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Melville's America : democratic brotherhood

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MELVILLE'S AMERICA: DEMOCRATIC BROTHERHOOD

BY

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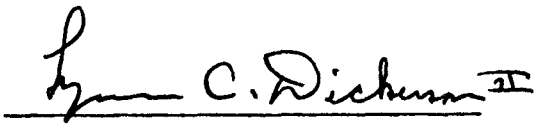

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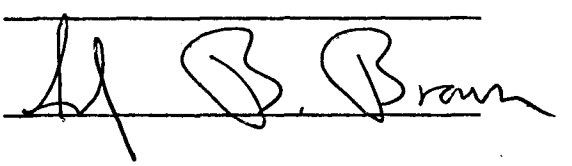

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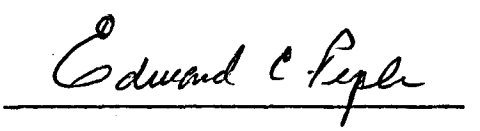

Dean of the Graduate School

PREFACE

I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to two faculty members of the University of Richmond in the preparation of this thesis. I want to thank Dr. John C. Boggs, Jr., for originally stimulating my interest in Herman Melville in a seminar in American Literature during the spring of 1970. I also want to express my appreciation to Dr. Lynn C. Dickerson, II, for his gracious suggestions, helpfulness, and patience in supervising the organization and writing of the thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Herman Melville had a deep faith in his fellow man. He felt that man's devotion to other men, a feeling of brotherhood between men, was the essential bond of humanity. Men had to acknowledge their responsibility to their own kind in order to achieve order and happiness in the rapidly changing, ambiguous world of the mid-nineteenth century. He rejected transcendental philosophy because each man had to achieve his own convictions and peace of mind through personal contact with nature, which led to the isolation of the individual. Melville believed that men could not live together in a society by cultivating their isolation from other men; he felt men could only achieve happiness through their concern for their fellow men. He adopted almost religiously the principle of the brotherhood of men. "In opposition to the doctrines of intellectualism, Melville set up almost as a religion the social and emotional values of love, companionship, sympathy, beneficience, unselfishness."[1]

In accordance with his principle of brotherhood, Melville believed in democracy; it was the only political system which was based on a respect for the individual man. But he felt that if democracy was to succeed, there must be an underlying sense of brotherhood between men. In institutionalized forms of American society of his day, however, Melville

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[1]R. E. Watters, "Melville's 'Sociality'," American Literature, XVII, (1945-46), 47.

could not see any evidence of a fraternal feeling between men. Slavery, an institution that systematically degraded men, was practiced in a land whose government was based on the principle of democracy. There was little or no sympathy between the various sections of the country, particularly the North and the South; there was no sympathy between the economic classes of the country. The military establishment, with its severe discipline, evinced no respect for the common man. The church was not able to put into practice the doctrine of Christian charity. Growing industrialization placed more value on money and machinery than on human life. Thus, Melville became pessimistic towards the idea of democracy as it was practiced in the United States because of the lack of a feeling of brotherhood he saw in the society around him.

However, Melville's pessimism was limited. Although he found little human sympathy in the institutionalized forms of American society, he could see individual instances of friendship between men. Because of these manifestations of brotherhood between individuals, he could maintain some hope for the future of democracy in America. This brotherhood, limited though it was, could serve as a basis for the eventual spread of brotherhood into the forms of society so that one day the United States might actually practice, as well as proclaim, the principle of democracy.

> Melville's procedure is, rather, to single out certain experiences within the larger field of social relationships which can be affirmed and from which durable values can be derived. If society is evil, some human relationships are nevertheless good. These can be designated by the general name of brotherhood or community. . . .[2]

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[2]Henry Nash Smith, "The Image of Society in Moby Dick," in Tyrus Hillway and Luther S. Mansfield, eds., Moby Dick Centennial Essays (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1965), p. 73.

Melville adopted his attitude of limited pessimism towards America early in his career and maintained it throughout his career. His works fall into three categories both chronologically and by genre (except for Billy Budd, his last work, which was completed in 1891, but not discovered and published until 1924). In the first part of his career, Melville wrote novels, beginning with the publication of Typee in 1846 and ending in 1857 with The Confidence Man. Before he completed his last novel, he had already begun the second phase of his career by writing short stories, many of which were first published in periodicals. The only collection of his short stories which was published during his lifetime was The Piazza Tales, published in 1856. During the last part of his career, Melville concentrated on poetry. Two volumes of poetry were published before his death in 1891: Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War, published in 1866, and his long, narrative poem Clarel, published in 1876.[3] In all three periods and genres of literature, Melville's attitude towards America, first stated in Mardi (1849), remained essentially the same; he maintained an attitude of limited pessimism.

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[3]Two other collections of his poetry were printed in editions of twenty-five copies each: John Marr and Other Sailors, 1888; and Timoleon, 1891.

NOVELS

Melville first illustrated the lack of brotherhood in the institutions of American life in his novels. In Mardi, his third novel, he expressed his pessimistic attitude about the future of democracy in a land that permitted the practice of slavery. In the allegorical visit to Vivenza (the United States), Melville first illustrates the discrepancy between the principle of democracy and the practice of slavery in the motto of Vivenza: "In-this-re-publi-can-land-all-men-are-born-free-and-equal." Then scrawled beneath: "Except-the-tribe-of-Hamo."[1] In his description of the South, Melville condemns the practice of slavery.

For Melville, however, the practice of slavery in the United States was more than an illustration of the lack of brotherhood between the white man and the Negro. It was also the source of animosity and a lack of sympathy between white men themselves for the people of the North condemned their Southern neighbors because of the practice. They did not understand or sympathize with the difficult predicament of the Southerners. Through Babbalanja, the philosopher, Melville condemns the lack of brotherhood between white men and the Negro and between the North and the South.

> 'For the righteous to suppress an evil is sometimes harder than for others to uphold it. Humanity cries out against this vast enormity:--not one man knows a prudent

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[1]Herman Melville, The Works of Herman Melville: Mardi (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), IV, 224.

> remedy. Blame not, then, the North; and wisely judge the South. Ere, as a nation, they became responsible, this thing was planted in their midst. Such roots strike deep. Place to-day those serfs in Dominora [England]; and with them, all Vivenza's past;--and serfs, for many years, in Dominora, they would be. Easy is it to stand afar and rail. All men are censors who have lungs. . . .The soil decides the man. And, ere birth, man will not to be born here or there. These southern tribes have grown up with this thing; bond-women were their nurses, and bondmen serve them still. Nor are all their serfs such wretches as those we saw. Some seem happy: yet not as men. Unmanned, they know not what they are.[2]

In Redburn, published in 1849, Melville again refers to the lack of brotherhood inherent in the problem of slavery in the United States. Redburn is a young, innocent American who has to face the reality of the problems of an over-crowded, long-established civilization when he travels to Liverpool. In spite of all the inequalities and poverty of Liverpool, the people were in some ways more democratic than the people of America. The notable instance of this was their treatment of the Negro. In Liverpool, the Negro was accepted as a man; in America, he was still considered an inferior being.

> Being so young and inexperienced then, and unconsciously swayed in some degree by those local and social prejudices, that are the marring of most men, and from which, for the mass, there seems no possible escape; at first I was surprised that a colored man should be treated as he is in this town; but a little reflection showed that, after all, it was but recognizing his claims to humanity and normal equality; so that, in some things, we Americans leave to other countries the carrying out of the principle that stands at the head of our Declaration of Independence.[3]

Melville was perhaps forecasting a rather dismal future for the United States if it continued with its lack of brotherhood in its institutions and way of life. He had already warned the United States

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[2]Ibid., p. 251.

[3]Herman Melville, The Works of Herman Melville: Redburn (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), V, 260.

that its real test would come when its vast western frontier finally closed and its population began to press upon itself.[4] In the slums surrounding the docks of Liverpool, Melville described the deplorable conditions of an over-crowded populace, made even worse by the absolute lack of human sympathy and brotherhood between men. In contrast to the American ideals based upon the idea of the essential worth of every individual, the Liverpool slums demonstrated that there the lives of the poor were deemed of little significance.

One of the most poignant scenes involved the slow death of a young woman and her two daughters. While walking through an alley one day, Redburn heard a feeble wail which he traced to an opening in the basement of an old warehouse. Peering into this opening, Redburn saw below him the still forms of a woman, who was holding the body of a dead baby, and her two daughters. All three were near death from starvation, and Redburn realized that "there they had crawled to die." He was shaken by this sight.

> I stood looking down on them, while my whole soul swelled within me; and I asked myself, What right had any body in the wide world to smile and be glad, when sights like this were to be seen? It was enough to turn the heart to gall; and make a man-hater of a Howard. For who were these ghosts that I saw: Were they not human beings? A woman and two girls? With eyes, and lips, and ears like any queen? with hearts which, though they did not bound with blood, yet beat with a dull, dead ache that was their life.[5]

Redburn tried in vain to secure assistance for this miserable woman and her children. He went to the police, his landlady, and other poor women in the same neighborhood trying to find someone who would take them out of that hole and give them some food, but to no avail. No one showed the slightest interest in the fate of those three human beings. The small

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[4]See Mardi, pp. 239-40.

[5]Redburn, p. 232.

amount of food and water that Redburn was able to bring himself only served to prolong their misery. Redburn finally realized that they were beyond medical help, and death was the only answer to their misery and suffering. Even this realization only served to make him think of other instances of inhumanity in the institutions of society.

> I hardly know whether I ought to confess another thing that occurred to me as I stood there; but it was this--I felt an almost irresistible impulse to do them the last mercy, of in some way putting an end to their horrible lives; and I should almost have done so, I think, had I not been deterred by thoughts of the law. For I well knew that the law, which would let them perish of themselves without giving them one cup of water, would spend a thousand pounds, if necessary, in convicting him who should so much as offer to relieve them from their miserable existence.[6]

When Redburn returned the next morning, the bodies were gone. He was relieved by their death: "but my prayer was answered--they were dead, departed, and at peace."[7] However, Redburn could receive no consolation from the hard reality of man's inhumanity to man and its complete opposition to the Christian ideal of charity and brotherhood.

> But again I looked down into the vault, and in fancy beheld the pale, shrunken forms still crouching there. Ah! what are our creeds, and how do we hope to be saved? Tell me, oh Bible, that story of Lazarus again, that I may find comfort in my heart for the poor and forlorn. Surrounded as we are by the wants and woes of our fellow-men, and yet given to follow our own pleasures, regardless of their pains, are we not like people sitting up with a corpse, and making merry in the house of the dead?[8]

The hard lot of the immigrants coming to America again reminds Melville of the lack of charity and brotherhood in both America and the rest of the world. In spite of laws passed in order to protect the

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[6]Ibid., p. 236.

[7]Ibid., p. 237.

[8]Ibid.

immigrants, unscrupulous shipowners and captains take advantage of the immigrants in order to make a little more money for themselves. They have no sympathy for the suffering their greed inflicts upon the immigrants. This example of the inhumanity of one man to another, the absolute lack of human sympathy and Christian charity, is unbearable to Melville.

> We talk of the Turks, and abhor the cannibals; but may not some of them go to heaven before some of us? We may have civilized bodies and yet barbarous souls. We are blind to the real sights of this world; deaf to its voice; and dead to its death. And not till we know that one grief outweighs ten thousand joys will we become what Christianity is striving to make us.[9]

The oppressive discipline and the power structure of the Navy betrayed a lack of brotherhood in the military establishment. In White Jacket, published in 1850, Melville illustrated how the way of life in a man-of-war in the early nineteenth century infringed upon the essential dignity of man, which he felt was the real basis of democracy, as well as the basis of his own principle of brotherhood and the principle of Christian charity.[10]

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[9]Ibid., p. 379.

[10]In Moby Dick, Melville states:

> But this august dignity I treat of, is not the dignity of kings and robes, but that abounding dignity which has no robed investiture. Thou shalt see it shining in the arm that wields a pick or drives a spike; that democratic dignity which, on all hands, radiates without end from God; Himself! The great God absolute! The center and circumference of all democracy! His omnipresence, our divine equality!

Herman Melville, The Works of Herman Melville: Moby Dick (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), VII, 144.

The conditions of the ship compromised two essentials of man: his health and comfort. The crew ate at eight, twelve, and four, three times in eight hours and not at all for sixteen hours. The crew slept in the crowded hammocks of the berth-deck. Not all of the hammocks were out during the day, even though the men may have spent eight hours on night watch. The stifling sick-bay was dark and lacked ventilation.

Melville describes the inequality resulting from the power structure on a ship. Naval ships of the time operated under the regulations of the Articles of War, which were extremely severe and unequally applied. The Articles ruled death for thirteen out of twenty possible offenses. Under the power structure of the ship, the captain was almost a monarch. All officers were very powerful and subject to very little redress from their superiors. Seamen had almost no rights; they did not even have means available to air their grievances. Of the naval social system, Melville says:

> The immutable ceremonies and iron etiquette of a man-of-war; the spiked barriers separating the various grades of rank; the delegated absolutism of authority on all hands; the impossibility, on the part of the common seaman, of appeal from incidental abuses, and many more things that might be enumerated, all tend to beget in most armed ships a general social condition which is the precise reverse of what any Christian could desire.[11]

Melville makes a dramatic indictment of the oppressive discipline of the Navy in general and of the practice of flogging in particular. He felt it was morally wrong because it opposed the spirit of both the

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[11]Herman Melville, The Works of Herman Melville: White Jacket (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), VI, 472-73.

brotherhood between men and the political institutions of the United States, which were based on principles of political liberty and equality. Seamen were not given any kind of a trial before flogging. Officers were not subject to being flogged; they were above the law in this case.

> Certainly the necessities of navies warrant a code for its government more stringent than the law that governs the land; but that code should conform to the spirit of the political institutions of the country that ordains it. It should not convert into slaves some of the citizens of a nation of freemen. . . .Our institutions claim to be based upon broad principles of political liberty and equality. Whereas, it would hardly affect one iota the condition on shipboard of an American man-of-war's man, were he transferred to the Russian Navy and made a subject of the Czar.[12]

Melville summarizes his feelings on flogging by saying:

> Irrespective of incidental considerations, we assert that flogging in the navy is opposed to the essential dignity of man, which no legislator has a right to violate; that it is oppressive, and glaringly unequal in its operations; that it is utterly repugnant to the spirit of our democratic institutions; indeed, that it involves a lingering trait of the worst times of a barbarous feudal aristocracy; in a word, we denounce it as religiously, morally, immutably wrong.[13]

The Christian church was another institution in American society that was unable to achieve brotherhood between men. Although most Americans were Christians, the majority did not put into practice the doctrine of Christian charity; they did not feel a sense of brotherhood for their fellow men. In The Confidence Man, published in 1857, Melville satirically points out the lack of Christian charity in American society.

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[12] Ibid., p. 179.

[13] Ibid., p. 182.

> This singular figure is distinguished from all the other individuals in The Confidence Man by his utter innocence, or naivete, as symbolized by his innumerable associations with whiteness, and by his action: Unlike all of the succeeding 'protagonists,' the mute does not practice a con game, he does not fleece any of the passengers on the Fidèle. In short, the mute is Christ bringing the essence of the Christian ethical message to the world. This identification is suggested by innumerable symbolic clues, not the least of which is the final position by the stairs leading upward: the way to heaven, salvation, is through Christ.[16]

The passengers of the Fidèle refuses to accept the message of charity offered by the Confidence Man. They regard him as a simpleton and rudely push him aside. But they accept without question the sign "No Trust" that the barber hangs outside his shop, an uncharitable message.

> An inscription which, though in a sense not less intrusive than the contrasted ones of the stranger, did not, as it seemed, provoke any corresponding derision or surprise, much less indignation; and still less, to all appearances, did it gain for the inscriber the repute of being a simpleton.[17]

After the worldly crowd rejects his message of charity, the stage is set for the Confidence Man to make his appearance in other disguises.

As Black Guinea, a Negro cripple, the Confidence Man asks for charity in the form of alms from the passengers. After the original curiosity and subsequent charity of some of the passengers, Black Guinea resorts to a "game of charity" that offered a chance for both "diversion and charity"; he held his mouth open while the passengers

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[16]James E. Miller, Jr., A Reader's Guide to Herman Melville (New York: The Noonday Press, 1962), pp. 176-77.

[17]The Confidence Man, p. 4.

pitched pennies into it. This diversion, however, was soon broken up by a one-legged man. He asserted that Black Guinea was a fake; his cynicism was enough to put an end to the charity for Black Guinea. The complete lack of charity and brotherhood in this one-legged man is noted by Melville:

> That cripples, above all men, should be companionable, or, at least, refrain from picking a fellow-limper to pieces, in short, should have a little sympathy in common misfortune, seemed not to occur to the company.[18]

The Confidence Man next appears as John Ringman, wearing a long weed in his hat. He accosts Mr. Roberts, the good merchant who had given Black Guinea money and accidently dropped his business card at the same time. John Ringman pretends to be an acquaintance of Mr. Roberts and, after telling him an unfortunate story, succeeds in persuading the charitable man to give him some money.

The Confidence Man then appeals for charity as the solicitor for the Seminole Widow and Orphan Asylum. He proposes the founding of a World Charity. Although he enthusiastically describes all the good that would result from such an organization, he is actually turning charity into a business, completely removing the sense of one man helping another.

> 'The World's Charity is to be a society whose members shall comprise deputies from every charity and mission extant; the one object of the society to be the methodisation of the world's benevolence; to which end, the present system of voluntary and promiscuous contribution to be done away, and the society to be empowered by the various governments to levy, annually, one grand benevolence tax upon all mankind; as in Augustus Caesar's time, the whole world to come up to be taxed; a tax which, for the scheme of it,

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[18] Ibid., p. 12.

> should be something like the income-tax in England, a tax, also, as before hinted, to be a consolidation-tax of all possible benevolence taxes; as in America here, the state-tax, and the county-tax, and the town-tax, and the poll-tax, are by the assessors rolled into one. This tax, according to my tables, calculated with care, would result in the yearly raising of a fund little short of eight hundred millions; this fund to be annually applied to such objects, and in such modes, as the various charities and missions, in general congress represented, might decree; whereby, in fourteen years, as I estimate, there would have been devoted to good works the sum of eleven thousand two hundred millions; which would warrant the dissolution of the society, as that fund judiciously expended, not a pauper or heathern could remain the round world over.'[19]

Ringman makes his World Charity into even more of a worldly business enterprise by applying the "Wall Street spirit."

> For if, confessedly, certain spiritual ends are to be gained but through the auxiliary agency of worldly means, then, to the surer gaining of such spiritual ends, the example of worldly policy in worldly projects should not by spiritual projectors be slighted. In brief, the conversion of the heathern, so far, at least, as depending on human effort, would, by the world's charity, be let out on contract. So much by bid for converting India, so much Borneo, so much for Africa. Competition allowed, stimulus would be given. There would be no lethargy of monopoly. We should have no mission-house or tract-house of which slanderers could, with any plausibility, say that it had degenerated in its clerkships into a sort of custom-house. But the main point is the Archimedean money-power that would be brought to bear.'[20]

The Confidence Man next appeals to the greed of some of the passengers of the Fidèle as the president and transfer-agent of the Black Rapids Coal Company. He is able to easily sell shares of stock to passengers who expect to be able to make money on the investment. Notable among his victims is a college sophomore who had refused to be charitable to John Ringman, but who is more than anxious to invest in this stock.

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[19] Ibid., p. 51.

[20] Ibid., p. 53.

As the herb doctor, the Confidence Man peddles his Omni-Balsamic Reinvigorator and Samaritan Pain Dissuader as a means of appealing to another human desire, the desire to be healthy.

The Confidence Man makes his next appearance as the representative of the Philosophical Intelligence Office. He induces a misanthropic Missouri bachelor to regain his faith in both boys and men by arguing that all boys, whatever their behavior, have potentially noble qualities within them.

The Confidence Man makes his last appearance as the Cosmopolitan, Francis Goodman. While he converses with others and consistently maintains the doctrine of charity and confidence between men, three stories are told which illustrate the lack of charity, brotherhood, and friendliness between men. The first story, told by Charles Noble, another confidence man, is about Colonel John Moredock, Indian-hater . Colonel Moredock, because of the massacre of his family, indiscriminately hates all Indians. He is not satisfied with vengefully killing all those Indians who participated in the massacre; he hates all Indians and continues to inflict his vengence on the entire race.

The Cosmopolitan tells the story of Charlemont, who had no faith in the true basis of friendship. After being ruined financially, Charlemont refused to see any of his friends until he had regained his fortune; he feared the contempt of his friends because of his changed financial position.

Egbert, a disciple of Mark Winsome, follows his master's practical philosophy in removing all charity from friendship and reducing friendship to the level of the market place. In a hypothetical situation, he describes the basis of friendship:

> Though our friendship began in boyhood, think not that, on my side at least, it began injudiciously. Boys are little men, it is said. You, I juvenilely picked out for my friend, for your favorable points at the time; not the least of which were your good manners, handsome dress, and your parents rank and repute of wealth. In short, like any grown man, boy though I was, I went into the market and chose as my mutton, not for its leanness, but its fatness.[21]

Egbert uses the story of China Astor to illustrate the theme of "the folly, on both sides, of a friend's helping a friend."[22]

Charity towards man is the theme around which The Confidence Man revolves. The Confidence Man continually praises charity and confidence among men in his various disguises. However, his purely charitable schemes are not as successful as those that appeal to man's desire for money or health. Although there are a few charitable passengers on the Fidèle, such as the good merchant who befriends both Black Guinea and John Ringman and who later becomes a victim of the Black Rapids Coal Company scheme, most of the passengers display an almost complete lack of charity. The last passenger of the book is a good example. The old man praises charity and confidence in men; at the same time, he eagerly obtains a bolt for the door, a money belt, and a Counterfeit Detector.

The Cosmopolitan describes himself as a man of the world:

> Oh, one roams not over the gallant globe in vain. Bred by it, is a fraternal and fusing feeling. No man is a stranger. You accost anybody. Warm and confiding, you wait not for measured advances. And though, indeed, mine, in this instance, have met with no very hilarious encouragement, yet the principle of a true citizen of the world is still to return good for ill.[23]

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[21] Ibid., p. 272.

[22] Ibid., p. 294.

[23] Ibid., p. 177.

It is exactly this "fraternal and fusing feeling" that Melville continually urges for mankind, particularly his countrymen. But it is also this "fraternal feeling" that is missing in most of the passengers of the Fidèle. The Confidence Man illustrates how cold and materialistic man may become without charity or brotherhood.

As R. W. B. Lewis has pointed out:

> Charity in its traditional Christian or Pauline sense--the self-giving love between man and man--had always been for Melville the supreme human resource, the supreme human countermeasure, in a wolfish and maddeningly ambiguous world; and Melville's commitment to it was passionately manifested in his fiction, his letters, his marginalia, and his life.[24]

Although the lack of brotherhood in American society as a whole led Melville to adopt a pessimistic attitude towards American society, individual instances of brotherhood between men limited his pessimism. Melville could illustrate examples of brotherhood in individual men that partly compensated for the lack of it in the institutionalized forms of society.

Although Redburn witnessed extreme examples of the lack of human sympathy in the Liverpool slums, he was moved himself by what he saw. He exhibited a sincere concern for the dying woman he saw, a stranger to him, even when her neighbors and the local authorities did not seem to care. He maintained a feeling of brotherhood for the poor people of Liverpool and the immigrants coming to America when no one else seemed to.

Even under the strict discipline of a man-of-war, there were instances of brotherhood between individual men. The friendship between White Jacket and Jack Chase, captain of the main-top, was one such example. White

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[24]R. W. B. Lewis in an "Afterword" to Herman Melville, The Confidence Man (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1964), p. 274.

Jacket describes the sense of brotherhood inherent in Jack Chase. He says, "No man ever had a better heart" and continues: "There was such an abounding air of good sense and good feeling about the man, that he who could not love him would thereby pronounce himself a knave."[25] White Jacket expresses his commitment to Jack Chase by saying: "Wherever you may be now rolling over the blue billows, dear Jack! take my best love along with you; and God bless you, wherever you go!"[26] Melville's last work, Billy Budd, was dedicated to Jack Chase.

Melville expands his theme of friendship by describing the sense of brotherhood between all of the men of the main-top: "We main-top men were brothers, one and all; and we loaned ourselves to each other with all the freedom in the world."[27]

The general fraternity among the sailors of the Neversink was symbolized by the smoking club, where, for a while at least, individual differences succumbed to the feeling of brotherhood.

> Now a bunch of cigars, all banded together, is a type and a symbol of the brotherly love between smokers. Likewise, for the time, in a community of pipes is a community of hearts. Nor was it an ill thing for the Indian sachems to circulate their calumet tobacco-bowl--even as our own forefathers circulated their punch-bowl--in a token of peace, charity, and goodwill, friendly feelings, and sympathising souls. And this it was that made the gossipers of the galley so loving a club, so long as the vapoury bond united them.[28]

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[25] White Jacket, pp. 13-14.

[26] Ibid., p. 14.

[27] Ibid., p. 15.

[28] Ibid., p. 489.

The most significant example of the redeeming force of brotherhood is the friendship between Ishmael and Queequeg in Moby-Dick. Ishmael and Queequeg came from two different worlds. Ishmael was a depressed American, experiencing a "damp, drizzly November" in his soul. Queequeg was a native of a cannibalistic island, Kokovoko. But these two men with such different backgrounds were drawn together by the bond of friendship. This friendship had a positive effect on Ishmael. Queequeg's friendship dispersed the depression he had felt; he no longer felt the "November" in his soul.

> I began to be sensible of strange feelings. I felt a melting in me. No more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world. This soothing savage had redeemed it. There he sat, his very indifference speaking a nature in which there lurked no civilized hypocrisies and bland deceits. Wild he was; a very sight of sights to see; yet I began to feel myself mysteriously drawn towards him. And those same things that would have repelled most others, they were the very magnets that thus drew me. I'll try a pagan friend, thought I, since Christian kindness has proved but hollow courtesy.[29]

Like Melville, Ishmael could find no comfort in American society with its hollow "Christian kindness." But he could and did receive the encouragement he needed in his friendship with Queequeg. The sense of brotherhood shared by Ishmael and Queequeg is an example of the kind of friendship that limited Melville's pessimism towards America; this friendship between individual men was a positive force that could counteract the negative aspects of American society.

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[29]Herman Melville, The Works of Herman Melville: Moby Dick (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), VII, p. 62.

SHORT STORIES

In his short stories, Melville continued to illustrate the lack of brotherhood in the institutions and forms of American society. As in his novels, this lack of brotherhood led him to continue his pessimistic attitude towards American society in general.

In "The Two Temples," which was rejected for publication by Putnam's Monthly Magazine in 1854 and was not included in The Piazza Tales, he illustrated the utter lack of Christian feeling and brotherhood in the institutionalized forms of the Christian church. While elegant members of a fashionable New York church are told that they are "the salt of the earth," the vigilant warden keeps out all undesirable worshipers, including the narrator. The Americans in this sketch are too concerned with outward appearances to experience genuine human sympathy. The second of the two temples is a theater in London on a Saturday night. In these seemingly unauspicious surroundings, the narrator experiences human sympathy, charity, and a genuine sense of brotherhood with his fellow man. This is the real essence of Christianity to Melville. The theater becomes a temple to the narrator because of the feelings it stimulates; the grand temple in New York is simply a beautiful building, nothing more. It does not encourage feelings of human sympathy. The narrator summarizes his feelings about the two temples:

> I went home to my lonely lodging, and slept not much that night, for thinking of the First Temple and the Second Temple; and how that, at home in my own land, was thrust out from the other, and a stranger in a strange land, found sterling charity in the one.[1]

In "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs," published in Harper's New Monthly Magazine in June, 1854, Melville points out the lack of charity between the economic classes in America. The first sketch, "Poor Man's Pudding," is set in the United States. The United States at that time was very proud of being the home of the free, with equality for all. But these glorious ideas, which contributed to the pride of its prosperous citizens, did not alleviate the poverty of some of its citizens and, in a sense, only made their poverty more miserable.

> The native American poor never lose their delicacy or pride; hence, though unreduced to the physical degradation of the European pauper, they yet suffer more in mind than the poor of any other people in the world. Those peculiar social sensibilities nourished by our own peculiar political principles, while they enhance the true dignity of a prosperous American, do but minister to the added wretchedness of the unfortunate; first, by prohibiting their acceptance of what little random relief charity may offer; and, second, by furnishing them with the keenest appreciation of the smarting distinction between their ideal of universal equality and their grindstone experience of the practical misery and infamy of poverty--a misery and infamy which is, ever has been, and ever will be precisely the same in India, England, and America.[2]

The poet Blandmour symbolizes the prosperous American citizen. He can talk of his theory that "through kind Nature, the poor, out of their very poverty, extract comfort."[3] As examples of this theory,

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[1]Herman Melville, The Works of Herman Melville: Billy Budd, and Other Prose Pieces (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), XIII, 191.

[2]Ibid., pp. 201-2.

[3]Ibid., p. 195.

he talks of "Poor Man's Manure" (snow), "Poor Man's Eye-water" and "Poor Man's Egg" (rain water), "Poor Man's Plaster" (made of natural ingredients), and "Poor Man's Pudding," which he says is "as relishable as a rich man's."[4] When the narrator tasted "Poor Man's Pudding," he found it to have a "mouldy, briny taste." "The rice, I knew, was of that damaged sort sold cheap; and the salt from the last year's pork barrel."[5] Blandmore has no idea of the misery of poverty; he can happily delude himself with his idea of Nature taking care of the poor. He was not interested enough in the poor to find out what their life was like. He lacked compassion and human sympathy for the poor of his land. This sketch by Melville implicitly points out the faults of this complacency. This type of shallowness and self-sufficiency allows one to enjoy his own heritage and be proud of his free country while completely ignoring the suffering of his fellow human beings.

In the second part of "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," published in Harper's New Monthly Magazine in April, 1855, Melville pointed out the dehumanizing quality of factories and machines at a time when industrialization was growing rapidly in the United States. Industrialization was another example of the lack of brotherhood between men in American society. In the factory system, the production of goods was more important than the waste of human life that contributed to that production. The narrator of the sketch, visiting a paper factory in New England, is struck by the pale, almost lifeless girls working in the factory. Melville implicitly points out the dehumanizing

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[4]Ibid., pp. 194-95

[5]Ibid., p. 200.

aspect of the machinery, and he also points out the physical dangers inherent in some of the jobs. In the rag cutting room, "The air swam with the fine, poisonous particles which from all sides darted, subtilely, as motes in sunbeams, into the lungs."[6]

The narrator poignantly feels the fate of these working girls: "So through consumptive pallors of this blank, raggy life go these white girls to death."[7] While gazing at the machine that made paper from pulp, he says:

> Before my eyes--there, passing in slow procession along the wheeling cylinders, I seemed to see, glued to the pallid incipience of the pulp, the yet more pallid faces of all the pallid girls I had eyed that heavy day. Slowly, mournfully, beseechingly, yet unresistingly, they gleamed along, their agony dimly outlined on the imperfect paper, like the print of the tormented face of the handerchief of Saint Veronica.[8]

In "Bartleby, the Scrivener," Melville gives us a portrait of a man who completely withdrew from society, who refused to share a sense of brotherhood with other men. Bartleby simply "preferred not to" associate or cooperate in any way with other men or their activities. Bartleby remained completely apart from the affairs of men.

In a brief passage at the end of the story, the narrator tells us that Bartleby had previously worked in the Dead Letter Office in Washington. This is apparently a clue to Bartleby's withdrawal from men. Bartleby had had close contact with dead letters, letters that could not communicate with anyone. He felt the futility of trying to communicate with or reach other men. He decided not to try. He remained isolated within himself.

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[6] Ibid., p. 247.

[7] Ibid., p. 248.

[8] Ibid., p. 253.

The wall that Bartleby looked at from the office window and the wall that he faced in death are appropriate symbols of the barrier that Bartleby had erected around himself. He did not allow anyone to penetrate that barrier.

Bartleby is, of course, an extreme case. Because he had witnessed the futility of communication between men, he felt that there could be no brotherhood or communion between them. He completely withdrew into himself, and the only release from his isolation was death.

But the subtitle of the story, "A Story of Wall Street," suggests that Melville did not feel that Bartleby's problem, extreme though it was, was unique. He seems to imply that there is little genuine brotherhood or companionship between men in the business and financial world of Wall Street. Thus, the concluding expression reflects despair not only for Bartleby, but for all men who cannot or do not receive the fellowship of other men. "Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity!"[9]

However, in his short stories, as in his novels, Melville's portrait of American life was not entirely bleak. He again presented examples of a sense of brotherhood in individuals that combated the lack of brotherhood in the forms and institutions of society. The narrator of "Bartleby, the Scriviner," showed compassion for Bartleby; he felt a sense of brotherhood for him.

> For the first time in my life a feeling of overpowering stinging melancholy seized me. Before, I had never experienced aught but a not unpleasing sadness. The bond of a common humanity now drew me irresistibly to gloom. A fraternal melancholy! For both I and Bartleby were sons of

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[9]Herman Melville, The Works of Herman Melville: The Piazza Tales (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), X, 65.

> Adam. I remembered the bright silks and sparkling faces I had seen that day, in gala trim, swan-like sailing down the Mississippi of Broadway; and I contrasted them with the pallid copyist, and thought to myself, Ah, happiness courts the light, so we deem the world is gay; but misery hides aloof, so we deem that misery there is none.[10]

In his description of Jack Gentian, Melville presented another example of brotherhood in an individual man. In the "Jack Gentian" sketches, published in 1924, Melville seemed to outline the characteristics of what he felt an American should be. The chief characteristic of Jack Gentian was his humane sympathy for and understanding of his fellow human beings. For Melville, this sense of the brotherhood of men became the essence of life. Through his portrait of Jack Gentian, Melville gave us an example of an American who practiced brotherhood.

Although Jack Gentian lived in the rather exclusive company of the "Burgundy Club," a bachelor club of which he was the Dean, he did not maintain an aristocratic aloofness between himself and other less fortunate men. His associates criticized him for practicing social democracy. They felt his abandonment of his aristocratic aloofness was an indication of his failing health, caused by his age. One of his associates says:

> But--will you believe it?--late I espied him musing on a shaded bench in Madison Square; in the forenoon it was, too, not far from a seated file of disreputable nondescripts, non-producers in deplorable attire, plunged in lugubrious reveries on their doubtless misspent lives. Yes, and presently he rose, and after looking about him went straight up to a solitary old vagabond, and standing before him seemed making personal inquiries of him, and concluded by putting hand in pocket and bestowing something upon him. Now seems not that an indication of impaired senses?--deliberately to put a premium on improvidence and thriftlessness, or worse?[11]

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[10] Ibid., p. 40.

[11] Billy Budd, and Other Prose Pieces, p. 369.

Another associate comments, "It were almost enough to banish him from respectable society were it not the esteemed Major and the Dean."[12]

This conversation of Jack's associates points out their own faults. In contrast to Jack, they have absolutely no human sympathy; they are mercenary and place a premium on money, productivity, and material usefulness. The unfortunate men in the square are described as "non-producers," and Jack's generosity to one of them is seen as putting "a premium on improvidence and thriftlessness, or worse." One says that he "hardly thought that he had any way so far decayed in his sense of what is beseeming in a gentleman whatever his years, as publicly to idle, and in business hours, and in such vicinity as you mention."[13]

One of the group cynically mentions that the forgiveness these men are willing to show Jack for his indiscretion may be based upon his bank account. To this, the vestryman indignately replies: "This is America, Christian America, thank God; where, be it what it may, one's bank account is of no account whatever in an American's estimate of a fellow American."[14]

Although these men speak approvingly of these noble ideas, their conversation demonstrates the validity of the original observation.

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[12] Ibid., p. 370.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

They go on to agree with Jack's action in resigning as a director of the Dime Savings Bank because "he had generally outlived his usefulness."[15]

Through their own conversation, Melville shows the mercenary nature of these men. In contrast to Jack's benevolence, they exemplify the lack of brotherhood between the various economic classes in American society.

In addition to his sympathy for less fortunate men, Jack Gentian's sympathic nature is also illustrated in his attitude towards the Civil War. He is proud of his ancestors who fought in the Revolutionary War and proudly wears his grandfather's golden insignia of the Society of the Cincinnati, an order established by Washington and Lafayette for officers of the Revolutionary War. He is proud of his ancesters having participated in the war that gained the independence of the United States; he solemnly celebrates the Fourth of July every year. But he does not observe the day of celebration recognized as the yearly tribute to the victory of the North over the South; he cannot revel in a victory over his fellow countrymen, although he distinguished himself during the war. His reminiscences of the war are concerned with the human side of the story, not the military.

> Not often dost thou discuss the tactics of thy Virginia campaigns, but what things hast thou told us of its byplay--the scouting, the foraging, the riding up to lovely mansions . . . lovely damsels more terrible than Mars in their feminine indignation at the insolent invader; in other instances being coquettishly served at an improvised lunch on some broad old piazza by less implacable beauties reduced by the calamities to dispensing hospitality for the enemy's greenbacks. In such and similar passages of the war thou aboundest, passages luckily not susceptible of being formalized into professed history.

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[15] Ibid., p. 371.

[16] Ibid., p. 365.

Jack could sympathize with the spirit of Charles Sumner: "For what was sterling in him, thou didst so sincerely honour, though far from sharing in all his advocated measures."[17]

Jack's humane qualities, which prevented him from glorifying the defeat of his fellow countrymen, were misunderstood by his narrow-minded associates. Because he did not share the general optimism and chauvinism of the North, it was deemed that his faculties were dimmed by old age.

> 'Major Gentian, though a soldier on the right side in the war, besides being of double Revolutionary descent--so I am told--nevertheless is far from being that sanguine New Yorker he used to be, and which in true patriotism we are all bound to be? What is this, I would like to know, but the natural optimist doting into the deplorable pessimist.'[18]

Through his sketches of Jack Gentian, Melville seems to say that the true American is one that feels genuine sympathy and brotherhood for his fellow men; that men should put into practice the American ideal of equality for all through true Christian charity. Hypocrisy, social pretention, and materialism, as illustrated by Jack's associates, are false attitudes, showing no human sympathy, that need to be corrected by following Jack's example. Melville expressed the admiration he felt for the qualities Jack exemplified:

> Fail thou yet mayest, Major, but never degenerate. Thou mayest <u>outlive thy usefulness</u> (execrable phrase!) but never thy loving-kindness. To the last thou wilt be Jack Gentian; not too dignified to be humane; a democrat, though less of the stump than the heart.[19]

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[17]<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 359.

[18]<u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 371-72.

[19]<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 327.

Melville openly sympathized with the humane qualities of Major Jack Gentian.

> They become the occasion for brief final affirmations of that American-democratic spirit of Christian charity and reconciliation that Melville never lost imaginative faith in; that sense of the unity of mankind in the tragic accumulations of its history which he had once thought American authors especially would be free to express.[20]

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[20]Warner Berthoff, ed., in an "Introduction" to The Great Short Works of Herman Melville (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), p. 402.

POETRY

The Civil War dramatically, and violently, demonstrated the lack of brotherhood in American institutions that Melville had been illustrating in his novels and short stories. Because of the lack of brotherhood and sympathy between the North and the South, men were fighting their countrymen in a bloody civil war. Each side had little sympathy for the institutions and ways of life that were different from its own. The practice of slavery was, of course, a major issue in the war. Melville had already stated his views on the problem of slavery in Mardi. He condemned slavery as incompatible with the principle of democracy. He did not, however, condemn the Southerners themselves. They had inherited the institution of slavery. It was a part, an important part, of their way of life. Melville felt compassion for his Southern countrymen at a time when most of his Northern contemporaries did not.

But the Civil War was also a battle between two economic systems: the agricultural economy of the South, which depended heavily on slave labor, and the industrial economy of the North. In trying to abolish slavery, the North slowed little concern for the economic problems it would cause in the South. Again, there was a lack of brotherhood between these two systems.

Finally, the Civil War was a clash between political systems. The South, upholding the doctrine of states' rights, felt it had a right to secede from the Union when actions of the Union jeopardized its interests. The North denied that such a right existed; the North felt the Union had to be preserved at any cost.

Thus the various institutions of each section, political and economic, were at odds. There was littly sympathy or understanding of the position of the other side. This lack of brotherhood between the various institutions of the two sections of the United States finally erupted into the Civil War.

In his poetry dealing with the Civil War, Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War (1886), Melville dealt chiefly with the effect of the war on individuals. Although he believed in the Union cause and he rejoiced in the victory of the North as a victory for freedom, he was primarily concerned with the effect of this clash of institutions on individual men on both sides. These men had to pay the price of the lack of sympathy in the institutions and systems of American life.

In "On the Slain Collegians," Melville revealed his own sense of brotherhood for all the men who fought in the war, both for the North and for the South. Each man was true to his own home and family.

> Aflame with sympathies whose blaze
> Perforce enwrapped him--social laws,
> Friendship and kin, and by-gone days--
> Vows, kisses--every heart unmoors,
> And launches into the seas of wars.
> What could they else--North or South?
> Each went forth with blessings given
> By priests and mothers in the name of Heaven;
> And honor in both was chief.

Warred one for Right, and one for Wrong?
So be it; but they both were young--
Each grape to his cluster clung,
All their elegies are sung.[1]

Expanding the idea of men's loyalty to their homes, Melville compassionately described the predicament of men in the South at the outbreak of the war. They were torn between loyalty to their home and family and loyalty to their country. In "Lee in the Capitol," dated April, 1866, Lee tries to explain why the Southerners, some of them reluctant, decided to fight the North. He compares the Southerners to a Moorish girl who was converted to Christianity. Priests told her that since she was a Christian, she must leave her father and learn to hate him because Moors and Christians were at war. She refused; she could not abandon her father.

So in the South; vain every plea
'Gainst Nature's strong fidelity;
  True to the home and to the heart,
Throngs cast their lot with kith and kin,
  Foreboding, cleaved to the natural part--
Was this the unforgivable sin?[2]

A later poem, "Bridegroom Dick," dated 1876, repeats the same idea.

--Well, we, to a man,
We sailors o' the North, wife, how could we lag?--
Strike with your kin, and you stick to the flag!
But to the sailors o' the South that easy way was barred.
To some, dame, believe (and I speak what I know),
Wormwood the trial and the Uzzite's black shard;

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[1]Herman Melville, The Works of Herman Melville: Poems (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), XVI, 118.

[2]Ibid., p. 167.

> And the faithfuller the heart, the crueller the throe.
> Duty? It pulled with more than one string,
> This way and that, and anyhow a sting.
> The flag, and your kin, how be true unto both?
> If either plight ye keep, then ye break the other troth.
> But elect here they must, though the cauists were out;
> Decide--hurry up--and throttle every doubt.[3]

Melville rejoiced in the victory of the North, but not in a partisan way. He did not celebrate the defeat of the South. Instead, he rejoiced in the victory of freedom and preservation of the Union. In "The Surrender at Appomattox," he says:

> The warring eagles fold the wing,
> But not in Caesar's sway;
> Not Rome o'ercome by Roman arms we sing,
> As on Pharisalia's day,
> But Treason thrown, though a giant grown,
> And Freedom's larger play.
> All human tribes glad token see
> In the close of the wars of Grant and Lee.[4]

In a prose "Supplement" to Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War, Melville states: "It is right to rejoice for our triumph, so far as it may justly imply an advance for our whole country and for humanity."[5]

One of the most persistent themes of Melville's Civil War poetry is the brotherhood of the men fighting each other. Despite the opposition of their institutions, these men were still countrymen, still brothers in Melville's sense of the term. "On the Photograph of a Corps Commander" explicitly states Melville's belief in the brotherhood of men. Melville does not tell us if this commander is from the North or the South.

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[3] Ibid., pp. 208-9.

[4] Ibid., p. 99.

[5] Ibid., p. 184.

That is not important. This "manly" man, with his "warrior-carriage of the head" and "brave dilation of the frame," inspires pride and respect in other men. His manly carriage inspires the "bonds that draw" in other men.

> Nothing can lift the heart of man
> Like manhood in a fellow-man.
> The thought of heaven's great King afar
> But humbles us--too weak to scan;
> But manly greatness man can span,
> And feel the bonds that draw.[6]

In "Shiloh," Melville poignantly describes the painful recognition of dying soldiers that they were in fact brothers. Their institutions had deceived them into being "foemen at morn"; but with approaching death, they were undeceived and became "friends at eve." They finally recognized the brotherhood between them, but it was too late.

> Skimming lightly, wheeling still,
> The swallows fly low
> Over the field in clouded days,
> The forest-field of Shiloh--
> Over the field where April rain
> Solaced the parched ones stretched in pain
> Through the pause of night
> That followed the Sunday fight
> Around the church of Shiloh--
> The church so lone, the log built one,
> That echoed to many a parting groan
> And natural prayer
> Of dying foemen mingled there--
> Foemen at morn, but friends at eve--
> Fame or country least their care:
> (What like a bullet can undeceive!)
> But now they lie low,
> While over them the swallows skim,
> And all is hushed at Shiloh.[7]

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[6] Ibid., p. 76.

[7] Ibid., p. 46.

"A Meditation" is subtitled "Attributed to a Northerner after attending the last of two funerals from the same homestead--those of a National and a Confederate officer (brothers), his kinsmen, who had died from the effects of wounds received in the closing battles." In this poem, Melville dramatically presents the brotherhood and close kinship of the men fighting each other. He opens by describing soldiers coming out of their works after a truce, looking at their enemies, and recognizing a kinsman or friend. He continues:

> What thoughts conflicting then were shared,
> While sacred tenderness perforce
> Welled from the heart and wet the eye;
> And something of a strange remorse
> Rebelled against the sanctioned sin of blood,
> And Christian wars of natural brotherhood.
>
> Then stirred the god within the brest--
> The witness that is man's at birth;
> A deep misgiving undermined
> Each plea and subterfuge of earth;
> They felt in that rapt pause, with warning rife,
> Horror and anguish for the civil strife.[8]

A failure to recognize and accept the brotherhood between the men of the North and the South had caused the Civil War. With the victory of the North, Melville realized that America faced a new challenge. It now had to assimilate the Negroes into its culture, and it also had to re-establish the South as a part of the Union. Melville felt the answer to both of these problems lay in brotherhood--brotherhood towards both the Negroes and the defeated Southerners. In his Civil War poetry, he advocated brotherhood between the two sections after the war, but particularly on the part of the North towards the defeated South.

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[8]Ibid., p. 170.

In "A Meditation," he praises the "manful soldier view" of respect towards the South.

> A darker side there is; but doubt
> In Nature's charity hovers there:
> If men for new agreement yearn,
> Then old upbraiding best forbear:
> 'The South's the sinner!' Well, so let it be;
> But shall the North sin worse, and stand the Pharisee?
>
> O, now that brave men yield the sword,
> Mine be the manful soldier-view;
> By how much more they boldly warred,
> By so much more is mercy due:
> When Vicksburg fell, and the moody files marched out,
> Silent the victors stood, scorning to raise a shout.[9]

In "Rebel Colour-Bearers at Shiloh," subtitled "A plea against the vindictive cry raised by civilians shortly after the surrender at Appomattox," he argues:

> The life in the veins of Treason lags,
> Her daring colour-bearers drop their flags,
> And yield. Now shall we fire?
> Shall nobleness in victory less aspire
> Than in reverse? Spare Spleen her ire,
> And think how Grant met Lee.[10]

In "Lee in the Capitol," he gives some practical reasons for adopting an attitude of brotherhood and reconciliation towards the South in the speech of Lee before the Reconstruction Committee of Congress.

> A voice comes out from these charnel-fields,
> A plaintive yet unheeded one:
> "Died all in vain? both sides undone?"
> Push not your triumph; do not urge
> Submissiveness beyond the verge.
> Intestine rancour would you bide,
> Nursing eleven sliding daggers in your side?
> Far from my thought to school or threat;
> I speak the things which hard beset.

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[9] Ibid., pp. 171-72.

[10] Ibid., p. 107.

Where various hazards meet the eyes,
To elect in magnanimity is wise.
Reap victory's fruit while sound the core;
What sounder fruit than re-established law?
I know your partial thoughts do press
Solely on us for war's unhappy stress;
But weigh--consider--look at all,
And broad anathems you'll recall. . . .

These noble spirits are yet yours to win.
Shall the great North go Sylla's way?
Proscribe? prolong the evil day?
Confirm the curse? Infix the hate?
In Union's name forever alienate?
From reason who can urge the plea--
Freemen conquerors of the free?
When blood returns to the shrunken vein,
Shall the wound of the Nation bleed again?

Well may the wars wan thought supply,
And kill the kindling of the hopeful eye,
Unless you do what even kings have done
In leniency--unless you shun
To copy Europe in her worst estate--
Avoid the tyranny you reprobate.[11]

In his prose "Supplement," Melville clearly states his belief in the power of brotherhood to solve the post-war problems of the United States.

> The work of Reconstruction, if admitted to be feasible at all, demands little but common sense and Christian charity. . . . Benevolence and policy--Christianity and Machiavelli--dissuade from penal severities toward the subdued. . . . In our natural solicitude to confirm the benefit of liberty to the blacks, let us forbear from measures of dubious constitutional rightfulness toward our white countrymen--measures of a nature to provoke, among other of the last evils, exterminating hatred of race toward race. . . . so far as immediate measures looking toward permanent Re-establishment are concerned, no consideration should tempt us to pervert the national victory into oppression for the vanquished. . . . The years of the war tried our devotion to the Union; the time of peace may test the sincerity of our faith in democracy.[12]

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[11] Ibid., pp. 166-8

[12] Ibid., pp. 180-9.

Although Melville advocated a policy of brotherhood and reconciliation towards the South, he remained pessimistic about the willingness and the ability of the institutions of the United States to carry out such a policy. The reaction of the Reconstruction Committee, representing the government of the United States, to Lee's pleas for reconciliation in "Lee in the Capitol" illustrates his pessimism. The Committee completely disregards Lee's argument for reconciliation and ignores his advice. It continues to follow its policy of retribution towards the South, confident of its own infallibility.

> But no. Brave though the Soldier, grave his plea--
> Catching the light in the future's skies,
> Instinct disowns each darkening prophecy:
> Faith in America never dies;
> Heaven shall the end ordained fulfil,
> We march with Providence cheery still.[13]

Clarel, published in 1876, was the last of Melville's works to be published for public distribution during his lifetime. Although it is primarily an account of Clarel's pilgrimage in the Holy Land in search of a solution to his religious doubts, the people Clarel meets on his pilgrimage represent many different ideas and points of view. One of these travelers in particular, Ungar, represents the pessimism Melville felt towards America because of the lack of brotherhood in its institutions.

Ungar was a Confederate soldier who had become bitterly disillusioned with America because of the lack of brotherhood he witnessed in the society around him, particularly in the political institutions. Ungar has exiled himself from his native country because of his personal convictions concerning the Civil War and its aftermath. He strongly believes in the

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[13] Ibid., p. 168.

idea, stated many times before by Melville, that slavery as an institution was wrong, but that the Southerners at the time of the Civil War were not to be blamed for its existence. They had inherited this institution as a part of their way of life; they did not choose to begin the practice of slavery.

> . . . but Unger knew
> . . . that instinct true
> Which tempered him in years bygone,
> When, spite the prejudices of kin
> And custom, he with friends could be
> Outspoken in his heart's belief
> That holding slaves was aye a grief--
> The system an iniquity
> In those who plant it and begin;
> While for inheritors--alas,
> Who knows?[14]

Clarel became disillusioned when he realized that the people of the North did not share his sympathetic views toward the South. The political institution of the North evinced an absolute lack of sympathy for the South through its policy of retribution. His own sense of brotherhood and charity was repelled by the absolute lack of these feelings on the part of the North. He became bitterly disillusioned when he saw no humane feelings of sympathy and brotherhood between men living in the home of democracy, the land of freedom and equality for all. Because he could not compromise his personal beliefs, Ungar became an exile from his native land.

> Now was he the self-exiled one.
> Too steadfast! Wherefore should be lent
> The profitless high sentiment?
> Renounce conviction in defeat:
> Pass over, share the spoiler's seat
> And thrive. Behooves thee else turn cheek
> To fate with wisdom of the meek.
> Wilt not? Unblest then with the store
> Of heaven, and spurning wordly lore

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[14]Herman Melville, The Works of Herman Melville: Clarel (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), XV, 179.

Astute, eat thou thy cake of pride
And henceforth live on unallied.--15

Ungar's disillusionment with the political institution of the United States led him to a dilillusionment with all of the institutions of the land for essentially the same reason: the lack of brotherhood. Ungar's sense of the lack of brotherhood in the United States is implicit in all of his criticism of it. In the practice of slavery, the North's policy of retribution towards the South, the lack of Christianity, the avarice and materialism of his countrymen, and the inhumanity of industrialization, he saw Americans selfishly following their own desires and completely ignoring the suffering, needs, and desires of their countrymen.

Ungar describes the lack of Christianity in materialistic Americans of his age, a time of great material progress. But he feels material progress cannot offset the lack of Christianity in the institutions of American life. Without Christianity, "corruption dwells,/ And man and chaos are without restraint."

Against pretences void or weak
The impieties of "Progress" speak.
What say <u>these</u>, in effect, to God?
"How profits it? And who art Thou
That we should serve Thee? Of Thy ways
No knowledge we desire: <u>new</u> ways
We have found out, and better. Go--
Depart from us; we do erase
Thy sinecure: behold, the sun
Stands still no more in Ajalon:
Depart from us!"--And if He do?
(And that He may, the Scripture says)
Is aught betwixt ye and the hells?
For He, nor in irreverent view,
'Tis He distils that savour true
Which keeps good essences from taint;
Where He is not, corruption dwells,
And man and chaos are without restraint.16

15<u>Ibid</u>.

16<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 246-7

Ungar feels the lack of Christian charity in American life limits the power and influence of democracy.

> She's limited; lacking the free
> And genial catholicity
> Which in Christ's pristine scheme unfurled
> Grace to the city and the world.[17]

The inhumanity of industrialization was another example of the lack of brotherhood in American institutions. In their avarice in employing material progress to achieve material gain, Americans displayed little sympathy for their countrymen who worked in factories and were perhaps killed or maimed by their work.

> How many hughs of Lincoln, say,
> Does Mammon in his mills, to-day,
> Crook, if he do not crucify?[18]

Ungar has become so disillusioned with Americans and their way of life that he traces the lack of brotherhood in his countrymen as far as the language they use.

> 'Your alms-box, smaller than your till,
> And poor house won't absolve your mill.
> But what ye are, a straw may tell--
> Your dearth of phrases affable.
> Italian, French--more tongues than these--
> Addresses have of courtesies
> In kindliness of man toward man,
> By prince used and by artisan,
> And not pervertible in sense
> Of scorn or slight. Ye have the Sir,
> That sole, employed in snub or slur,
> Never in pure benevolence,
> And at its best a formal term
> Of cold regard.'[19]

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[17] Ibid., p. 240.

[18] Ibid., p. 193.

[19] Ibid.

Melville had stated in Mardi that he believed the western frontier, by providing room for the population to expand, had prevented the United States from facing the problems of a crowded civilization. Ungar repeats this idea and adds that when the frontier closes the lack of brotherhood between the economic classes would result in a "class-war, rich-and-poor-man fray."

> Those waste-wiers which the New World yields
> To inland freshets--the free vents
> Supplied to turbid elements;
> The vast reserves--the untried fields;
> These long shall keep off and delay
> The class-war, rich-and-poor-man fray
> Of history. From that alone
> Can serious trouble spring. Even that
> Itself, this good result may own--
> The first firm founding of the state.[20]

Ungar sees the various factions of American life eventually erupting into war, the freedom of the country contributing to the catastrophe.

> 'But in the New World things make haste;
> Not only men, the state lives fast--
> Fast breeds the pregnant eggs and shells,
> The slumberous combustibles
> Sure to explode. 'Twill come,'twill come!
> One demagogue can trouble much:
> How of a hundred thousand such?
> And universal sufferage lent
> To back them with brute element
> Overwhelming? What shall bind these seas
> Of rival sharp communities
> Unchristianised? Yea, but 'twill come!'
> 'What come?'
> 'Your Thirty Years (of) War.'[21]

Again, however, as in his novels and short stories, if Melville felt the institutions of American society failed because of their lack of brotherhood, he could still find examples of brotherhood between individual men. "Rebel Colour-Bearers at Shiloh" gives such an example.

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[20] Ibid., p. 248.

[21] Ibid., p. 249.

This poem is based upon a newspaper account of Colonel Stuart's refusal to allow his men to kill the color-bearers of the South at the front of the line. He is quoted as saying: "No, no, they're too brave fellows to be killed."[22]

Melville begins the poem by describing the Rebel color-bearers bravely stepping out in front of the lines of the South. He calls them "martyrs for the Wrong." He continues by illustrating how a Northern officer, hard-pressed by the battle, admired their courage and reacted compassionately.

> Perish their Cause! but mark the men--
> Mark the planted statues, then
> Draw trigger on them if you can.
>
> The leader of a patriot-band
> Even so could view rebels who so could stand;
> And this when peril pressed him sore,
> Left aidless in the shivered front of war--
> Skulkers behind, defiant foes before,
> And fighting with a broken brand.
> The challenge in that courage rare--
> Courage defenseless, proudly bare--
> Never could tempt him; he could dare
> Strike up the leveled rifle there.[23]

This Northern officer exhibited compassion and sympathy, a sense of brotherhood, for his Southern foes. The soldiers of Shiloh, as they lay dying, realized the essential brotherhood between the men on both sides. These individual cases of brotherhood were important to Melville in the face of war and the ensuing policy of retribution towards the South. The institutions of American society still lacked brotherhood. But Melville did not become completely disillusioned with America because of these cases of brotherhood between individual men.

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[22]Poems, p. 177.

[23]Ibid., p. 106.

Even the extreme pessimism of Ungar is limited by the brotherhood of individual men. In this case, Ungar himself exhibits a sense of brotherhood. Even though Ungar has become bitterly disillusioned because of the lack of brotherhood in American institutions and society, his disillusionment could not quench his own sense of brotherhood for his countrymen. A brief encounter with three of his fellow countrymen in a strange country stirs up his feeling of friendship for them. Although he never expresses these feelings in words, his behavior during his departure from them achnowledges the deep feelings he still has for his countrymen.

Farewell

He overnight had said, ere cell
He sought for slumber. Brief the word;
No hand he grasped; yet was he stirred,
Despite his will, in heart at core:
'Twas countrymen he here forsook:
He felt it; and his aspect wore
In the last parting, that strange look
Of one enlisted for sad fight
Upon some desperate dark shore,
Who bids adieu to the civilian,
Returning to his club-house bright,
In city cheerful with the million.[24]

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[24]Clarel, p. 272.

CONCLUSION

Melville's attitude towards the United States remained essentially the same throughout his career. He was pessimistic towards the institutions and forms of American society because they evinced a lack of brotherhood. He felt a sense of brotherhood was essential in a democracy. In his works in all three genres of literature, he illustrated the lack of brotherhood, or Christian charity, in various aspects of American life: the political institutions, the economic classes, the process of industrialization, the geographic sections of the country, the military establishment, and the ineffectualness of the Christian church.

However, Melville's pessimism towards the United States was limited by instances of brotherhood evinced by individual men. Redburn's sincere concern for the welfare of others, the friendship of Ismael and Queequeg, the humanitarianism of Jack Genetian, the comradeship and brotherhood shown by individual men during the Civil War, and the sense of brotherhood for his countrymen still prevalent in Ungar in spite of his disillusionment with America were all important to Melville because they illustrated that men were still capable of demonstrating a sincere love for their fellow men.

Even though the forms of American society disillusioned Melville, he could still find cause for hope in individual Americans.

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VITA

I was born on November 8, 1944, in Welch, West Virginia, the second of three children. In 1948, we moved to Bluefield, West Virginia, where my father, Earl Yeager, was an automobile dealer. My mother died on July 3, 1955, after a long illness. My father assumed the full responsibility of rearing us. I graduated from Bluefield High School in June, 1962.

On March 29, 1962, I married Larry Paige Bailey. In the fall of that year we entered Concord College, Athens, West Virginia. On March 7, 1963, our daughter, Kimberly Lynn, was born. In August, 1965, we moved to Philadelphia where my husband worked on his Master's degree at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. I completed my last three classes by correspondence courses and received a B. S. in Education, with teaching fields in English and Social Science, from Concord College in June, 1966. On March 16, 1967, our son, Larry Paige Bailey, Jr., was born. My husband received his Master's degree from Wharton in June, 1967.

In August, 1967, we moved to Richmond, where my husband was associated with a C. P. A. firm. He became a Certified Public Accountant in May, 1969. In June, 1969, he began teaching at Virginia Commonwealth

University, where he is now an Assistant Professor in the Business Department.

During the summer of 1969 I took Elementary French in a night course at Virginia Commonwealth University in preparation for entering the Graduate School of the University of Richmond in the fall. I hope to complete the degree requirements for a Master of Arts in English at the University of Richmond in June, 1971.

We plan to move back to Philadelphia in August so that my husband can work on his doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania.