sinful pride of Oberlus and Ahab are but a few. The themes of divine judgment and multiple reaction to nature also bind the two works together.

Using Chapter Seventeen of The Voyage of the Beagle as representative of the entire book, I found The Voyage of the Beagle to be a book deservedly obscure in literature. The enthusiastic zeal of the young Darwin is reflected on every page of Chapter Seventeen, but this exuberance is not nearly enough to overcome the pedestrian quality of the writing nor the long, tiring lists of biological data and save the work from its fate.

If recent critical interest in "The Encantadas" reflects a new awareness by the critics of the high quality of this work, then "The Encantadas" has already taken its proper position in literature. Except for the repetition of some parts of the description, "The Encantadas" is a highly polished, beautifully conceived piece of work. In every way, it reflects the special qualities of Melville's writing gift--his ability to find the universal themes, his consciousness of poetic effects in writing, his sensitivity for characterization, his insights into human nature.

For their service to Charles Darwin and Herman Melville, the Galapagos Islands have attained an enduring importance.

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