

Global Melville

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The distinct national colors of the imperialist map have merged and blended in the imperial global rainbow. (Hardt and Negri xiii)

Gone Global: Melville and the World "We" Live In

You sink your clan, down goes your nation; you speak a world's language, jovially jabbering in the Lingua-Franca of the forecastle. (*Mardi* 13)

Fifty years ago, C. L. R. James subtitled his *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways* "Melville and the World We Live In." James recalls lecturing for several years on Melville and finding remarkable "the readiness of every type of audience to discuss him, and sometimes very heatedly, as if he were a contemporary writer." James's experiences on Ellis Island, which he saw as a *Pequod*-like "miniature of all the nations of the world and all sections of society," further convinced him that Melville had "painted a picture of the world in which we live, which is to this day unsurpassed" (Introduction). Melville's prescience lay in his precisely describing how the subjectivities produced by technological and economic development were incubated in a multicultural America. Because of conditions which massed laborers together from the ends of the earth, in America a looming crisis of modernity was registered "in every personality, in every social institution" (James 149, 194), from the captains of industry to the managerial classes to workers, whose forecastle Lingua Franca James "recoded into forms of emancipatory struggle" (Pease xiv). This sense of ruthless telos – with capitalism reinventing itself in dialectical relation to the "types" it produced,

whose humanity, for different reasons, revolted – made the voyage of the *Pequod* into nothing less than “the voyage of modern civilization seeking its destiny” (James 18).

To consider the problem of theorizing a global Melville in the twenty-first century is to ask how Melville’s texts can be recoded within an altered scene of reading to speak to the conditions we now live in. Whether considered as an extension of the voyage into modernity or of that into postmodernity, these conditions are what most would describe as *gone global*. In this state, goods, peoples, and information are irretrievably caught in a world-wide web of unruly flows that potentially erode the institutions that traditionally interpellated subjects. Consciousness at even the village level undergoes a transformation, experiences itself as linked up. The most “remote” or vernacular levels and strata of society register the threat or promise directed at them by technological advances and the transnationalization of capital. Within the body of “global theory” that attends to these uneven developments, the “local” generally figures as the site for negotiating globalism’s impact, though “local” here might be considered less as small or inherently resistant than as that which responds to similar phenomena differently (Staheli 18) – not “anti”-globalization so much as “alter”-globalization. If today, to paraphrase Jacques Derrida, “Il n’est pas hors du mondialisation” (there is no outside globalization), such a truism provokes reflection on what globalism portends, or on how and on what terms “local” movements might counter globalism’s destructive aspects.

What follows in this essay considers directions that theorizing a global Melville within scenes of reading that aspire to transnationalism might take. I attempt to read Melville reading globalization and to read global theory reading Melville, while positing coordinates within which Melville’s theoretical usefulness in responding to globalism might be addressed. As one who approached human destiny as planetary and framed his questions accordingly, Melville, and his texts, have new resonances when read through the concerns of global theory. If he could not have imagined how advances in economic, communicative, and military technologies would reconfigure modern life – any more than he could have predicted the arms race, revolutionary movements, and gulags of James’s day – he did anticipate that the processes by which peoples would spill over nation-state boundaries and commingle would be world-changing. The “Etymology” section that ushers in *Moby-Dick* suggests that the text aims to be global, to invoke all of the world’s languages and traditions, to dust them with “a queer handkerchief, mockingly embellished with all the gay flags of the known nations of the world” (*MD* xv). The transnationalist James was visionary in recognizing this world-integrating emphasis in a Melville archive that Cold War Americanists insisted on reading through frames that validated their world-splitting national narrative.

The mode of close reading that foregrounded Melville’s textual and philosophical ambiguities – and disregarded his socio-political approach to global issues – in this sense functioned as a cover story for the maintenance of a staunchly nationalist understanding of Melville. For powerful shapers of American Studies like F. O. Matthiessen and Richard Chase, Donald Pease argues, *Moby-Dick* was never “merely an object of analysis.” Rather, “it provided the field itself with a frame narrative that

included the norms and assumptions out of which the field was organized. The action that *Moby-Dick* narrated was made to predict the world-scale antagonism of the Cold War" (Pease xxiii). Given multivocal approaches to US literatures and the attention to contexts of production and consumption, no text of US literature can be read today as a self-contained narrative of national identity. Yet given Melville's iconic status – and a lingering sense that *Moby-Dick* is "the greatest and most eccentric work of literary art produced in the United States" (Said *Moby-Dick* 356) – the book and the Melville archive retain an indexical force. If *Moby-Dick* authorized the national self-understanding and reading practices of Cold War American Studies, in which a geopolitical area's boundaries were naturalized and policed by a cluster of disciplines (Pease xxix), what frames might it authorize for an American Studies Unbound, released from tightly nationalistic aims, gone global, that embodies at every junction the discourses that now deregulate its terms of circulation?

In the present moment, marked by shifts in the structure and cultural mission of the University, it seems that what provided coherence to Cold War and post-Civil Rights Americanist scholarship was a sense of the University as a means by which the nation discussed and reconstituted itself. However, in this age of accelerated globalization, as universities function more like transnational corporations, this sense of cultural mission has shifted from a promotion of "national culture" to the promotion of "excellence," quantitatively measured by its contributions to the market economy (Readings). Much as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri see a supranational "Empire" as the possible frame for exploring contemporary subjectivities, Bill Readings considers the "ruins" of the national culture model as a promising place to reconceptualize intellectual work, to shift the period-style national framework of English Studies to globally articulated, interdisciplinary study. The challenge is to reconfigure disciplines in progressive ways that circumvent the economic logic that drives and assesses them.

For many in English Studies, the shift away from national frames is not necessarily liberating. Masao Miyoshi argues that necessary processes of delinking literature from national narrative and the equally necessary move toward multiculturalism have been accompanied by the appropriation of difference by neoliberal transnationalists, diminishing the political touch and effectiveness of literature and criticism as instruments of progressive planetary change. Within an increasingly linked world, in which democracy is promoted as a "universal value" (Sen) which only the atavistic resist to their own detriment, Miyoshi decries the shift in focus from questions of economic oppression and political economy toward the socio-poetics of individual subjectivities. Like Miyoshi, those who object to global theory argue that it functions as an instrument of what it criticizes, while failing to articulate with insurgent social movements that effectively oppose inequality. On the other hand, for Readings and others, global consciousness has progressive political power, lines of flight and fight that might coalesce into a genuinely liberationist movement, or what Derrida describes as a "New International," linked in "affinity, suffering, and hope" (Derrida 85) and freed from the hegemonic narratives of nation-states. The fact that subjected peoples the world over continue to fight for nation-state status and cultural

survival, and feel that, as Maori writer Linda Tuhiwai Smith puts it, "there can be no 'postmodernity' for us until we have settled some business of modernity" (Smith 34), is accommodated within such analyses into visions of coalition modeled on linkages among blocs with discrepant epistemologies and political agendas.

Within this reimagined scene of reading, radically thrown open for the global rearticulation of old texts along new lines of communication (technoscapes) and for new communities (ethnoscapes) and for new purposes (ideoscapes) – the terms are Arjun Appadurai's – aspects of Melville's boundary-breaking imagination appear as forms of sociocultural theorizing and practice. However, this simultaneous enunciation and demonstration of global theory is recordable in competing ways. On the one hand, Melville's deterritorializing, world-circling, mobile imagination, in which sailing is always a metaphor for a thinking that can "try all things" (*MD* 345), offers to the global imaginary reading models of liberatory freedom and fluid identitarian politics. Melville's works, Edward Said writes, "spill over national, aesthetic, and historical boundaries" (358). On the other hand, even as Melville engages globalization with philosophical restlessness and anarchic formal energy, his prose might be read as moving in alliance with aspects of globalization that dispense old human rights prescriptions in neoliberal bottles. While he promoted universalist principles that in theory protect deregulated flows from infringing on the rights of others, he recognized himself that in practice such processes were often destructive. And while he depicted an egalitarian multicultural mingling of the world's peoples, in which the citizen-sailor would sink the nation and speak a world's language, their common language was English.

In part because Melville's complex and often contradictory corpus will not yield fixed positions on the global processes that they describe and arguably reproduce, his texts are potentially productive sites for staging debates about concepts fundamental to globalism. In attempting to facilitate this discussion, I proceed in the second part of this essay by suggesting that Melville's ideas about globalism took shape within and against a nineteenth-century US discourse on globalism, concerned with the costs, benefits, and terms on which the world's peoples were to be linked; the section "Melville's 'Grand Principles' and America Among the Nations" below takes up the general problem of America among the nations, not simply as a problem to itself, but as the world's problem, and explores Melville's attempt within such considerations to delineate "grand principles" (*T* 201) on which human relations might be grounded; the final section elaborates on contemporary, transnationalist scenes of Americanist reading before returning to questions of what, within such altered frames, Melville's texts offer students of globalism.

"One Cosmopolitan and Confident Tide": Scenes of Globalization in Nineteenth-Century US Writing

Natives of all sorts, and foreigners . . . in short, a piebald parliament . . . of all kinds of that multiform pilgrim species, man. (*The Confidence-Man* 9)

However one chooses to historicize globalization – and one must believe that the telos of globalism is important if historical approaches are to deliver anything theoretically useful to the present – observations about globalization have a substantial history in American writing. Melville's views on globalism derive not only from his own experience in ports that were nodal points for the flow (import/export) of foreign goods, peoples, and ideas but from an emerging American discourse on globalism. The sense of the "blood" of the American as flowing from multiple sources to produce a new cosmopolitan pilgrim-refugee of European faction now rehabilitated by democratic conditions of production, so rapturously described by Crèvecoeur, is a constitutive feature of nineteenth-century US national narrative. This New Man finds expression in the encyclopedic catalogue rhetoric, which pulls the whole world into redemptive relation with America. It was in port cities, however, that catalogues of human diversity most strikingly included non-whites as peoples to whom Americans might be increasingly linked. What differentiates Melville from many contemporaries in describing these scenes is his attentiveness to race/class analysis, and a theoretical bent that diminishes the locational specificity of his analyses.

Most telling in nineteenth-century descriptions of multicultural scenes, generally presented with excitement and a sense of future shock, are the terms on which people meet. While there is something progressive in a scene like James Jarves's description of Honolulu streets in *Scenes and Scenery in the Sandwich Islands* (1844), it takes place in bigoted terms that the text naturalizes: "Frenchmen, Spaniards, Portuguese, Russians, in fact, representatives from almost every race under the sun, from the cannibal of New Zealand to his civilized prototype, the convict of New South Wales; – the dark Arab and ebony African. Amid such a medley every shade of civilization and barbarism, with their attendant virtues and vices, are to be seen. And this variety and novelty renders society here agreeable to the voyager, though not always so to the resident" (39). For Jarves, whom Hawaiians laughingly nicknamed *po kanaka*/skull man (literally "po'o"/head + "kanaka"/man) for having skulls exhumed to send to craniologists in Boston, that the putative "cannibal" shares social space with "civilized" Europeans suggests that the ends of the globe have been joined. If the resultant human medley presents itself as a touristic variety show, imagined as a nuisance for "the resident" (by which it is doubtful that Jarves means Hawaiians), it at least begins to imagine civil society as a social space shared by international citizens. However, that social-political space is "progressive" strictly in US proto-imperialist terms. It should be remembered that the refiguring of Jarves's Hawai'i by "residents" was part of a process that displaced Hawaiian values and rights and that cost Hawaiians their sovereignty. Whether this fact is a historical footnote or narratively central in the present, of course, depends upon where and how and for what one stands in relation to the global.

In contrast, in *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840), Richard Henry Dana presents an exhilarating scene of cultural interaction within a virtual free-zone, as perhaps possible only where no one is seen to be laying claim to the land:

We had now, out of forty or fifty, representatives from almost every nation under the sun: two Englishmen, three Yankees, two Scotchmen, two Welshmen, one Irishman, three Frenchmen (two of whom were Normans, and the third from Gascony,) one Dutchman, one Austrian, two or three Spaniards, (from old Spain,) half a dozen Spanish-Americans and half-breeds, two native Indians from Chili and the Island of Chiloe, one Negro, one Mulatto, about twenty Italians, from all parts of Italy, as many more Sandwich Islanders, one Otaheitan, and one Kanaka from the Marquesas Islands. (160)

In a scene set in the hide-tanning camps of California, which would not become a US state for another ten years, the "Digger" Indians seem simply part of the mix. Here languages circulate, with Spanish as the common ground, "for everyone knew more or less of that" (160). In the Hawaiian camp where he works, Dana describes Native Americans speaking Hawaiian, which he learns as well. The Marquesan kanaka was mingling European and non-European languages before Melville jumped ship in the Marquesas to experience what he later described, if polemically, as natives in a state of nature, or "wholly unchanged from their original primitive condition" (*T* 170).

Jarves, Dana, and Melville stressed scenes involving Pacific Islanders in part because the Islands allowed nineteenth-century US citizens to think about globalization without the anxieties and guilts of the black/white or Native-American/white paradigms: this time, "civilization" might get it more democratically right. That the remote islands – geographically and culturally as distant as possible from "civilized" Americans – were now sites of US commerce suggested that the globe was completely linked economically, and raised the question of how and on what terms it might be culturally integrated as well. Melville was struck by the notion, as so many theorists across the disciplines have been since, that "progress" in the islands indexed the nature of world-integration. His reports from the Pacific front lined up the Islands in terms of their degree of exposure to "civilization": Marquesas (state of nature), Tahiti (half-civilized), Hawai'i ("civilized into draught horses" [*T* 196]). He entreated home-audiences to audit the terms of cultural exchange: "Let the savages be civilized, but civilize them with benefits . . . let heathenism be destroyed, but not by destroying the heathen" (*T* 195), he wrote, without clarifying how it should be decided what aspects of "heathenism" should be destroyed, or evincing much faith in the "benefits" Islanders were receiving.

By *Moby-Dick*, however, Melville emphasized that one did not need to travel to the "South Seas" to see globalization at work. In New Bedford, where "actual cannibals stand chatting at street corners," the most comical sight is "green Vermonters and New Hampshire men." Such scenes are repeated in cities across the globe, where "live Yankees have often scared the natives" (31). Through such cosmopolitan streets, Queequeg and Ishmael walk arm in arm, the people more surprised at their intimacy than at the sight of Queequeg, "for they were used to seeing cannibals like him in the streets" (58). There were so many Islanders in New Bedford at this time that a section of town was known as New Guinea (Olson 22). At the same time, on board a ship the conditions of relation became manifest. Melville finds that, once quit of the land,

whether on the *Pequod* or the *Fidèle*, representatives of all of the world's cultures are in the same boat, at times harmoniously, at times xenophobically, but always on structurally unequal terms.

While in *Two Years* Dana presented a pragmatic and localized scene in which learning about other cultures required him to move outside of his own languages, Melville never came to such a localized imagination. Melville supported the notion of "tribes" federated into a "mystic league" (*M* 536) that protected the rights of groups, but he did not seek the specificities of cultural locations so much as the principles of their organization. In *Typee*, he admits and performs his bafflement about Marquesan practices ("I saw everything, but could comprehend nothing" [177]). In *Omoo*, he presents Tahitian culture in the process of being debased (beginning to market itself). After these books, Melville tended to resolve the question of cultural difference by dissolving or insubstantializing it and by suggesting in a serio-comic Platonism that all knowledge that mattered was already "in our cores" (*M* 576). All cultures were to be absorbed into each other in ceaseless mixture, as the poetry of ideas ran together in the borderless world of the imagination. What Melville envisioned as a new cultural subject would face problems of modernity, brought into being by economic and technological forces that broke down the historic boundaries that previously separated peoples and "federated" them "along one keel" (*MD* 121).

In a series of "prophetic" passages that mock American political evangelism as they engage in it, Melville projects futures in which the new cultural subject will recognize the need to "take all Mardi for [their] home. Nations are but names; and continents but shifting sands" (*M* 638). Humanity will return to the period before continental drift as "a common continent of men" (*MD* 121); "the estranged children of Adam [shall be] restored" and "the curse of Babel [shall be] revoked" (*R* 169). If Melville's globalism is not ideologically that of the twenty-first century, in such passages it does and does not quite seem to be that of the nineteenth century either. This is to say that, unlike Jarves and Dana, Melville is more interested theoretically in intercultural relation and the implications of recombinations and circulation than in localized description. That the specificities of culture, history, and resistance of the catalogues of peoples invoked figure so little in Melville's euphoric scenes of globalism – and that Melville most frequently imagines postnationalism as the absorption of all nations into an American "ark of the liberties of the world" (*WJ* 151) – suggests the tendency of one Melville specter – cosmopolitanism – to collude with forces it criticizes.

There is no question, however, that Melville viewed globalization as an inevitable, world-transforming process. The exhilarated moment in his vision, if in hyperbolic, ironic, unsettling ways, *seems* to be summed up by the chapter "The Advocate" in *Moby-Dick*, in which Melville presents the whaler as a figure for the poetry of globalization. The whaler has links to the US state but is not identical with it: if the sea is the whaler's, "he owns it, as Emperors own empires" (*MD* 64). This "empire" is not land with boundaries but a mode of capitalism involving international labor and promoting free trade as world-integrating. "The cosmopolite philosopher," Melville writes, cannot point to any "peaceful influence" that has "operated more

potentially upon the whole broad world" than "the business of whaling." Old World Empire, that of exploitative colonies, gives way to transnationally driven republicanism: "It was the whaleman who first broke through the jealous policy of the Spanish Crown, touching those colonies; and . . . it might be distinctly shown how from these whalemen at least eventuated the liberation of Peru, Chili, and Bolivia from the yoke of Old Spain, and the establishment of the eternal democracy in those parts" (109). Likewise, if "double-bolted Japan is ever to become hospitable it is the whale-ship alone to whom the credit will be due; for already she is on the threshold." It is whalers (globalizers), in other words, who create conditions, non-coercively and with mutual benefit, for the world's peoples to merge together, like "the streams of the most distant and opposite zones" merging in the Mississippi, into "one cosmopolitan and confident tide" (CM 9).

Of course, nothing could be more conventional than this seeming "advocacy" of whalers – whose "butcher sort of business" produces the world's oil (MD 108) – functioning as benevolent avatars of globalism. It is core American ideology of the Early Republic – in which the US sought partners and not colonial subjects abroad – that trade makes the world interdependent (thus more politically stable) and that it helps the world's peoples to feel their interests and cultures joined, while spreading values (industry, cultivation, cooperation) believed to be as salutary to nations as to individuals. Such a pollyanna vision could only be offered up by Melville serio-comically, in a moment of "advocacy" that appeals to landsmen to see the poetry of the seemingly grimy industrial enterprise Ishmael is engaged in. This is "The Pacific as sweatshop" (Olson 23) that lies behind the metafictional image of the Try-Works converting blubber into light. If the vision of "The Advocate" has the poetry of a particular historico-political narrative behind it – based on the sublimation of the violence-to-others through which national narrative and later the notion of a global village emerge – for a writer concerned with the ethical "grand principles" undergirding global integration, the official vision raises questions more readily than it raises hopes.

Melville's "Grand Principles" and America Among the Nations

Settled by the people of all nations, all nations may claim her for their own. You can not spill a drop of American blood without spilling the blood of the whole world. . . . We are not a narrow tribe of men. . . . No: our blood is as the flood of the Amazon, made up of a thousand noble currents all pouring into one. We are not a nation, so much as a world. (*Redburn* 169)

In the face of institutional and intellectual calls to participate in "Globalizing Literary Studies," one measure of the perceived relevance of curricula, programs, or projects resides in their ability to redirect research toward the problems posed by

globalism, including the problems of growing social inequalities, diaspora, and dislocation, the position of "America" within globalization, and the changing forms and responsibilities of global citizenship. To a large degree, as C. L. R. James suggests, Melville collapses these problems into each other through the vision of America as the first international nation-of-nations, the model for the globalized world-to-come, as well as the most aggressive agent within the world-linking process. That Melville presented the world of the *Pequod* as hierarchically arranged along racial lines, with the ironic image of white American officers "provid[ing] the brain, the rest of the world generously supplying the muscles" (*MD* 121), suggests a distinctly international understanding of the power imbalances among nations. (Were the spheres that Melville used for his demonstration more inclusive of women, as in "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," perhaps this analysis would have extended more productively to the gendered distributions of labor, and would seem more contemporary.)

When in the course of Melville's work globalization and Americanization seem synonymous, the alignment often seems polemical, exhortatory, and directed at fellow Americans. As Rob Wilson describes it, Melville's "advocacy" of trade carries with it "a cautionary insight into national purpose and method, as economy precedes and installs the ideology of 'freedom' " – a freedom that in "interlocking disparate regions into a coherent space of American fantasy and design" (82–3) is fundamentally imperialistic. The most apparently jingoistic statements in Melville's work are destabilized by irony or explicitly undermined. In *White-Jacket*, for instance, Melville describes Americans as the "chosen people": "God has given to us, for a future inheritance, the broad domains of the political pagans, that shall come and lie down under the shade of our ark, without bloody hands being lifted" (151). Yet in relation to Native Americans he writes that an American frigate amounts to "blood red hands painted on [the] poor savage's blanket," and asks, "Are there no Moravians in the Moon, that not a missionary has yet visited this poor pagan planet of ours, to civilize civilization and christianize Christendom?" (267). The spirit of these contradictions, emphasizing (as Moravians did) the centrality of conduct, seems to be that of holding up an America-to-be, always in the dialectical process of creation and decreation, as a field of self-critique. This critique, as Derrida writes of a certain specter of Marx, "*wants itself* to be in principle and explicitly open to its own transformation, re-evaluation, self-reinterpretation" (88). As refugees flood into America seeking asylum, turning the nation outside-in, American institutions are, in theory, pressured to accommodate difference. That the aggression of the US and other imperial powers sets the process in motion and then claims that the movement of colonized people to the metropolis models a visionary pluralism is constitutive of the self-validating discourse. And yet from Melville to Hardt and Negri, the image of American democratic ideals, however rapaciously the US acts politically, is held up as the social model that the world must eventually adopt.

Melville approaches these issues, particularly that of an international democracy ushered in through trade, with a sense that their fraught contradictions are inherent to

globalism. His critique of predatory American capitalism stems from a suspicion that trade corrupts higher ethics, whether among individuals or states. Trade assumes "trust" and depends on "confidence" about fairness among partners, while creating incentives for confidence to operate as a scam. Without genuine trust and regard for each other's wellbeing and commercial interest – which capitalism, in Melville's view, does not foster – only rigorously policed international law could stabilize exchange, and such international law itself requires "confidence," consensus, and intercultural understanding among participant nations. Furthermore, when a stronger nation can essentialize its own righteousness and mesmerize citizens to enact its will, nothing prevents it from ignoring or manipulating international law. For instance, according to the agreed-upon Western legal principles, in the nineteenth century land belonged to those who cultivated it; "developed" nations were those with assets cultivated and organized through infrastructure for trade. Less developed or "civilized" peoples, groups that followed alternative systems of governance, were by Western consensus "loose fish" or "fair game for anybody who can soonest catch" them, as Melville ironically put it (*MD* 396). In other words, if in theory spreading democratic capitalism to "savage" peoples and organizing them into "civilized" nations inter-linked through trade promises individual freedom to peoples subjected by communistic chiefs, in practice exporting civilization seems to Melville to be as exploitative abroad as American slavocracy or genocide against Native Americans is domestically. Capital-driven processes treat Native peoples and workers as instruments.

At the same time, as disgusted as Melville was at the sight of contaminated Islanders in *Typee* and *Omoo*, restoring Islanders to their "state of nature" seemed a denial of human relation and a philosophical cop-out. Historical questions of Islander agency in the matter – a genuine attention to the politics of the local – were to the side of this: Islander politicians only appear in Melville's texts as buffoonish mimics. The work of culture had to go forward, and Melville fundamentally accepts the West's developmental, temporal narrative, in which in Freudian/Marxist terms, peoples begin in a "state of nature" and gradually mature into increasingly repressed/alienated yet cultured states that prioritize individual rights. The crux of the problem of encounter between developed and undeveloped for Melville thus seems that of finding kinder, gentler means of bringing primitives into modernity than those by which civilization is imposed for profit motives (such as the US ventures to open routes through the Islands for the China trade). The terms of such an analysis, Melville's attribution of a developmental stage to Islanders, as opposed to recognizing alternative cultural systems as viable, constitute an imperialistic stance. In the end, although he admires *Moby-Dick*, what Said says of Euroamerican universalizing discourses seems to apply to Melville: there is "incorporation" and "inclusion," but "there is only infrequently an acknowledgement that the colonized people should be heard from, their ideas known" (Said *Culture* 50).

Nonetheless, how to secure egalitarian relations, based on a securing of every human's individual rights, is a central theme of Melville's work. Whether he approaches it in terms of the engagement of imperial powers with "savages," or in

terms of interpersonal topoi, a set of global questions underlines Melville's trajectory. It begins with the question of how non-coercively to bind the world's peoples while respecting different lifeways, continues with the critique of capitalism and centralized power formations as means of achieving this end, and concludes with the problem of establishing and protecting personal rights. Individual works engage related issues, such as the centrality of human dignity (*White-Jacket*) and the right to rebel against oppressive force, as well as the costs of doing so ("Benito Cereno"), the ethics of inaction and non-participation ("Bartleby"), the susceptibility of even just "law" to manipulation and abuse (*Billy Budd*), the division of domestic and public spheres before the law (*Pierre*), and the power of rhetoric (today advertising, media) to manufacture consent or manipulate reality (*Moby-Dick*, *The Confidence-Man*). What pins these together, from the assertion in *Typee* about a "universally diffused perception of what is just" (201) to the conspicuously named ships in *Billy Budd* (*Rights of Man*, *Bellipotent*), is a sense that relations between individuals, grounded in "grand principles," provide the foundational model for undoing the surrounding regulatory forces that criss-cross and connect every life in "a Siamese connexion with a plurality of other mortals" (*MD* 320), many of whom are unaware of how their structural position subordinates others. Only laws premised on safeguarding the dignity of the foreigner irrespective of race and prior to knowledge could free humans from adjudicating for others through the language games of their own self-interest.

For this reason, the Queequeg/Ishmael marriage is at the heart of Melville's social vision, a compressed topos of worker relations under conditions of globalization based on non-materialistic ethics of fraternity. In Melville, from *Typee* on, the relation between two men, *pace* Greek philosophy, models a micropolitics. When Toby shakes hands with Tommo, for instance, it is a "ratification" that echoes the literal politics of Marquesan name-exchange, about which "ratify" is used as well (*T* 33, 72, 139). The Queequeg/Ishmael scene resolves in the sweetest terms the questions of hospitality and friendship that Derrida in a cluster of texts on friendship, hospitality, and cosmopolitanism brings to the study of contemporary problems associated with globalization, such as the problem of how a "host" culture welcomes immigrants and refugees. This question of how to be hospitable to the new mobile citizen-worker is about how (on what or whose juridical principles) to open one's home (or institutions or nation) without oppressively legislating terms (forcing assimilation), while protecting one's institutions from the imposition of or corruption by a foreign system of values.

With Ishmael, the homeless outcast, and Queequeg-the-friendly-cannibal (who explores, with disappointment, the Christian world in search of knowledge "to make his people still . . . better than they were" [*MD* 56]), no one is properly the host. This relationship seems the utopic key to Melville's dream of a non-materialistic "first congregation to which we all belong" (*MD* 83). As with Dana's topos of language circulation, egalitarian interculturalism is most imaginable among equally displaced persons, as if Crèvecoeur's American-as-"Western pilgrim"/refugee could only form against the "virgin land" imagined by Henry Nash Smith. In such

moments it is the planet that plays host. One is required only to be faithful to principles of common humanity as one tries to be "on friendly terms with all the inmates of the place one lodges in" (*MD* 7). Echoing the Pequot minister William Apees, Ishmael assures readers that "a man can be honest in any sort of skin" (21), and then recodes the Christian categorical imperative into a justification for worshipping Queequeg's "Congo idol." Cultural specificity matters less in the image of this composite Islander worshipping an African image and smoking a tomahawk than the *idea* of embracing what is, from Ishmael's perspective, the humanity of someone who is as culturally foreign to him as possible.

As the tone of the passages describing the formation of their friendship makes clear, Ishmael's openness to Queequeg as "a human being just as I am" (24) is not exactly cultural relativism and cosmopolitanism, though Melville does draw upon notions of friendship derived from his admiration of Pacific Islander friendship ritual. What matters most is Ishmael's willingness to *act* as if it is, Melville's insistence that humanism is something practiced in the face of a materialistic, "wolfish world" (51). Pivotal here is their recognition of each other as human beings, as embodied confirmations of the belief, first formulated in *Typee*, that "The grand principles of virtue and honor, however they may be distorted by arbitrary codes, are the same the world over: and where these principles are concerned, the right or wrong of any action appears the same to the uncultivated as to the enlightened mind" (201). By "arbitrary codes" it seems that Melville means something like "culture," presented as a distorting function, behind which there is, nonetheless, the inviolable "Republican Progressiveness" which he as an American author is bound "to carry into Literature, as well as into life" (*PT* 245).

Melville and the Newest (Dis)Course of American Studies

Freedom is more social than political. And its real felicity is not to be shared. That is of a man's own individual getting and holding. (*Mardi* 529)

As I have been suggesting, to theorize Melville as, like literary studies, gone global is not so much to track Melville's "foreign" reception or the endless array of popular cultural registers into which his works are *translated* internationally, so much as to speculate about how within reconfigured scenes of reading Melville's textual spectres might speak to the global present. The newly imagined, dispersed scenes of Americanist reading coincide with the "end" of decades of US decathection from the old national cultural model. This involved what Robyn Weigman describes as a "struggle to break apart the coherence of the field's object of study" (5) in the name of doing justice to the plurality of America, along with a critique of American imperialism. As American Studies shifted from unitary myth to competing rhetorics or regions, the delinking of US identities from geography recovered roots/routes outside of the

borders of the US state, and in turn led to a recognition of the need for transnational, postnational, post-Americanist understandings of the fluidity of subjectivities within a world of disjunctive "scapes" and post/colonial borderlands. With the discursive borders open for free trade, critics like John Carlos Rowe call for a new internationalist comparativism, in which, say, the study of the Philippine-American or Vietnam Wars would require not simply Filipino/a and Vietnamese perspectives, but some sense of US culture as refigured by the encounter.

This new comparativism requires a recognition that American Studies is now, whether as the historic result of US imperialism or as an accelerating and uneven globalization, part of the cultural geography of many states and communities. What international Americanists and global theorists alike oppose, rhetorically at least, is the massive trade imbalance involved in this deregulation of borders, with a surplus of American culture being exported, while US institutions remain less hospitable (insufficiently infrastructured) to support forms of cultural exchange that would require US students to learn about or to be able to recognize "foreign" cultures in other than violent translation (Spivak 164). A scene of encounter imagined as the interface of the US with various local formations, in which every nation discerns its hyphenated-American reflection, and every nation reads through its political relation to the US, is less one of exchange than of dissemination. While the US is purportedly cleansed of exceptional status and turned inside out for critique, every junction where American Studies engages local formations becomes a further port of entry for the logic of a global theory that, like Melville's grand principles, follows a universalizing logic pursued in the name of a democracy-to-come and free markets, whether or not its flows exacerbate gaps between the "haves" and the "have-nots."

Within foreign American Studies institutions the institutional locus of interest gravitates toward transnational, cosmopolitan scholars and authors who can frame issues of globalization both for diasporic communities in the US and an international community, while suggesting that, as Homi Bhabha argues, the "truest eye may now belong to the migrant's double vision" (5). This development promises forms of analysis that cannot simply be reabsorbed into nationalist projects. Within this restructuring of Americanist scenes of reading, the study of US cultures seems to follow a dual line: on the one hand, there is a general resentment of US military and economic power and a concern with the effects of US-led policies. On the other hand, foreign Americanist institutions acknowledge compelling aspects of US culture – its pluralism and dynamism, its egalitarian ideals, and its pervasive popular cultural forms – while emphasizing the pragmatic value to their constituencies of learning English and understanding how US sociopolitics informs contemporary global practices.

Within these coordinates of international American Studies, Melville might well be given the appreciative reading that Edward Said gives *Moby-Dick*: "Melville's contribution is that he delivers the salutary effect as well as the destructiveness of the American world presence, and he also demonstrates its self-mesmerizing assumptions about its providential significance" (Said *Moby-Dick* 364). Melville's critique of racial hatred and exploitative capitalism, and his premonition that US failures were

potentially cataclysmic, speak to that part of global theorizing that affirms the republican principles for defining human rights while lacking confidence in the integrity of the US to lead in achieving planetary egalitarianism. At the same time, Melville's works both critique and embody a central contradiction of globalism, its belief that trade will diminish the importance of nation-states, along with the suspicion that its driving agents, through imposing conditions on "less developed" nations, will appropriate their sovereignties into their own.

To the new mobile worker of Empire, however, Melville arguably speaks the language of accommodation to globalism. This is predicated on a separation of the emotive life and culture of the free mind from the realm of political economy and social community. That capitalism interferes with the free flow of human relations while trade drives people over borders in ways that wear away nation states is a conflict resolvable within global theory through the separation of interior life and material conditions. In the end, this separation rests on Melville's conviction that "freedom is more social than political," and ultimately that the culture that matters is "of a man's own individual getting and holding" (*M* 529). Internally, culture is polyphonic and metropolitan, a global village: "we are all fuller than a city" (*M* 594). As Slavoj Žižek serio-comically puts it about Western Buddhism as the fetish of late capitalism, this sense of the priority of internal culture "enables you to fully participate in the frantic pace of the capitalist game while sustaining the perception that you are not really in it . . . that what really matters to you is the peace of the inner Self to which you know you can always withdraw" (15). It does not ultimately matter what job you have, Ishmael assures the reader: "Who ain't a slave?" Melville, that is, remains more committed to the dignity and mental culture of the worker than to questions of relieving structural inequality. He would never, James argues, endorse "any kind of a program" of concerted political action, least of all revolutionary socialism (James 20).

This apolitical political content finds expressive form in the wildness of Melville's swishing together of the styles and tropes of all traditions with utter disregard for the proprieties of those conventions, a style that pulls in the same direction as his dream of wearing away the alienating languages that make men "Isolatoos." For the imagination, no thing or place is inherently separate. Beyond the irony of the ways that Melville's relentless allusiveness and often convoluted sentences shut out and even anger readers (Melville wrote Hawthorne that, while a supporter of "ruthless democracy on all sides" [*L* 190] he believed in an aristocracy of the brain), antagonists of globalization or believers in traditional cultures – not as pure entities, but as the non-arbitrary ancestral knowledges that ground a people's collective subjectivity – would find Melville's dream of "sinking your own tribe and nation," or of being absorbed into one vast detribalized America-like pluralism, the height of neo-colonial arrogance. It is partly for this reason that, in Oceania, for instance, insofar as Melville is discussed at all, it is less as an anti-racist defender of human rights than as an author whose terms of critique of colonialism reinscribe its assumptions.

Along these lines, anti-colonial critics might hear global Melville as dismissive of traditional cultural values and priorities, despite his theoretical defense of every people's human right to traditional culture, or argue that, to the degree that Melville is concerned with culture as such, it is with the curious power of cultural scripts to delimit what the I/"eye" sees. Intellectually for Melville culture ultimately has no closeable borders, but ceaselessly absorbs and refigures what it comes into contact with. Thus rather than seeking interior knowledge of cultures, or feeling it important to represent them in some responsible anthropological sense, Melville emphasizes the viewer's response to difference, or parodies the prejudicial preconceptions of his readers, a device that arguably fails as pedagogy, since telling what something is not hardly explains what it is. This level of abstraction (exacerbated by his textual play and irony) in Melville's manner of posing questions of the global, especially in an age in which Melville texts and pop-Melvilleana circulate as made-in-the-USA commodities, consistently imbricates Melville in the world-integrating processes he critiques.

In other words, Global Melville circulates today not simply as a writer who critiqued the ontology of the American errand within processes recognized as globalization, and who deplored its costs to native peoples, its effects on the interior lives of workers, and the tendencies of globalism's imperial agents to warp weaker nations into ugly versions of themselves. Rather, Melville simultaneously circulates *as* a form of global theory and can be read as duplicating many of its assumptions. Tonally, his work offers a mix of cautionary rhetoric and wild excitement at the forms by which, in Homi Bhabha's terms, "newness enters the world." Sociopolitically, his text inclines toward the neoliberalism that neutralizes multiculturalism by assimilating difference, celebrating the endless play of differences in a mobile world in which subjects are unmoored from traditional or national cultures, and encouraged to rearticulate themselves as self-fashioning participants in a liberal-democratic world. This is a world, as Melville predicted, in which there is a surplus of possibility: "all that has been said but multiplies what remains to be said. It is not so much paucity as superabundance of material that seems to incapacitate modern authors" (PT 246).

It would be hard to place much revolutionary confidence in collective subjectivities formed within such flows, imagined as radically democratized and unregulated. The postmodernist poetry of transnational capitalism seems as self-mesmerizing as did the modernist poetry of transnational whaling. Rather, the new subjects of global culture seem to be joined primarily as fellow consumers, albeit with vastly different means at their disposal or degrees of access to technological participation. The aim, the promise of "Empire," Hardt and Negri argue, is precisely to incorporate everyone in ways blind to the old racist, chauvinist categories of difference (198). Difference in the new model, thoroughly amenable to global capital, is to be affirmed in order for it to be more effectively managed. This phenomenon raises the question of whether today one could make C. L. R. James's leap in imagining Melville's crew as redirected toward liberatory ends – engaged in pursuing cooperative alternatives to neoliberal capitalism – or whether one imagines the *Pequod's* crew individually dreaming about where they would vacation if they raised the whale and cashed in proceeds from the Doubloon.

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