

Captain David Porter and Melville's Anti-colonialism

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Abstract

Melville criticizes Captain Porter for his colonialist ambition in the South Seas although he is heavily indebted to Porter's *Journal* for his borrowings. But close comparative reading of *Journal* and Melville's *Typee* shows that Melville's critical reading of Porter in his transactions with the native people serves to form his own assertions and subsequently his descriptive form. At the same time, closer reading reveals Melville is deeply, although ironically twisted, inspired by him to conceptualize the thematic construct of his first novel: an idea of civilizers as intruders into Eden.

...and what is still more to our Shame civilized Christians, we debauch their Morals already too prone to vice and we interduce among them wants and perhaps diseases which they never before knew and which serves only to disturb that happy tranquility they and their fore Fathers had enjoy'd. If any one denies the truth of this assertion let him tell me what the Natives of the whole extent of America have gained by the commerce they have had with Europeans.¹

James Cook, *The Journals*

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¹ James Cook, *The Journals*, sel. and ed. Philip Edwards (London: Penguin Books, 2003) 277. The book is prepared from the original manuscripts by J.C. Beaglehole for the Hakluyt Society, 1955-67.

When asked by John Adams to introduce to him any book that gives the “account of the tradition of the Indians”, Thomas Jefferson, in 1812, suggests in his letter of reply the improbability of getting any book that may answer the inquiry of his former political antagonist, adding, however, early travelers have left accounts of the customs and character of Native Americans. Jefferson selects two travelers out of them. His intention is not to acquaint Adams with instructive books but, on the contrary, to propound and expose their methodological failures and inappropriate approaches in the studies which may result in unsubstantiality.²

Melville in 1844 needed published materials to instruct and aid him in his writing of *South Sea Indians*.³ He finds two books especially helpful: David Porter’s *Journal of the Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean* (1815) and C.S. Stewart’s *A Visit to the South Seas* (1831). They do great service to him but he also finds them inappropriate in their approaches to the target people.

Typee was published in 1846 as a real travelogue or as an autobiography but in fact it is not a book composed exclusively of the direct experiences of the author. Melville, a young deserter from a whaling ship, stayed in a native valley for no more than four weeks with scarcely any knowledge of the language of the people. He also confesses he did not keep diaries to help his recollections. Two years later he came back to his home town and set to write about the people he met in a valley of a faraway island in the South Seas. His manuscript was brought to London the next year. An English publisher accepted it, though he scented the taint of fiction. But the book was a popular success.

In his *Herman Melville* (1920), a Melville biographer Lewis Mumford pointed out Melville’s habit of reference, saying that “he read up every account of the South Seas he could lay hands on.”⁴ It was Charles Roberts Anderson that provided the source materials and examined closely Melville’s borrowings from them referring, when necessary, to other contemporary documents or modern ethnographic studies. Anderson

² Thomas Jefferson, “Letters,” in *Thomas Jefferson* (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 1261.

³ W. Patrick Strauss, *Americans in Polynesia 1783-1842* (East Lansing: The Michigan State University Press, 1963), 2. Polynesians were linked to the American Indians.

⁴ Lewis Mumford, *Herman Melville* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1920), 68-69.

concludes that "Melville's own acquaintance with Marquesan life may have been so brief, so limited, and so imperfect that he was forced to turn to printed authorities for the facts necessary to give substance to his narrative."⁵ *Typee* is chiefly indebted to the two books cited above. Melville also, in the first chapter of *Typee*, mentions the titles of these books which he considers warrant particular notice, adding, however, he has not met with Porter's *Journal*.⁶

The critical writings of *Typee* after Anderson have been produced based on the common conception that *Typee* is a fiction, a work of art. Milton Stern in his *Critical Essays on Herman Melville's Typee* introduces the history of *Typee* criticism and summarizes as the concluding view that Melville expresses "a recognition of richly mixed yearning for and final repudiation of the primitive energies."⁷ This is in the same line with the critical essays by D. H. Lawrence made public in 1920. His essay on *Typee* interprets the inconsistency in the narrative as Melville's strong desire for seeking an ideal paradise, his discovery of it and then his disappointment in it, putting the emphasis on the impossibility of primitive values for civilized men.⁸ His essays on Melville are strongly colored with racism which is incompatible with Melville's insistence. Melville's impassioned accusation against American and European imperialism is either ignored, or, if acknowledged at all, as it is a necessary evil for the development of the intellect of human beings.

⁵ Charles Roberts Anderson, *Melville in the South Seas* (New York: Morningside Heights Columbia University Press, 1939), 191. He also says "*Typee* itself is a compilation." (190). See 152-156, 169-175 for evidences. One of them is an erroneous report on a strange ritual in the Marquesan religious system, in which a piece of log wrapped in cloth is said to be a god and it is treated like a doll during the ceremony. Both Porter and Melville state the ritual in detail. According to E. S.C. Handy it is doubtful that portable images were ever used in public ceremonies. (Anderson, 170-73)

⁶ Herman Melville, *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life*, eds. Harrison Hayward, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1968), 6. Subsequent references to this edition appear in the text. Other books Melville refers to are William Ellis's *Polynesian Researches*, and an anonymous book, *Historical Account of the Circumnavigation of the Globe and the Progress of Discovery*. Although Langsdorff's *Voyages and travels* and Bennett's *Narrative of a Whaling Voyage* are not mentioned, Anderson says they must have proved useful to Melville. (Anderson, 118-119)

⁷ Milton Stern, *Critical Essays on Herman Melville's Typee* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1982), 8.

⁸ D. H. Lawrence, "Herman Melville's *Typee* and *Omoo*," in *Studies of Classic American Literature* (1920; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), 139-52.

The cause of these somehow contradictory discussions can partly be ascribed to the slight regard to the biographical and ethnographic element of the book because it is not a literal transcription of his experiences. Melville certainly relied on printed contemporary authors but it does not imply he transcribed their passages uncritically. It is the purpose of this paper to examine Captain David Porter's *Journal* in the hope that this will demonstrate Melville's critical reading of his literary materials and its reflection upon his art of writing.

Porter's *Journal* plays an important and intricate role in the construction of *Typee*. Melville's use of this secondhand information as if from his direct experiences is already proved. His borrowings indicate that the book was with him all the while he was writing although he denies his encountering of it. At the same time Melville finds in Porter an antagonist to play against in his dramatic description of the island. It was his preordination to narrate from the perspective quite opposite to that of Captain Porter. He writes from the point of view of a common sailor or a beach-comer which Melville really was. No less importantly Melville makes a fable about the Captain's real story with reference to his intrusion into Typee valley, and applied it to his own story.

To read the same material Melville read will be particularly helpful in understanding this young inexperienced writer, because reading for Melville then was the process of recognition of what he had seen and what he wanted to see, and writing was the process of discovering afresh what he had hidden deep in his mind which he was sure would transcend the materials open before him, a process of "unfolding" himself which he recounted in his oft-cited letter to Hawthorne.⁹

Warships

Melville starts his narration from where Porter left his legacy as a colonialist, insisting that the hard line policies of whites in the South Seas have caused some natives to behave toward outsiders antagonistically and violently.

Within the last few years American and English vessels engaged in

⁹ Herman Melville, *Correspondence*, ed. Lynn Horth (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1993), 193.

the extensive whale fisheries of the Pacific have occasionally, when short of provisions, put into the commodious harbor which there is in one of the islands; but a fear of the natives, founded on a recollection of the dreadful fate which many white men have received at their hands, has deterred their crews from intermixing with the population sufficiently to gain any insight into their peculiar customs and manners. (*Typee* 6)

Availing himself of Porter's book for materials, Melville is critical of the way Porter deals with the natives in 1813. Melville is deeply concerned with the relative meanings of the civilized and the primitive, while the primary concern to Porter, as an ambitious officer representing the new republic, is more practical and political.

Porter is assigned to the frigate *Essex* in 1811. About a year later he is made captain. Shortly after the outbreak of the war of 1812 he sets sail from New York. For a few months he cruises the Atlantic disrupting British trade. On August 13, he is attacked by the enemy warship *Alert*, but a short action which follows leads *Alert* to surrender. *Alert* marks the first British warship that is captured by the American navy in the war. Cruising in the South Atlantic, Porter decides in January, 1813, to sail to the South Seas with the intent to destroy the English whaling industry there. He sails for Valparaiso for he learns Chile has become independent and it is after American cruisers. In March Porter captures the Peruvian privateer that has taken American whalers, and rescues his countrymen who have been kept prisoners. Captain Porter cruises in the Pacific during the year and captures a number of British whaling ships, destroying the British whaling industry in the Pacific. One of the captured vessels is converted into a warship and named *Essex Jr.* When he learns that the British government has sent out vessels with the order to capture *Essex*, Porter sails to one of the Marquesas Islands, Nukuheva (Porter spells it Nooaheevah), and anchors in the Bay of Nukuheva to refit. *Essex* is the first US warship that goes to the island, showing the American flag. It was October 25, 1813. He gives new names to the island and the bay, calling them Madison's Island and Massachusetts Bay respectively. On 19 November, 1813, he takes possession of the island in the name of the United States.¹⁰

¹⁰ The psychosocial study of Captain Porter in his confrontation with the natives of Marquesas Islands starts from T. Walter Herbert, Jr., *Marquesan*

Twenty-nine years later, on June 23, 1842, the *Acushnet*, an American whaling ship which Melville is on board, or the *Dolly* in the book, sails towards the very bay where Captain Porter anchored the *Essex* to refit. But the beauty of the bay is soon lost on the narrator because there bursts into view “the tri-colored flag of France trailing over the stern of six vessels, whose black hulls and bristling broadsides proclaimed their warlike character” (*Typee* 12). Melville then learns that Rear Admiral Du Petit Thouars has just taken possession of the whole group of islands in the name of the French nation.

It is no wonder that Melville interprets French war vessels and her possession of the islands as a revised and somewhat altered version of the same sight a generation ago. He notices from the subjective point of view that the two events are almost identical in terms that the most distinguished significance to note is the political ambitions of western powers to subjugate the natives using their far superior military force, though the two represent different historical and political backgrounds.

The French, although they had gone through the ceremony of hoisting their colors for a few hours at all the principal places of the group, had not as yet visited the bay of Typee, anticipating a fierce resistance on the part of the savages there, which for the present at least they wished to avoid. Perhaps they were not a little influenced in the adoption of this unusual policy from a recollection of the warlike reception given by the Typees to the forces of Captain Porter, about the year 1814, when that brave and accomplished officer endeavored to subjugate the clan merely to gratify the mortal hatred of his allies the Nukuhevas and Happsars. (*Typee* 26)

Melville may have gathered information about the French from the

Encounters (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980) in which Herbert discusses what civilization meant to the nineteenth-century Americans who encountered Marquesans including Melville. John Carlos Rowe's argument in his *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) places Captain Porter among those who lead the U.S. policy on the conviction that it is highly significant that “U.S. imperialism would be predicated on commercial, rather than territorial control of other cultures, and people” (85), relating Porter to the American political and diplomatic history especially from the end of eighteenth century to the middle of twentieth century. Aside from his indictment of Porter on his invasion to Typee valley, Rowe suggests, Melville indicts Porter's larger ambitions of commercial and military colonialism in the post war of 1812.

foreigners residing on Nukuheva, but at the time of his writing two years later he is concerned more about Porter's colonial enterprises than the French possession of the island. Melville needs to remind the reader of the past confrontation between the Americans and the Typees in order to invest the latter with a terrifying image for the following dramatic development of the narrator's adventure. The French merely serve as an introduction to it.

Melville accuses Captain Porter of being a typical instigator and inducer of arousing the islanders' hatred for and violence toward the white outsiders. Porter and his men went to the valley, Melville says, in order only to "gratify the mortal hatred of his allies the Nukuhevas and Happars." Porter had to withdraw because of the stout resistance he faced from his enemy. Melville then summarizes: "The invaders, on their march back to the sea, consoled themselves for their repulse by setting fire to every house and temple in their route." In reality, Porter had contests twice: in the first he was forced to retreat as Melville states. He set fire to the villages during his second expedition as he advanced into the further end of the valley, rather than on his way back. Melville conflates the two, probably because the simplified form may stress the unreasoning atrocities Porter committed, and also because his ignorance of the *Journal* may look more plausible. He makes a mistake about the date, too. Where he should have written 1813 he puts 1814. But the root reason is that the war between the Typees and Porter is not straightforward enough for Melville to summarize correctly in a few sentences.

Initial Encounter

A whaling boat or a war vessel on first entering the bay can be translated as a symbolical encounter of two worlds. Edmund Leach makes a compact explanation of boundaries which can be applied both to time and to space: "they are ambiguous in implication and a source of conflict and anxiety."¹¹ Naturally the sea has no marked boundaries. But the intrusion of outsiders brings about a boundary that has not existed, causing an ambiguous situation. It has to be marked. In the cases of Porter and Melville, the person who attempts to lead the visitors into contact with the strange world is one that occupies transient and ambiguous ground. He might be baffling

¹¹ Edmund Leach, *Culture and Communication: the logic by which symbols are connected* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 34.

and mysterious or he might be dualistic and double-tongued. In the case of the whaler *Dolly*, a self-appointed leader is a drunken South Seas vagabond who was once a lieutenant in the British navy but deserted his ship due to some criminal conduct he has committed and now is appointed pilot by the French. Although the captain of the *Dolly*, however, does not trust him in the role he is supposed to perform, he has no choice but to accept him as a pilot.

Porter, on the other hand, is stricter in his judgment of South Seas vagabonds. Being a representative figure of a civilized country and also a man of order and discipline, he does not allow himself to acknowledge any kind of defect or ambiguity. Soon after he anchors his vessel he observes a boat with three white men on board coming from the shore. He is enraged at the sight of those who seem to him to be deserters from ships. He pays special attention to the one who is “perfectly naked, with the exception of a cloth about his loins” and whose body is “all over tattooed.”¹² Porter has least expected to see any white man in this part of the world. Judging from the circumstance he feels confident that they are the ones who deserve to be despised and disregarded, allowing none of his men to have any conversation with them. Porter refuses to allow their boat to come alongside his ship and directs them to leave the ship.

Running into a tattooed white man comes as a rude shock to both Melville and Porter. To get tattooed may involve the transgression of cultural distinction and issues of personal identification, which is Melville’s concern. He is gravely impressed in *Omoo* by the appearance of Lem Hardy, a runaway white who became a war-leader of the natives with a musket and a bag of ammunition. He is tattooed in the face. “A renegado from Christendom and humanity,” Melville cries with the air of abhorrence.¹³ In *Typee* the narrator is strongly advised to be tattooed and this confirms his desire to escape from the valley.

But it is not so much a matter of cultural or psychological interest as it is a political and diplomatic state of affairs that Porter was most concerned about. “The looks of Wilson,” Porter says, “had strongly prejudiced me

¹² Captain David Porter, *Journal of a Cruise made to the Pacific Ocean* 2nd ed. (New York: Wiley & Halsted, 1822), rpt. *Journal of a Cruise*, ed. R.D. Madison. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press *Journal of a Cruise*), 303. This volume brings together the texts and illustrations of both the 1815 edition and the 1822 edition. Subsequent references to this edition appear in the text.

¹³ Herman Melville, *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventure in the The South Seas* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1968), 27.

against him." His initial feeling arises from his idea of a strong distinction between the two peoples—civilized white men and uncivilized South Sea Indians—which is an irrefutable prerequisite in his understanding of men. To which category does the tattooed white man belong, then? Wilson is an Englishman by birth and has been here among the Marquesans for a long time and, according to Porter, speaks their language as well as his own. He has "become in every respect except in color, an Indian."

Porter's political mind, however, soon realizes his having committed an error when he sees that Wilson appears to be an influential figure among the natives. He feels fearful, suspecting things might be going in a most undesirable direction. Porter has a clear intention which in the long run should be beneficial to his country. In order to pursue his duty as a military officer he is at present "desirous of establishing, with natives, the most friendly intercourse" (Porter 303). Porter does not tarry before altering his way of treating these whites. He soon finds Wilson an "inoffensive, honest, good-hearted fellow, well disposed to render every service in his power." Wilson becomes his favorite and after this serves Porter as his interpreter. Porter admits that he relies upon Wilson whenever he has intercourse with the natives. "Wilson is the organ of communication," he declares. (Porter, 304)

Porter is a captain Delano who acknowledges a man according to his preconceived stereotyped image and its appropriate role of service. His prejudice against Wilson is skin-deep. It does not come from the fear of ambiguity which overwhelmed Melville at the sight of Lem Hardy. If Porter had felt the man might have some adverse effect on his intention for the island due to his ambiguous identification he would have found his foreboding a correct one. After Porter left the island, Wilson organized the islanders to work against lieutenant Gamble and his remaining Americans and finally expelled them from the island.

The eminent importance for Porter is to take control of the people of the place which he finds suitable for the refit. He needs to know what the natives can do for him. The most important diplomatic measure to take is to establish with each tribe a formal "friendship," by which alone trade runs smoothly. Friendship, in most cases, is almost a synonym for bartering. He needs to have a counterpart on the island.

One of the interesting features of Porter's *Journal* is the ironical, comical, sometimes tragicomic situations he falls into. He is perfectly astounded to see Gattanewa, the most important chief in Taheeh. Porter was expecting to

meet a man in full costume like the warriors he had seen, who were highly ornamented with plumes, large tufts of hair, a cloak, large round or oval decorations in their ears, necklaces, or ornaments around the loins, with a highly polished spear or a club richly carved. Their bodies were highly and elegantly ornamented by tattooing, executed in a manner to excite Porter's admiration. The chief who appears, however, is "an infirm old man of seventy years of age, destitute of every covering or ornament except of a clout about his loins, and a piece of palm leaf tied about his head: a long stick seemed to assist him in walking; his face and body were as black as a negro's, from the quantity of tattooing, which entirely covered them, and his skin was rough, and appeared to be peeling off in scales, from the quantity of kava (an intoxicating root) with which he had indulged himself" (Porter 312).

The tactics Porter employs to impress upon the drunken chief that he is a man of predominance fail to bring about the desired effect, while they disclose his basic communication system which functions in a not very friendly fashion to achieve "friendly relations" with the natives. First, Porter assembles all his men to boast to Gattanewa of his superior power, anticipating his amazement and the respect due to him, but this gambit does not at all draw the attention of the chief. When Porter orders a gun to be fired, the old chief complains the noise would hurt his ears. Porter takes him down to show him things which may arouse his curiosity, but in vain. Finally, "some whales' teeth...roused the old man from his lethargy." He is given one of them and returns to the shore, leaving Porter in perplexity. But the chief offers the most important diplomatic relations before he leaves, i.e. exchanging names. Porter is not aware of its true meaning. On the next morning Gattanewa sends to Porter a present of hogs, and several boat loads of cocoa-nuts and plantains.

Melville also delineates a meeting, which the narrator had a chance to observe on his pleasure trip, between a native chief and the French admiral. Melville writes that the admiral came down in state from Nukuheva, "attended by all the boats of his squadron" in order to hold a ceremonial interview with the Tior[Taioa] chief "to take formal possession of the place."

The patriarch-sovereign of Tior was a man very far advanced in years; but though age had bowed his form and rendered him almost decrepid, his gigantic frame retained all its original magnitude and grandeur of appearance. He advanced slowly and with evident pain,

assisting his tottering steps with the heavy war-spear he held in his hand, and attended by a group of grey-bearded chiefs, on one of whom he occasionally leaned for support. The admiral came forward with head uncovered and extended hand, while the old king saluted him by a stately flourish of his weapon. The next moment they stood side by side, these two extremes of the social scale,—the polished, splendid Frenchman, and the poor tattooed savage. They were both tall and noble-looking men; but in other respects how strikingly contrasted! Du Petit Thouars exhibited upon his person all the paraphernalia of his naval rank. He wore a richly decorated admiral's frockcoat, a laced chapeau bras, and upon his breast were a variety of ribbons and orders; while the simple islander, with the exception of a slight cincture about his loins, appeared in all the nakedness of nature. (*Typee* 29)

It seems that the twenty nine years that separates these two meetings has not brought any change. Melville presents almost the identical scene, but he observes it from afar as a third party. He serves as the lens of a movie camera through which the reader sees the pictures of the two characters standing side by side. Porter's disappointment at the appearance of a high-ranking native without the external embellishment which one might expect to be proper for a chief is also shared at first. Here, with a hint of irony, "all the paraphernalia" of the other party which Porter must have exhibited is enumerated. The list of items here functions, without doubt, anthropologically, culturally and sociologically as the undisputable symbol for the one party. However, when it is abruptly contrasted to the nonexistence of it in the other corresponding party, the symbolical function of the former becomes the subject of relative consideration.

The ceremony displays, though intended to conceal, the outrageous imbalance and disproportion inherent in the scheme of one party to make public the execution of its own primal legal step involving the other party regardless of the absence of a corresponding system. The metaphorical implication of the "nakedness" and the embellishment with "all the paraphernalia" as the proof of official endorsement is the materialized fear that justifies the "legal" violation of human rights.

Melville acknowledges the dichotomy between the savage and the civilized based upon the idea of progress: the former stay as near as possible to the supposedly original state of human beings, while the latter have

continuously progressed up to the present time. Melville recalls what he thought at that time about the native chief: "Yet, after all...insensible as he is to a thousand wants, and removed from harassing cares, may not the savage be the happier man of the two?" This is his answer to the question Thomas Paine posed more than half a century before when he saw the wretched people in his country: has civilization more promoted or more injured the general happiness?¹⁴

Whether Melville, or the narrator, is serious about the comparative happiness of the two peoples is not very important. There are, indeed, two perspectives here: that of the narrator at the time of his experience and that of the present narrator reflecting his own. The "philosophical reflections" the narrator makes while eating bananas may sound an irresponsible whim, but this is because of the unusual appearance of the present narrator who recollects his past immature self nostalgically. Melville selects the scene because it is impressive and agrees with his theme, the contrast between the primitive world and the civilized Western world.

Melville's intent becomes the more apparent when Anderson indicates Melville's ignorance of the true purpose of the French expedition: the French came to the valley of the Tior not to take formal possession, for the formalities have already been gone through. They came to persuade the Tiors to return Moana's wife. Moana, the grandson of Gattanewa and the puppet king of Nukuheva Island, complained to the French about his wife being held hostage by his enemy, the Tiors. And the French did not visit with all their boats as Melville writes but they brought only one *canot*.¹⁵ In fact the occupation takes place on June 2 and three weeks later, on June 23, the *Acushnet* comes to anchor in Nukuheva bay.¹⁶ Melville's narrator states in *Typee* that he learns from the drunken pilot on that day about the complete occupation of the Marquesan Islands by the French, adding, in the following chapter, that it is several weeks old. Though the precise dates are not mentioned, it is apparent that Melville had the information at the time of his writing. There is no knowing whether Melville is ignorant or pretends to be ignorant of the true purpose of the French expedition. Whichever it is, Melville is resolved to produce a dramatic scene because of his explicit anti-colonialism, insisting that the occupation is "a signal infraction of the

¹⁴ Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, *The American Spirit: A Study of the Idea of Civilization in the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942), 113.

¹⁵ Anderson, 79-80.

¹⁶ Jay Leyda, *The Melville Log*, Vol. I (New York: Gordon Press, 1969), 127-28.

rights of humanity." And it is by the French who "have plumed themselves upon being the most humane and polished of nations." This indictment is not confined to the French but directed at the civilization.

A high degree of refinement, however, does not seem to subdue our wicked propensities so much after all; and were civilization itself to be estimated by some of its results, it would seem perhaps better for what we call the barbarous part of the world to remain unchanged. (*Typee* 17)

Unreserved denial of civilization is not what Melville has in mind. The romantic eulogy to the native people in the middle of the book and the seemingly contradictory conclusion of the story have in some cases lead to an either-or reading, or "the problem of over-argumentation."¹⁷ His accusations against civilization in journalistic style appear in some earlier and middle sections of the work—specifically in chapters 2, 3, 4, 11, 17, and 26. They become rampant when the narrative topics touch on the violation of the "rights of humanity."

Let the savages be civilized, but civilize them with benefits, and not with evils; and let heathenism be destroyed, but not by destroying the heathen. The Anglo-Saxon hive have extirpated Paganism from the greater part of the North American continent; but with it they have likewise extirpated the greater portion of the Red race. Civilization is gradually sweeping from the earth the lingering vestiges of Paganism, and at the same time the shrinking forms of its unhappy worshippers. (*Typee* 195)

In the mind of Melville, the South Sea "Indians" are being forced towards the same destructive fate as the American "Indians." Just as French is administering its policy by colonizing the island now, Porter in 1813, as the official American representative brought the same political measures into effect.

What was the colonialists' idea about the Native Americans and their basic understanding of them? For colonial Americans and for early Republic,

¹⁷ Bette S. Weidman, "Typee and *Omoa*: A Diverging Pair," *A Companion to Melville Studies*, ed. John Bryant (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 101.

dealing with the Native Americans was not merely a scholarly topic. It was a matter of history, politics, culture and psychology. It was “at once practical and theoretical.”¹⁸ They feel obliged to conceive the ideas about the Native American and practice and experiment accordingly. Jefferson, as well as Adams in 1812 acknowledges this.

In his letter to John Adams, Jefferson particularizes three points: his memories of childhood experiences with them, the civilizing process among some of the tribes, and the conquering and dispelling of other tribes that opposed the new Republic.¹⁹

Native Americans to Jefferson are the people of the past, people of his childhood and people in the state of childhood in the history of progress. Jefferson’s recollections of a Cherokee warrior and orator have a poetic touch which reminds the reader of the function of memory as in William Wordsworth’s “daffodils.” The difference is that the memory that flashes upon the “inward eye” of the poet is “the bliss of solitude” filling the heart with pleasure, while that of Jefferson fills his heart with “attachment and commiseration” for them. He feels attachment because of his familiarity with them in his early years. He feels commiseration because he knows many of them are an obstacle in the way of American expansion and destined to be removed sooner or later.

Jefferson’s feeling of love and pity is not extended to all the Native Americans. He makes a distinction between the ones that “have made any progress” and the ones that are “the backward.” The former, he insists hopefully, are not anti-America and, the latter, he says, should be conquered or driven “with the beasts of the forest into the Stony mountains” because these tribes will yield to British Empire against which America is ready to wage war at any time. The enmity against the British induces him to make a distinction. He concludes as a general opinion on the Native Americans that “their steady habits permit no innovations, not even those which the progress of science offers to increase the comforts, enlarge the understanding, and improve the morality of mankind.”²⁰ In fact the War of 1812 formally begins on June 18, a week after the date of the letter. In the extension of it Porter now faces the South Sea “Indians,” who are, he says to his men before they get to their destination, “a people much addicted to

¹⁸ Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Savages of America: A Study of the Indian and the Idea of Civilization* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 3.

¹⁹ Jefferson, 1263.

²⁰ Jefferson, 1263.

thieving, treacherous in their proceedings, whose conduct is governed only by fear, and regulated by views to their interests.”

Women and European Civilizers

Melville's strong belief that the foreign visitors are the corrupting agency is most explicitly narrated in his depiction of their first meeting with the native women. The notion of corruption of the natives has been widely recognized in terms that some aspects of their old style of living or behavior suffer change due to the contact with outsiders. But Melville's apprehension goes much deeper.

Melville does not specify the corrupted ways of the inhabitants but it is apparent that he follows the tradition of Captain James Cook who has been most influential to the later journal writers. When he visited New Zealand for the second time in June 1773, Cook came to notice a deplorable change of the natives, both men and women, due to their commerce with Europeans. He had thought the women there were “more chaste than the generality of Indian Women.” When some of them gave their favors to the crew of the *Endeavour*, their behavior then seemed to be a private transaction in which native males were not interested. This time, however, the women's favors were open prostitution of which Cook says “men are the chief promoters.” In order to acquire things they coveted such as a spike nail, men obliged their family women to engage in the trade. Cook felt keenly the responsibility of the “Shame civilized Christians” who introduced the desires and diseases which had hitherto been unknown to the natives.²¹

Porter has his way of elaborating on women in the South Seas. Especially, careful observation is devoted to the verification of the cause of the indignation of Captain Cook. In a small cove on the island of Rooahooga, one of the Washington group, which he calls Adams's island, Porter first comes across the native women in terms of possible sexual availability. In return for the small presents which Porter gave to some native men who have swum out to his boat, the chief of the people points to the three women who happen to be on the beach as “the most acceptable present they could offer” the visitors. Observing these women Porter states clearly the contrary opinion to the one made by Cook who suggested the abuse of women. Porter observes that “the girls themselves showed no disinclination to grant every

²¹ Cook, *The Journals*, 276-77.

favour we might be disposed to ask.” Porter also defends the nakedness of native women from the possible criticism from the reader saying “our great mother Eve believed herself sufficiently clad when covered with a fig-leaf ” (Porter 295) and nakedness is neither proof of depravity nor want of shame.

The lively description that follows aims to prove Porter understanding and sympathetic with his men. His use of figurative words and roundabout expressions effectively conveys what is going on with his men and the native women. After a short time on the shore of Nukuheva with his officers and men, he “perceived that they had formed with the female part of the community, an intimacy much closer than that which brotherly relationship gave a title to: they had soon made themselves understood without any aid of interpreters; and had wandered to the houses or perhaps the bushes, which suited their purpose, as well to ratify their treaty. The negotiating of which neither cost them much time or trouble.” Using the terms of diplomatic procedures Porter light-heartedly reports on the determined mariners who wait to take advantage of the similar opportunities “even at the risk of violating every principle of subordination and obedience to orders” (Porter 306), which the very determined captain would not otherwise allow.

Islands are considered by captains to be not only an important source of provisions such as foods, water and timber, but also a haven that gives their crew chances of “refreshing,” which means the sexual availability of the local women.²² It has become the practice of the native women to visit ships. When the ship is moored Porter sees natives, mostly women, lined up on the shore, who solicit the seamen to come ashore by boats so that they can be transported to the ship, since taboo forbids women to get on board canoes.

...in a short time she was completely filled by them, of all ages and descriptions, from the age of sixty years to that of ten; some as remarkable for their beauty, as others for their ugliness. They all appeared to be of the most common kind, and many of them who had been in the habit of visiting ships, which had formerly been at this place, had been taught by the seamen, some few English words of the most indecent kind, which they pronounced too plain to be

²² Strauss, 3. According to Strauss there were principal centers of “refreshment” in New Zealand in 1820s. He also introduces an episode about a chief who thought prostitution a profitable trade and in 1825 built brothels, which resulted in the spread of diseases throughout the entire North Island.(28)

misunderstood.

Indeed the ship was a perfect Bedlam from the time of their arrival until their departure, which was not until morning, when they were put on shore, not only with whatever was given them by all such as had shared their favours, but with whatever they could lay their hands on. (Porter 308)

The plain style and matter-of-fact way of his writing does not hold any element of emotional implications besides the one, if there is, of Porter's desire to depict and give explanation to what is happening of which he is a witness no matter how peculiar it may look to the reader. "Indeed," he says the ship becomes a disorderly house, but there is nothing pathetic about those women of a common class, young and old, who visit ships expecting to acquire some articles from the crew as a token of giving their favors. The women are thus carried to the ship by the boats and taken back to the shore in the morning by the same boats. Porter does not employ the word "prostitute" as Cook did, but he tells more clearly the way of their doing business, with the intent of verifying that the women are not under any kind of compulsion. If this transaction is a voluntary dealing, why should one feel sorry for them?

Langsdorff in 1804 wholly exempts himself from any kind of sense of guilt that lies, even if very lightly, upon Porter's conscience.

...but in a short time we had the very extraordinary spectacle presented us of some hundred men, women, girls, and boys, all swimming about the ship, having in their hands cocoa-nuts, bread-fruit, and bananas, which they brought to sell.

...The young girls and women were not more clothed than the men, and were collected even in greater numbers; they were above all loud and noisy, and according to our European idea, immodest. They burst into a loud laugh at the most trifling things; and as we did not understand a word of the many comic effusions addressed to us, their oratory was illustrated with pantomimic gestures, by which we were sufficiently given to understand that they were making us the most liberal and unreserved offers of their charm. The men who were with them did not shew [sic] the slightest symptoms of jealousy, but rather seemed pleased and flattered when a wife, a daughter, or a sister, attracted our particular attention.

...Suffice it, that the beauties of the island were so extremely importunate to be permitted to come on board, and urged their importunities with so much noise, that merely for the sake of getting rid of them and being left quiet awhile, we were obliged to grant some of them free access to the ship.

These graces appeared in general with all their charms exposed; for though they never left the land without at least so much clothing as a large green leaf, yet this light covering was generally lost by swimming any length of way. By a few only were the leafy aprons preserved,.

But however prodigal of their favours, and however ready to follow any sailor that held out a hand to them, the fair sex were still not without a certain degree of modesty. They seemed to be considerably distressed when they had lost their aprons, and crept about with their hands in the position of the Medicean Venus, in attitudes which presented a beautiful spectacle to the philosophic observer. Those who had not been deserted by their garments were particularly anxious to adjust them properly. We were not a little surprised to see girls, who seemed not more than eight or nine years old, very free in their approaches to us, and appearing no less desirous of making a market of their charms than their older companions. But we learned from Roberts, that such is the precocity of nature here, in comparison with what is to be seen in colder climates, that these children were now as forward as girls in the north of Europe are at nearly twice their age. We saw a girl, who at the utmost did not seem above eleven years old, and was already the acknowledged wife of one of the islanders.

We were not, however, allowed a long time to make philosophical observations upon our new Venuses; for one after another they vanished, hand-in-hand with the sailors, to the interior of the ship, while the goddess of night threw her dark veil over the mysteries that were celebrated. Thus ended, with a scene altogether new and extraordinary to us, the first day of our stay in the harbour of Nukahiva. Early on the following morning, the beauties skipped one after another upon deck, and leaping into the water, swam away gaily, carrying with them presents of various kinds.²³

²³ G. H. Von Lngsdorff, *Voyages and Travels in Various Parts of the World during the years 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806, and 1807*, Volume 1 (1813; London: England and

If Melville has read Langsdorff before he gets on board the *Acushnet* as Anderson proves, this passage has undoubtedly forms the image of the Marquesas the narrator conjures up in the early part of the book when he says, "The Marquesas! What strange visions of outlandish things does the very name spirit up! Naked houris..." (*Typee*, 5).

Both Porter and Langsdorff acquaint the readers with the possibility of the social classes among the girls, the fact of which neither Cook nor Melville touches on. Porter notices "a handsome young woman, of about eighteen years of age, her complexion fairer than common, her carriage majestic, and her dress better and somewhat different from the other females." She turns out to be a grand-daughter to the greatest chief in the valley, Gattanewa, whose grandson appears in *Typee*.²⁴ She does not wear "those playful smiles which enliven the countenances of the others" and looks cold and hauteur.

Langsdorff is more articulate about the class differences reflected in the physical makeup of the women.

Among many of the lower class, who were daily on board the ship, the body was small without being compact, the belly out of all proportion large, and their manner of walking slow and trailing. Among the women of distinction, who seldom or ever came on board, this was not the case: they were of a pleasing form, with slender waists, and great vivacity, so that they had a just claim to be called handsome. Of this truth I have been convinced by my own eyes, since Major Friderici, Counsellor Tilesius, and myself, in our walks about the vallies[sic], have sometimes met women and girls of the higher classes, They were very different from the women who lived about the harbour, taller in stature, with more decorum of manners, and never without some kind of covering: they would not enter into conversation with us, but seemed altogether modest and reserved.²⁵

Handy, however, warns the reader to be cautious about the accounts of early

Foreign Public Library; New York: Da Capo Press, 1968) 92-95. Melville's consultation of Langsdorff is indicated in Anderson, 74.

²⁴ Anderson, 129. The grandson, Moana, is made a puppet king by Rear Admiral Du Petit Thouars in 1842.

²⁵ Langsdorff, 111-12.

visitors with regard to chiefly classes, because much information of these visitors is derived from their unreliable interpreters. They are uneducated European sailors who have lived among the natives and biased by their European conception of class divisions. His warning refers to Langsdorff as well as to Porter. Handy concludes that all the evidence he obtained “in the three islands of the southern section of the group indicated that any conception of a chiefly class distinct from a class of commoners was almost entirely, if not completely, absent there.” According to Handy the handsome women in Langsdorff’s account would be the result of “habits of life and conditions during childhood” and not of class distinction. He also suggests the possibility of a secondary immigration to the Marquesas from Tahiti.²⁶

Handy’s conclusion is not altogether convincing because, ironically, he cites Melville for his support to prove the absence of chiefly classes. The narrator of *Typee* pays careful attention to Chief Mehevi’s everyday life and notes little difference from the rest of people. It is only at the festival after several weeks in the valley that he finds that Mehevi must be the greatest chief of the whole valley. Melville does not deny the existence of chiefly classes but emphasis is put on the equality of people and the surprisingly slight differences between chiefs and commoners if there are indeed any (*Typee* 185-87). Later, Robert C. Suggs acknowledges the truth of Langsdorff, affirming the existence of class differences in the sexual behavior of Marquesan women in the aboriginal culture, which he says have functioned “to protect maritally desirable females from being pre-empted by transients.”

Certain women, apparently of higher status, did not routinely present themselves at the ships to welcome Europeans. Many seem to have remained well inland when Europeans were present. They were more decorous and generally exercised care in selection of European consorts. The women who arrived at the ships were quite the opposite. As von den Steinen pointed out, the Marquesans appear to have learned that this sexual hospitality was an effective way of handling Europeans in the period between Captain Cook’s voyage and that of Marchand. Consequently it became a part of Marquesan culture.²⁷

²⁶ Handy, 37-38.

²⁷ Robert C. Suggs, *Marquesan Sexual Behavior* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966) 102.

Melville altered the picture of the meeting with women in terms of its significance with reference to human rights. Here, too, girls, as if they were a shoal of fish, swim out a long way to the ship to meet the sailors on board

What a sight for us bachelor sailors! how avoid so dire a temptation? For who could think of tumbling these artless creatures overboard when they had swam miles to welcome us?

Their appearance perfectly amazed me; their extreme youth, the light clear brown of their complexions, their delicate features, and inexpressibly graceful figures, their softly, moulded limbs, and free unstudied action, seemed as strange as beautiful.

The 'Dolly' was fairly captured; and never I will say was vessel carried before by such a dashing and irresistible party of boarders! The ship taken, we could not do otherwise than yield ourselves prisoners, and for the whole period that she remained in the bay, the 'Dolly,' as well as her crew, were completely in the hands of the mermaids.

In the evening after we had come to an anchor the deck was illuminated with lanterns, and this picturesque band of sylphs, tricked out with flowers, and dressed in robes of variegated tapa, got up a ball in great style. These females are passionately fond of dancing, and in the wild grace and spirit of their style excel everything that I have ever seen. The varied dances of the Marquesan girls are beautiful in the extreme, but there is an abandoned voluptuousness in their character which I dare not attempt to describe.

Our ship was now wholly given up to every species of riot and debauchery. Not the feeblest barrier was interposed between the unholy passions of the crew and their unlimited gratification. The grossest licentiousness and the most shameful inebriety prevailed, with occasional and but short-lived interruptions, through the whole period of her stay. Alas for the poor savages when exposed to the influence of these polluting examples! Unsophisticated and confiding, they are easily led into every vice, and humanity weeps over the ruin thus remorselessly inflicted upon them by their European civilizers. Thrice happy are they who, inhabiting some yet undiscovered island in the midst of the ocean, have never brought into contaminating contact with the white man. (*Typee* 15)

A decisive difference from Porter or Langsdorff is Melville's symbolic presentation of the transaction as a rape. His complete disregard to the suggestion of open prostitution, as a kind of trade, attests it. From the accounts of the past journals as well as his experience it is obvious that the men are obliged to reward the women with little items for their favors. Melville presents the girls as being simply young and beautiful, excluding any idea of the plausible gathering of common women young and old who clamor for barter. Melville presents the appearance of women to the reader as an unexpected event without referring to their tribal practice which may render the description that of just another habitual party repeated on board any ship that anchors in the bay.

Melville also ignores the presence and the role of male islanders to render the fact simple enough so that it will assume the symbolical connotation that the raping may lead to the destruction of the natives' lives by decimating the population. The male intervention might have made the transactions seem more complicated and less focused. The description by Louis De Bougainville, for example, of the first meeting of native women and his men in 1768 in Tahiti shows that the natives, worried about the associated disease, had a kind of physical inspection.²⁸

Melville does not explain but instead he endeavors to reveal the event to make the narrative evocative. The narrative contrasts to that of Porter in the lively way it tells of the women's behavior with the passage of time, suggesting unmistakably the sexual escalation on the part of men who are becoming intimate with them. The narrative aims, as T. Walter Herbert observes, "to evoke" what actually goes on, including the dance which the narrator says he dares "not attempt to describe," while Porter's passage dismisses the scene with a simple sentence, "the ship was a perfect Bedlam from the time of their arrival until their departure." If Porter's *Journal* represents a classical travel narrative, *Typee* is unique, as Sheila Post-Lauria proves, in its contribution to the genre "by constructing an informative, entertaining, sensational, and sentimental narrative."²⁹

²⁸ Louis De Bougainville, *A Voyage Round the World Performed by Order of His Most Christian Majesty, In the Years 1766, 1767, 1768, and 1769*, translated from the French by John Reinhold Forster (London:1772, rpt., New York: Da Capo Press, 1967) 217-19. Bougainville relates a story of his French cook who was surrounded by a crowd of natives, made to undress from head to feet and closely examined.

²⁹ Sheila Post-Lauria, *Correspondent Colorings: Melville in the Marketplace* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996),41

Melville keeps describing up to the climax without any diverting comments because the very climax is the act of sorrow incarnate. By calling the women and the sailors "poor savages" and "their European civiliziers" respectively, Melville depicts civilization as being disputable and yet denotes the irreversible tragic collision section of the two worlds.

If civilization means the heritage that has been handed down from the old world to the new, Europe and America are synonyms. Melville needs a free position that enables him to be a criticizer of western behavior and proportionally a defender of the native people. Over this tragic situation Melville says "humanity weeps." By using the word "humanity," he finds a position from which he speaks on a broader and more fundamental basis than a mere civilizer.³⁰

The reproach of the civilized world from the viewpoint of "humanity" follows the narrative of the sensational first meeting, but the two passages of different intent are almost juxtaposed. This abrupt development can be attributed to the ambiguous role of the narrator. Melville invests the narrator, when necessary, with dual roles: one reports what he sees and feels at the time of events, and the other, bearing a more authorial voice, recounts what the first one does not acknowledge.³¹ The contemporary reviewers, especially British, sensed the duality of authorship of the book, which made them suspicious concerning the book's authenticity. "The evidence against the authenticity of the book is more than sufficient to satisfy a court of justice," the *London Times* said.³² "Mr. Melville is a common sailor; but he is a very uncommon common sailor." His writings are "lifelike and vigorous," and his writing style is "that of an educated literary man than of a poor outcast working seaman."³³

Melville's concern about the contact of two cultures puts special emphasis on a romantic interpretation of the primitive people and the disparagement of civilization and its vicious influence upon such people. Melville with intent reversed the justification made by Porter of the sexual freedom the native women offer to the visitors. It was already known at the time of Cook what would result from it. When Porter writes that native women "have a

³⁰ Herbert, 154.

³¹ See William B. Dillingham, *An Artist in the Rigging: The Early Work of Herman Melville* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972), 9-30. Dillingham suggests two authorial perspectives in *Typee*: that of Melville at the time of his experience and that of Melville at the time of writing two years later.

³² *London Times*, 6 April 1846.

³³ *Ibid.*

high sense of shame and pride, I had afterwards many opportunities of observing, and am well satisfied that an intercourse with strangers is not considered by them criminal; But on the contrary, attaches to them respect and consideration” (Porter, 295), Melville knows that the history of the lack of “respect and consideration” of the visitors will make a mockery of Porter’s satisfaction and optimism, even if later anthropologists attest the truth of his words about the women.

Father and Children

Porter gets involved with the tribal antagonism between the Taeehs and Happas on the day after his meeting with Gattanewa. On this day Americans set up their camp at the place which is situated between the two hostile tribes and is uninhabited for some religious reason. The involvement may have been related to their exchanging names, though Porter was not then aware of its nature. This soon leads to a war, the result of which will make the Americans’ presence felt all over the island.

The drunken old chief of the Taeeh tribe expressed two wishes: to exchange names with Porter and to assist the chief in his war with the Happahs, who had cursed the bones of his mother.³⁴ Porter consented to the former but to the latter he replied he wished peace not war, adding he would help him in the case of the Happahs coming into the valley.

A name of a person in the Marquesan society was not his or her property alone. Names were given from parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Thus handed down, personal names were the property of families. Especially, the naming of the first-born was a matter of importance. The selection of the child’s name was done with the agreement of the immediate relatives, because it was supposed that the child should be a representative of all the ancestors and descendants of the families.³⁵

The exchange of names constituted a system of formal, and intimate and complete union between two individuals of the same sex. When the two

³⁴ Handy, in *Polynesian Religion*, points out as one of the causes that “an indignity suffered by a group or a chief at the hands of another had to be avenged.”(265) See also Patrick Vinton Kirch, *On the Road of the Winds: An Archaeological History of the Pacific Islands before European Contact*,(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 264-65, 348n.

³⁵ For personal names and exchanging names, see E. S. Craighill Handy, *The Native Culture in the Marquesas (Honolulu: The Museum, 1923; rpt. New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1971)*, 87-91.

persons became namesakes, the rights of one individual went to the other, including the present and even the future property as well. The effect of the system was not confined to the individuals but also exercised over the respective members of the other tribes. The system functioned beneficially when a person had a namesake in the enemy tribe. If he was held captive his life would be saved because of his namesake. As a contrary instance, Handy introduces a case of a chief who waged war to avenge the death of his namesake. The second proposal of Gattanewa is a natural outcome from the first. On the following morning of their first meeting, Porter receives a present of hogs and plenty of fruit. This might either be for the exchange of names or in return for the whale tooth, but whichever the case Porter does not seem serious about the situation he is in.³⁶

In the afternoon on the same day, he perceived a large body of the Happahs that had descended from the mountains destroying bread-fruit trees in the valley of his friendly tribe. Along with the incident and the provocative message he receives from the Happahs saying Porter is a coward because he did not oppose them destroying trees, Porter begins to see himself plunged into a military alliance with the Taeehs. His *Journal* records the consecutive escalation of the hostilities that arise between the Happahs and the Americans, rather than between the two tribes themselves, in the fashion that the Happahs are, at each step, the initiators of the antagonism and the Taeehs, led by the chief warrior Mouina, act as instigators.

Porter is getting mixed up in a war which seems unrelated to him and whose nature in the natives' cultural context he fails to fathom.³⁷ Porter is informed that Gattanewa harbors a plan of revenge, but why the Happhas harass the Taeehs and the Americans is not specified. He wishes to find a common ground of understanding, but in vain.

³⁶ Ibid., 90. Handy reports that the exchange of names by powerful chiefs accompanied giving large quantities of food and feasting but with common people it was made more simply, such as giving simple present. But there is no mention of any kind of formality in Porter's *Journal*. As to the whale tooth, Gattanewa begs Porter not to disclose to anyone that he has such valuable item.(314)

³⁷ See Herbert, 93. Herbert says Porter "did not conceive that the quarrel was meant to enact differences rather than settling them, or that occasions of conflict were staged to include ritual features that linked them to a fabric of meanings pervading the society as a whole. Also see Handy, *The Native Culture in the Marquesas*, 123-24, for the causes of war.

The threat of the Happahs had somewhat provoked me. I did not view this people as mere savages, but as intelligent beings, capable of reason, and having proper ideas of rights and wrong. I thought, however, before I proceeded to extremities, I would try if I could frighten them out of their hostile notions. (Porter 317)

He negates the idea of these people as being the mere savages as he had expected them to be, and begins to form a higher estimation of them, but still he defines them as staying at a low level with barely sufficient intelligence for rudimentary morality like children. It is ironical that Porter, who believes himself among the representatives of “intelligent beings, capable of reason,” fails to reason the source of the quarrel, and considers it reasonable to frighten the Happahs to let them know “the folly of resisting” his overwhelming power of firearms “with slings and spears.” He orders his men to shoot muskets at barrels in order to impress them with their frightening effect. Then he gives his reasoning and its associating morality. “I directed them to tell their countrymen that it would only be making a useless sacrifice of their lives; that I had no wish to destroy them, but that my own safety and the security of friendly tribes, whom I had promised to protect, required that they should be driven from the mountains overhanging the valley, where they had constantly kept their position, daily waving their cloaks to us to come up, and threatening us with their spears and clubs” (Porter 319). His reasoning sounds irrelevant to both tribes concerned.

Meanwhile, however, preparation for the battle gets under way when Porter plans to have the natives carry a heavy gun, a six pounder, to the top of the mountain. On the morning of the 29th, only four days after he jumped on shore, Porter orders the party of his men and assisting natives to march toward the fort of the enemy on the mountain top, when Gattanewa arrives to beg peace for his daughter who is married to a chief of the enemy. Porter turns his plea down and instead takes him as a hostage. “I told him that peace could not now take place until after a battle, when I should feel disposed to come to terms with the Happahs and would respect a messenger sent from them with a white flag” (Porter 326).

Now the real objects of his stay on this side of the world must be recalled, because his everyday decisions are properly conditioned by them even though they do not surface in his description often enough. Porter states them to his men on his way to the Marquesas after he left the Galapagos

because he considers it desirable to tell the crew the place they are heading for and the purposes so that the men may be filled with happy prospects instead of falling into lethargy due to inactivity. There are two objects : “firstly, that we may put the ship in a suitable condition to enable us to take advantage of the most favourable season for our return home...secondly, I am desirous that you should have relaxation and amusement after being so long at sea, as from your late good conduct you deserve it” (Porter 283-84). Porter devotes a considerable number of pages to the consequences of the second object, finding none of the difficulties which he anticipated. “The girls were neither coy nor cruel...black or white, it made no difference to them, provided they could receive a *tie tie*, or present”(Porter 315). The repairing work of his ship is running smoothly. Everything goes on as well as he has wished, except one.

Americans are destitute of fresh food. They should have to depend on salted provisions if they cannot procure enough hogs and fruit. In addition, they are unsuccessful in catching fish. The shortage arises from the fact that the Taeehs are unwilling to trade their hogs and fruit with the Americans. They are not persuaded to sell any of them to them even for the articles on which they usually put high value. Porter admits there is a considerable scarcity of hogs and fruit in the valley (Porter 318-19).

The war displays Porter's true intent when looked at from the point of the food supply: Porter may not be unwilling to be mixed up in it despite his repeated purports to the contrary. Aside from the provocative behavior of the Happahs, Mouina, the chief warrior of the Taeehs, challenges Porter to fight the Happahs. Porter takes advantage of this, and, showing a firm stance and equal belligerency, binds the Happahs by a promise in order to acquire the most desired food. “I informed them that they would not find me so ready to make peace after beating them, as at present; and that I should insist on being paid for the trouble they might put me to. They informed me they had an abundance of fruit and hogs, and would be willing to sacrifice the whole to purchase my friendship if I should conquer them” (Porter 320).

Porter proved his power with ease. The war was a short one. Forty American men with forty natives who carried their muskets and another forty who were assigned to carry provisions and ammunition for the six pounder climbed up under strong assaillment by the enemy from the fort. Gaining the fort, they shot at the retreating enemy of about three or four thousand and killed five Happahs.

This unprecedented victory for the Taeehs, but a mere snap to the

Americans with their war technology, has brought about three results for Porter: the fear and horror generated among the natives toward him; almost sovereign power; and a large supply of food.

The war has an appalling impact upon the natives, the depth of which is unfathomable from Porter's words. It is an incredible war to Gattanewa: the invincible fort is taken, and the number of dead as trophies is unprecedented, since they usually fight for weeks or for months without killing one person. "He supposed us stronger than we really were, and dreaded an ally so powerful" (Porter 329). How much Taihea-taioa, the wife of Gattanewa, changed after the war is proof of the anxiety and fear that begins to prevail in the heart of the people. The day before the battle Porter is visited by Taihea-taioa, some of her daughters and her grand-daughters. "They were like children pleased with novelties, which they could not comprehend" (Porter 325). He shows the ladies around the camp with social graces although he does not forget the joy of Marquesan conversation.

...and the old woman frequently reminded me that as I had exchanged names with Gattwnewa, I was now her husband, and (pointing to the others) that those were my children and grand-children, who looked up to me for protection. But when I in a joking way, insisted on enjoying all the privileges of a husband, she pointed to her grand-daughters, informing me that they would suit me better, and they showed by their ogling and smiles to be of the same opinion." (Porter 325)

Formal exchange of names is made between persons of the same class.³⁸ The wife of the most influential chief evinces familial intimacy with Captain Porter and he seems to be enjoying it, a symbolical scene about which he says: "Every thing went on as well as I could have wished, and much better than I could possibly have expected" (Porter 318).

The war on the following day redraws the picture. Two days later, Porter visits the house of Gattanewa, where he sees men surrounding dreadfully lamenting women. On his appearance they cry out in terror and look at him with fear and apprehension. He asks the wife of Gattanewa the reason for their alarm.

³⁸ Handy, *The Native Culture in the Marquesas*, 90-91.

She said now that we had destroyed the Happahs they were fearful we should turn on them: she took hold of my hand, which she kissed, and moistened with her tears: then placing it on her head, knelt to kiss my feet. She told me they were willing to be our slaves, to serve us, that their houses, their lands, their hogs, and everything belonging to them were ours; but begged that I would have mercy on her, her children, and her family, and not put them to death. It seemed that they had worked themselves up to the highest pitch of fear and on my appearance with a centinel[sic] accompanying me, they could see in me nothing but the demon of destruction. (Porter 333-34)

It is beyond possibility to know the kind of fate she visualized but it is possible to conjecture a portion of what was in her mind. She surely sees herself under the unpredictable sway of a tyrant that annuls the system of order pervading the valley. Porter already demonstrated his will to exercise power: he denied the request for peace made by an envoy from the Happahs and he kept the Taeeh chief as a hostage during the war, breaking diplomatic efforts and relations. The envoy was her daughter and the chief was her husband. The strong bond inherent in the exchange of names is terminated. Now the lives of her family are at stake.

On the other hand, Porter unexpectedly but not unpleasantly finds himself elevated to a superhuman. The fear he generated functions as buoyancy and gives him a new status. Consoling the wife he discovers words that furnish the symbolical meaning to his new role and his military force: God and his holy power to perform his office. He explains to her the war with the Happahs in "stately biblical cadence and diction" as Herbert correctly puts it.³⁹ "I had offered them peace: they had preferred war; I had proffered them my friendship, and they had spurned at it. That there was no alternative left me. I had chastised them, and was appeased" (Porter 334). The Happahs are children and should suffer to learn they have done something wrong. The war between the adjoining tribes is thus transformed into His chastising of an ignorant and disobedient people. When the Happahs come with a white flag, he says he is ready to make peace as he has been to punish their insolence. His attitude is also directed to his friendly tribe. He insists on the "necessity of living on friendly terms with" the Americans. He says he is willing "to consider them as brothers,"

³⁹ Herbert, 96.

and as long as they stay as friends he will “protect them against all their enemies” and their property shall be secure. He also adds the inviolability of the sacred. “Should a stone be thrown, or an article stolen from me or my people, and the offender not be given up to me, I should make the valley a scene of desolation” (Porter 334). It is very unlikely that his biblical style of expression would have been fully understood, for his further speech is halted by Gattanewa’s wife. But Porter is no longer a passive observer of the ways of the islanders. Now he holds sway over them. Gattanewa has to suspend his breakfast of a raw fish when he comes across Porter to whom the practice of eating raw fish is disagreeable.

Porter’s discourse to the Taaehs is reminiscent of the speech Jefferson made to the Cherokees, who he considered as an illustration of Native Americans of advanced state. Jefferson saw the possibility of their “making progress,” but to him their situation was incomplete, like children who are still ignorant of scientific progress, and were lacking understanding and devoid of morality. In a word they need a father to protect and instruct them. His speech given to the chiefs of the Cherokees in 1806 explains itself.

My children, this is what I wished to say to you. To go on in learning to cultivate the earth and to avoid war. If any of your neighbors injure you, our beloved men whom we place with you will endeavor to obtain justice for you and we will support them in it. If any of your bad people injure your neighbors, be ready to acknowledge it and to do them justice. It is more honorable to repair a wrong than to persist in it, Tell all your chiefs, your men women and children, that I take them by the hand and hold it fast. That I am their father, wish their happiness and well-being, and am always ready to promote their good.⁴⁰

Native Americans are “the children of nature,” as Jefferson states, because they have just emerged from the primitive state. Jefferson’s nostalgic recollections suggest that he has grown into adulthood while they as a group have still remained in the state of childhood on the way to civilized adulthood. In fact, as Michael Paul Rogin says, they are not by any means children. Porter shares with Jefferson the idea of progress which is behind the historical concept that a society develops from the infant uncivilized

⁴⁰ Thomas Jefferson, “To the Chiefs of the Cherokee Nation,” in *Thomas Jefferson*, 562.

stage to the present civilized stage of America.⁴¹

The adventures in Melville's narrative, when put side by side with Porter's, may impress the reader with their striking commonality. Furthermore, considering that Porter stayed on Nukuheva for about only six weeks, his personal experiences as well as the ethnographical information he gives are overwhelmingly rich. Melville must have been keenly aware of the necessity to lay emphasis on his own viewpoint which alone could compete, if he wished, with Porter, to whom he owed much but yet, against whom he held righteous indignation.

Melville's desire to produce an ideal society headed by an honorable chief is depicted first in the person of chief Mehevi of the Typee tribe.

Close to where we lay, squatting upon their haunches, were some eight or ten noble-looking chiefs—for such they subsequently proved to be—who, more reserved than the rest, regarded us with a fixed and stern attention, which not a little discomposed our equanimity. One of them in particular, who appeared to be the highest in rank, placed himself directly facing me; looking at me with a rigidity of aspect under which I absolutely quailed. He never once opened his lips, but maintained his severe expression of countenance, without turning his face aside for a single moment. Never before had I been subjected to so strange and steady a glance; It revealed nothing of the mind of the savage, but it appeared to be reading my own.

After undergoing this scrutiny till I grew absolutely nervous, with a view of diverting it if possible, and conciliating the good opinion of the warrior I took some tobacco from the bosom of my frock and offered it to him. He quietly rejected the proffered gift, and, without speaking, motioned me to return it to its place. (*Typee* 70-71)

⁴¹ See Michael Paul Rogin, *Fathers & Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991) for the role of Indians in American cultural mythology. This book discusses Andrew Jackson's major policy, the removal of Indians and their destruction, in relation to his personal history. Rogin says the "civilizing process [of the Indians] was not explicitly infanticidal, but there was violence in it nonetheless. It offered Indians not simply help, but a redefinition of their identity. It defined them as children, which in fact they were not. It forced the tribes into childish dependence upon a white father" (208). See also *Jefferson*, 1496.

Opposite to drunken Gattanewa, Mehevi attests every quality of a chief the reader may idealize. Invested in him is the kind of dignity desirable for a chief of high rank. Later episodes show that any kind of coercive measures are unknown to him, but his personality seems to assume authority over the people. Mehevi is not depicted as being on an inferior level of human existence, but as intelligent and benevolent as one could be. Porter underlines the particular function of exchanging gifts on two levels: between him and the chiefs to affirm friendship on the official level, and between the women and his men on the individual level. It is Melville's explicit assertion to negate the intervention of the idea of trade in the form of barter between the natives and the western visitors, because he knows the petty gifts allow the visitors, once accepted by the natives, not only to cancel out but also to justify any kind of plundering practice. Petty gifts insult the honor of the natives. Mehevi's chiefly and fatherly attention to the narrator does not go well with receiving gifts from a white.

Melville sacrifices the distinction of classes for the sake of presenting Mehevi as "a noble savage" in the full costume of a warrior: Mehevi is a chief not a warrior.

His aspect was imposing. The splendid long drooping tail-feathers of the tropical bird, thickly interspersed with the gaudy plumage of the cock, were disposed in an immense upright semicircle upon his head, their lower extremities being fixed in a crescent of guinea-heads which spanned the forehead. Around his neck were several enormous necklaces of boars' tusks, polished like ivory and disposed in such a manner as that the longest and largest were upon his capacious chest. Thrust forward through the large apertures in his ears were two small and finely shaped sperm-whale teeth, presenting their cavities in front, stuffed with freshly-plucked leaves, and curiously wrought at the other end into strange little images and devices. These barbaric trinkets, garnished in this manner at their open extremities, and tapering and curving round to a point behind the ear, resembled not a little a pair of cornucopias.

The loins of the warrior were girt about with heavy folds of a dark-colored tappa, hanging before and behind in clusters of braided tassels, while anklets and bracelets of curling human hair completed his unique costume. In his right hand he grasped a beautifully carved paddle-spear, nearly fifteen feet in length, made of the bright

koar-wood, one end sharply pointed, and the other flattened like an oar-blade. Hanging obliquely from his girdle by a loop of sinuate was a richly decorated pipe, the slender reed forming its stem was colored with a red pigment, and round it, as well as the idol-bowl, fluttered little streamers of the thinnest tappa...

But that which was most remarkable in the appearance of the splendid islander was the elaborated tattooing displayed on every noble limb....The warrior, from the excellence of his physical proportions, might certainly have been regarded as one of Nature's noblemen and the lines drawn upon his face may possibly have denoted his exalted rank. (*Typee* 77-78)

It is highly unlikely that Melville could recollect the embellishments in such detail. And he need not depict it from his imagination because he has ample materials before him, such as Porter's descriptions and his fine illustration of a warrior in full costume.⁴² Melville does not sacrifice the facts on purpose since Porter was confused as well in relation to the chiefly class and warriors' costume. Later anthropological research attests the graded order of people: the chiefly elite, the war leaders and the spiritual authority of the priests.⁴³ Gattanewa made his first appearance naked and this astonished and deeply disappointed Porter. Melville, not restricted within his biographic experiences, endeavors to give embellishments worthy of a majestic king. He depicts Mehevi in just the way that would appeal to Porter and his conventionalized idea of a king.

The father and children relationship in Porter's *Journal* is totally reversed in *Typee*. Melville's narrator is a child in the valley. The host family takes care of this intruder as if he is an innocent novice. Tinor acts toward him "in a truly maternal manner" and gives him some choice food "like a doting mother petting a sickly urchin with tars and sugar-plums" (*Typee* 85). In fact the narrator says he is treated "as if [he] were an infant" (*Typee* 88).

Melville does not invest his narrator with any vantage that suggests a

⁴² See Porter's *Journal*, 292 and 312, and for the illustration of a chief warrior, see 331. See also Anderson, 126-128. He suggests Stewart is the main source.

⁴³ See Handy, 36 and Kirch, 26-265. Kirch reports the harsh rivalries within a tribe among these three traditional authorities during the Classic Period that lasted from 1400A.D. to 1790. Handy in *the Native Culture in the Marquesas*(125-26) explains the functional difference of chiefs and war leaders.

specifically civilized intelligence. He is a stranger in a community seeking inward and outward security. His moral sense tells him to learn and to notice what is going around him. He dare not do anything that may suggest a higher knowledge or his interest in instructing them in some way. Once he is asked to repair one of the six old muskets in the valley which are “held in most extravagant esteem.”

As I did not possess the accomplishments of a gunsmith, and was likewise destitute of the necessary tool, I was reluctantly obliged to signify my inability to perform the task. At this unexpected communication Mehevi regarded, for a moment, as if he half suspected I was some inferior sort of white man who after all did not know much more than a Typee. (*Typee* 185)

What does a white man do in a primitive valley? Melville’s narrator goes into a strange world as a neophyte and refuses to behave in the way expected of a white man. His plausible reality contrasts with the father-like Porter, whose experiences Melville uses as second-hand information which he interprets in his context that contrasts with Porter’s.

Intruders into Eden

Both Porter and Melville’s narrator suffered from a shortage of fresh food, to which Porter finds an easy and efficient solution in the form of war. Fresh food accompanied the victorious result of the contest with the Happahs. “A large supply of hogs, cocoa-nuts, bananas, bread-fruit, tarra, and sugar-cane, with several roots of Kava” is brought into the camp the following day from the nearby tribes, although there is considerable scarcity of those foods in the valley. Two days later, the treaty is concluded with one of the chiefs of the Happahs with the condition that they give supplies once a week to the Americans, in return for which they receive iron and other articles. In less than two days every tribe on the island, except two, sends envoys to subscribe to the same terms.

Porter now can feed fresh provisions every day to his four hundred men. The supply of larger size hogs, whose pork is much better in flavor and taste, is so abundant that he finds it unnecessary to kill small size hogs. “We rioted in luxuries which the island afforded” (Porter 349). How the natives managed to supply the food is not referred to at all. Instead he observes that

all the natives without exception are satisfied with the compensation he gives them.

To the principal persons of the tribes I always presented a harpoon, it being to them the most valuable article of iron, and to the rest scraps of iron hoops were thrown, for which they took much delight in contending; those who got none appeared equally satisfied with the rest and those who were so fortunate as to obtain a large piece generously divided it with the others, and in no one instance did the mode of payment produce among them riot or dispute. (Porter 349)

It is scarcely a week since the day he complained that the natives would not trade food for harpoons, of which Porter had a large stock. It was also agreed that every tribe at peace with Porter should contribute to build a house for the Americans.

The process leading to the war with the Typees reveals the nature of the friendship Porter forms with each tribe. Friendship is not the state of being friends or in peace which he is inclined to insist. It is his device for and the practice of acquiring resources the island can offer him, human as well as material. Friendship at first with the Taeehs was practiced at a more private level or in the form of exchanging presents by those of the highest rank. This unfortunately fails to bring in as much of the necessary supplies as he desired. However, the war with the Happahs serves as the turning point to make friendship more affirmative, extensive and practical. Between Porter and each tribe friendship becomes the official agreement upon which the transaction is no longer a private free trade but a compulsive and regular transference. Accordingly, the violation of it in any form invites the threat of "punishment." This is demonstrated when one of the tribes has become unpunctual in sending in his supplies. Porter sends a messenger to compel the chief to make a choice of peace or war, in other words friendship or punishment. Friendship and punishment are two sides of the same coin.

It was the Typees that challenged the validity of the system by harassing one of Porter's friendly tribes with threatening words and stones to interfere with their conveyance of goods. The Typees are said to be warlike and have confidence in their strength since they have never been beaten by any other tribe or outsiders. Theirs is the most highly cultivated valley. Porter sends them a message to find out if they wish to be at peace with him, threatening them with punishment in case of their hostile moves against

his friendly tribes. If they wish peace, Porter says, he is “willing to meet them on the same terms as the other tribes.” The answer was a straightforward refusal: why should they want “a friendship” with Porter? Why should they bring hogs and fruit to the Americans? In reply to the Taaeh’s advice of reconsideration, the Typees return full of daring and insult, calling both the Taaehs and Happahs cowards and the Americans “white lizards, mere dirt” (Porter 364) who are not capable of overcoming the difficulties of fighting against them, and adding they are not afraid of the power of muskets.

The challenge of the Typees makes it clearer to both Porter and his friendly tribes that “friendship” is another name for subjugation and the tributes of fresh food are its confirmation. The Typees give a forceful shake to the very foundation of the status quo. Porter was not willing to fight, but his friendly tribes were very solicitous of war against the Typees. If he ignored the challenge his “friendship” with the other tribes would be in danger of collapse. Any disagreement that might have arisen with Porter from among the friendly tribes would trigger the breakdown. “I should find a difficulty in keeping them in that subjugation by which only we could render ourselves secure” (Porter, 364). He is compelled to make careful preparations. Ironically Porter has finished up by employing measures based on his prejudiced view of the natives “whose conduct is governed only by fear, and regulated by views to their interest” (Porter 284).

The fort he thinks of constructing on a hill commanding the bay is the reflection of the insecure situation in which he is put. “I now conceived the design of constructing a fort, not only as a protection to our village and the harbour, but as a security to the Taaehs against further incursions; and while it would enable us to give to them the most ample protection, it would place them perfectly in our power, in the event of any hostility on their part” (Porter 365). If the whole island should turn out to be his enemy, the fort, with an excellent breast-work made of old water casks and four guns, would serve him as the last resort. The Taaehs work zealously in building the fort which might be used against them. The fort was completed on the 14th of November. Porter keeps his true intent as to the fort a secret even from his fellow countrymen visiting the bay. Five days after, on the 19th November Porter declared the possession of the whole Island in the name of the United States and celebrated it with a salute of seventeen shots fired from the new fort. He gives the island a new name, Madison’s Island.

The precariousness of Porter’s position came in the form of loud

complaints from the friendliest tribes. The discontent stemmed from the deterioration of the "friendship" system and its resulting unfairness in relation to the Typees. The Taaehs and Happhas complain that some tribes discontinued bringing in their supplies and that others have fallen off, and that the Americans had nearly exhausted all their stock of food, "while the Typees are wholly exempt from the duty and" were "enjoying abundance." It was fortunate for Porter that these tribes were not on friendly terms with the Typees, otherwise they would have united against Porter. "Lead us to the Typees, said they, and we shall be able to furnish you from their valley; you have long threatened them; their insults have been great; you have promised to protect us against them, and yet permit them to offer violence to us; and while you have rendered every other tribe tributary to you, you permit them to triumph with impunity" (Porter 384). In order even to maintain and reestablish the system amongst the present allied tribes, punishment of the tribe outside the alliance became an urgent necessity.

The description of the fighting which took place along the narrow path through swampy bush against the invincible Typee warriors is among the liveliest parts in the *Journal*. Porter and his men took to the waterways and land near the Typee villages, which are located far inland and bordered by "a high and almost impenetrable swampy thicket" (Porter 386). Porter describes concentrating on his own party because the Typees attack from behind thick bushes with stones and spears and only occasionally show themselves. Yet the war has thousands of spectators on the surrounding mountains. They are his friendly tribes watching closely to assess their future relations with the Americans. It was a losing battle. The fierce and stout resistance forced Porter to halt before his getting to a Typee village, and he had to retreat with many of his men wounded. Just before the retreat, however, he succeeds in killing two Typees by the tactic of a feigned retreat. "For to return without gaining some advantage would, I believe, have rendered an attack from the Happhas certain." He again offers the Typees, "assuming the air and language of a conqueror" (Porter 390), the same terms of friendship. To this the Typees return their message of a generally accurate analysis of the war, daring him to renew the contest.

For the second contest Porter sets out early next morning with two hundred sailors and marines. This time they go overland, rather than taking a water route. His party reaches the summit of the mountain in three hours "with great difficulty." They then follow "up and down the steep sides of rocks and mountain, through rivulets, thickets, and reed breaks,

and by the sides of precipices which sometimes" cause them "shudder" (Porter 392), and at noon they come to the location from which they can hear the drums and singing from the Typee valley.

Twenty nine years later Melville's narrator and his friend Toby tread on almost identical route from Nukuheva to the same summit and on into the mountains which separate the Happah and the Typee. The noticeable difference is that Melville devotes almost two chapters to it while Porter takes less than a page. Melville renders the climbing an initial hardship for his characters to overcome just as the first contest against the Typees is for Porter to endure. Their progress to the summit is interrupted by the weather and tropical vegetation. The biggest obstacle is the thickly growing reeds among which the two runaways are trapped.

...with a bound like a roe, he[Toby] cleared a brook which ran across our path, and rushed forward with a quick step.

When we arrived within a short distance of the ridge, we were stopped by a mass of tall yellow reeds, growing together as thickly as they could stand, and as tough and stubborn as so many rods of steel; and we perceived, to our chagrin, that they extended midway up the elevation we purposed to ascend.

For a moment we gazed about us in quest of a more practicable route; it was, however, at once apparent that there was no resource but to pierce this thicket of canes at all hazards. We now reversed our order of march, I, being the heaviest, taking the lead, with a view of breaking a path through the obstruction, while Toby fell into the rear.

Two or three times I endeavored to insinuate myself between the canes, and by dint of coaxing and bending them to make some progress; but a bull-frog might as well have tried to work a passage through the teeth of a comb, and I gave up the attempt in despair.

...

After resting for a few moments we began the ascent, and after a little vigorous climbing found ourselves close to its summit. Instead, however of walking along its ridge, where we should have been in full view of the natives in the vales beneath, and at a point where they could easily intercept us were they so inclined, we cautiously advanced on one side, crawling on our hands and knees, and screened from observation by the grass through which we glided, much in the fashion of a couple of serpents. (*Typee* 37-39)

The whole passage of their struggle with the persistent reeds is twice as long as the one cited above. Melville describes his characters' undertaking as a quasi contest against the stout resistance of the plants in order to get to their destination. The above passage is closely related to Porter's another episode as well as his description of ascending the same mountain. It is worth notice that Melville begins to form a clear conception of the metaphorical intruders when he read the following passage. With Porter's *Journal* before him, he was more serious with the use of the metaphor than the apparent lighthearted air conveys. He has his characters not only follow the same footsteps of Porter but also assign the symbolical role which he recognizes Porter fulfilled.

As we continued our march the number of our allies became reduced, and even the brave Mouina, the first to expose himself, began to hang back; while he kept in advance, he had, by the quickness of his sight, which was astonishing, put us on our guard as the stones and spears came, and enabled us to elude them, but now they came too thick even for him withstand

We soon came to the place for fording the river; in the thick bushes of the opposite banks of which the Typees, who were here very numerous, made a bold stand, and showered on us their spears and other missiles; here our advance was for a few minutes checked, the banks of the river remarkably steep, but particularly on the side we were, which would render our retreat difficult and dangerous in case of a repulse; the stream was rapid, the water deep, and the fording difficult and hazardous on account of the exposed situation we should be in while crossing. We endeavoured in vain to clear the bushes of the opposite banks with our musketry. The stones and spears flew with augmented numbers Finding that we could not dislodge them, I directed a volley to be fired, three cheers to be given, and to dash across the river. We soon gained the opposite bank and continued our march rendered still more difficulty by the underwood which was here interlaced to that degree as to make it necessary sometimes to crawl on our hands and knees to get along. We were harrassed[sic] as usual by the Typees for about a quarter of a mile through a thicket which, at almost any other time, I should have considered impassable. (Porter 388)

The two writers narrate utterly different episodes: one is that of a true war of twenty-four Americans accompanied by a few native warriors against another native tribe, and the other is that of climbing a mountain by two young men. The war is not the kind of ethnological information Melville can make use of to fill his book. Yet, a certain literary reflection of it upon Melville can be noticed. There are many similarities. Both Porter and Melville's characters are under the pressure of the friendly natives: Porter is obliged to fight for them and Melville's characters need to hide from their observation. Both unexpectedly fall into a virtual standstill. The Typees' attack continues with no sign of slacking just as the numberless reeds keep on interfering with the climbers' progress. "I began to think we were fairly snared," says Melville's narrator. Toby is a counterpart of Mouina: both are daring and quick in action. It is fairly obvious that Melville writes about their struggle against the reeds in the fashion of Porter advancing to the Typee village during his first battle. The stubborn reeds are a somewhat derisive comparison of the incessant attacks by stones and spears. When he has his narrators "crawl" on their "hands and knees" just as Porter and his men did, Melville discovers in Porter what Porter never acknowledged in himself.

Melville begins to put his characters in the situation of a mythological background. Melville may in reality have spent many hours on the climb but his characters take an unusually long time getting to the same place at which Porter arrived. What is surprising is that his characters need five more days before getting down to the Typee valley while Porter took only several hours. The most unrealistic point is that they spend in total six days without the minimum amount of food to sustain their lives. But this is comprehensible if Melville's intention is the creation of metaphorical space and time for his characters within which they can act.

Porter abandons the attack on the Typees the day he and his men reach the mountaintop. For the sake of a safe descend during the daytime the party decides to stay the night on the ridge of the mountain, where they are caught by heavy rain.

Never, in the course of my life, did I spend a more anxious or disagreeable night. And I believe there were few with me who had ever seen its equal. A cold and piercing wind accompanied the deluge, for I can call it nothing else, and chilled us to the heart; without room to

keep ourselves warm by moving about, fearful of stirring, lest we might be precipitated into eternity down the steep sides of the mountains, for the ridge had now become so slippery we could scarcely keep our feet—we all anxiously looked for morning, and the first dawn of day, although the wind and rain still continued, was a cheering sight to us, notwithstanding our apprehensions of the fate of the ammunition and the conditions of our muskets. We were all as perfectly wet as though we had been under water the whole time, and we scarcely entertained a hope that a single cartridge or musket had escaped. (Porter 393-94)

Melville's characters also spend the night around the same place.

Shall I ever forget that horrid night? As for poor Toby, I could scarcely get a word out of him. It would have been some consolation to have heard his voice, but he lay shivering the live-long night like a man afflicted with the palsy, with his knees drawn up to his head, while his back was supported against the dripping side of the rock. During this wretched night there seemed nothing wanting to complete perfect misery of our condition. The rain descended in such torrents that our poor shelter proved a mere mockery. In vain did I try to elude the incessant streams that poured upon me; by protecting one part I only exposed another, and the water was continually finding some new opening through which to drench us.

I have had many a ducking in the course of my life, and in general cared little about it; but the accumulated horrors of that night, the death-like coldness of the place, the appalling darkness and the dismal sense of our forlorn condition, almost unmanned me. (*Typee* 46)

Here again Melville may have had an almost identical experience with Porter or he simply borrowed the situation from him. Whichever it is, putting his characters in a miserable condition suits his purpose for two reasons. First, in his metaphorical context, the mountaintop is disorienting as if it is an "infernal place" where the narrator loses his self-identification, and, therefore, a starry night, for example, is not appropriate. Another reason is that infernality is necessitated to make a striking contrast with the view which the narrator is to witness the following morning. Melville maintains the context by giving the narrator another metaphorical

symptom, a pain in his leg as if he had been bitten “by some venomous reptile” (*Typee* 48).

Twenty-nine years before, Porter was also in the utmost precarious situation. It is best conveyed by his standing on the summit of a steep mountain looking down the valleys of both sides. “The Happah village lay on one side of the mountain,...the Typee on the other” (Porter 394). The latter is the one he is going to assail, and as to the people of the former, although now they are supposed to be on friendly terms with him, he cannot put any trust in them. He is obliged to postpone the attack till the next day because of the bad condition of their path caused by rain, and decides to stay the night at the Happah village. Before he leaves he orders a volley to be fired for two purposes: one is to signal to the Typees his approach so that they have time to prepare against plundering by other tribesmen which is sure to follow his attack, and the other is to reassure the Happahs that the Americans are “still formidable,” since otherwise they would not hesitate to carry out an attack on him and his men.

The next morning Porter ascends the same ridge and looks at the valley he is about to lay waste.

...we halted to take breath, and view, for a few minutes, this delightful valley, which was soon to become a scene of desolation. From the hill we had a distant view of every part, and all appeared equally delightful. The valley was about nine miles in length and three or four in breadth, surrounded on every part, except the beach, where we formerly landed, by lofty mountains: the upper part was bounded by a precipice of many hundred feet in height, from the top of which a handsome sheet of water was precipitated, and formed a beautiful river, which ran meandering through the valley and discharged itself at the beach. Villages were scattered here and there, the bread-fruit and cocoa-nut trees flourished luxuriantly and in abundance; plantations laid out in good order, inclosed with stone walls, were in a high state of cultivation, and everything bespoke industry, abundance, and happiness—never in my life did I witness a more delightful scene ... (Porter 397)

Melville also delineates the breath-taking discovery as follows.

As the feverish sensation increased upon me, I tossed about, still

unwilling to disturb my slumbering companion, from whose side I removed two or three yards. I chanced to push aside a branch, and by so doing suddenly disclosed to my view a scene which even now I can recall with all the vividness of the first impression. Had a glimpse of the gardens of Paradise been revealed to me I could scarcely have been more ravished with the sight.

From the spot where I lay transfixed with surprise and delight, I looked straight down into the bosom of a valley, which swept away in long wavy undulations to the blue waters in the distance. Midway towards the sea, and peering here and there amidst the foliage, might be seen the palmetto-thatched houses of its inhabitants glistening in the sun that had bleached them to a dazzling whiteness. The vale was more than three leagues in length, and about a mile across at its greatest width.

On either side it appeared hemmed in by steep and green acclivities, which, uniting near the spot where I lay, formed an abrupt and semicircular termination of grassy cliffs and precipices hundreds of feet in height, over which flowed numberless small cascades. But the crowning beauty of the prospect was its universal verdure; and in this indeed consists, I believe, the peculiar charm of every Polynesian landscape. Everywhere below me, from the base of the precipice upon whose very verge I had been unconsciously reposing, the surface of the vale presented a mass of foliage, spread with such rich profusion that it was impossible to determine of what description of trees it consisted.

But perhaps there was nothing about the scenery I beheld more impressive than those silent cascades, whose slender threads of water, after leaping down the steep cliffs, were lost amidst the rich herbage of the valley.

Over all the landscape there reigned the most hushed repose, which I almost feared to break lest, like the enchanted gardens in the fairy tale, a single syllable might dissolve the spell. For a long time, forgetful alike of my own situation, and the vicinity of my still slumbering companion, I remained gazing around me, hardly able to comprehend by what means I had thus suddenly been made a spectator of such a scene. (*Typee* 49)

The description of the valley is, indeed, beautiful and romantic, or, to be precise, romantically conveyed. The contrast of hunger, a dismal sleepless

night, cold weather, a strange pain and a high fever with the abruptly and panoramically revealed shining valley properly gives the latter the title of Paradise. The narrator, however, does not know whether the paradisiacal valley is the territory of the dreaded Typee or friendly Happa. The two men spend further days descending, all the while holding the reader in suspense as to the identity of the valley's inhabitants. Anderson introduces an interesting report made by a reverend who visited Nukuheva in 1867. According to his account the distance to Typee valley is not more than five miles, and the natives walk and climb it in three or four hours.⁴⁴ Geographically it may be a very short distance but as has been shown Melville has already trodden into the realm of a fictional world.

There is no denying both accounts describe the same valley from around the same observatory spot and with similarly romantic view. The accuracy of the map in the accounts is striking except in the width of the valley. Melville writes "one mile" where he should write "one league," if Porter is accurate. It is probable that Melville makes this small mistake which is left unnoticed while transcribing Porter's sketch in his style using "league" instead of "mile."

Melville without doubt derived an inspiration for his art of fiction from Porter standing on the ridge overlooking the same valley which is about to "dissolve." Melville enchants and turns into Paradise Porter's merely delightful valley. Both valleys are depicted as too beautiful to exist in the real world. In half a day Porter's "delightful" valley actually is no more. Melville fears it might "dissolve" by "a single syllable." But there is an important difference between the two sketches: Porter's plain and compact sentences stimulate the reader to imagine well-organized societies with hard-working and yet perfectly happy people, while Melville's sketch conspicuously lacks mention of the cultivated fields or planted breadfruit. Here the natural environment of the valley is still left untouched.

It may not irrelevant to say that Melville sees in Porter the very image of Milton's Satan that flies up to the highest tree that grows in Paradise and looks down to wonder at and meditate on the earth God created.

Beneath him with new wonder now he views
To all delight of human sense exposed
In narrow room Nature's whole wealth, yea more,

⁴⁴ Anderson, 114.

A heav'n on earth, for blissful Paradise
 Of God the garden was, by him in the east
 Of Eden planted;⁴⁵

The troubled minds and the painful resolutions of Milton's Satan and Porter are surprisingly similar. Porter, just as Milton's Satan, falls into anguish over the contradiction between the conduct that duty dictates and the newly welled-up emotion regarding the target valley. Porter-Satan laments the fate that induced him to behave as a destructive agency, as the last sentence of the above-cited paragraph ends as follows.

—never in my life did I witness a more delightful scene or experience more repugnancy than I now felt for the necessity which compelled me to punish a happy and heroic people. (Porter 397)

His brief acknowledgement, not without a pathetic touch, is followed by a strikingly narrative and explanatory excuse. He believed he had sufficiently acquainted his reader with the cause and the circumstances that had led him to the conduct he was compelled to follow. He realizes he has not made himself clear when he looks down upon the beautiful valley. But more than that, he finds he is in need of a plausible excuse to convince himself of the justice of his unjust conduct just as Milton's Satan, who falls into an identical dilemma, finds a pretext. "Yet Public reason just, compels me now / To do what else though dammed I should abhor."⁴⁶ Porter paraphrases the intent as follows.

Many may censure my conduct as wanton and unjust; they may inquire what necessity could compel me to pursue them into their valley; where, in fact, was any necessity for hostilities with them so long as they left us in quietness at our camp: But let such reflect a

⁴⁵ John Milton, "Paradise Lost", in *Milton: Poetical Works*, ed., Douglas Bush (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), bk. IV, ll., 205-210. For Melville's early familiarity with Milton, see Merton M. Sealts, Jr., *Melville's Reading, Revised and Enlarged Edition* (University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 16-17. Sealts says that Melville's "Fragments from a Writing Desk" (1838) shows he was already familiar with the writings of Milton. For Milton's influence on *Typee*, see Henry F. Pommer, *Milton and Melville* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1970), 16-17.

⁴⁶ John Milton, bk. IV, ll., 390-93.

moment on our peculiar situation—a handful of men residing among numerous warlike tribes, liable every moment to be attacked by them and all cut off; our only hopes of safety was in convincing them of our great superiority over them, and from what we have already seen, we must either attack them or be attacked. (Porter 397)

His exoteric explanation exposes that “friendship” is simply the control of a weak nation by a stronger one, and the fragility of friendship must be adjusted through incessant contests.

It was again a victorious war. The exact number of those killed is not mentioned but a great number of dead is suggested. Only a few weeks previously five dead was an unprecedented number of victims. That two hundred men achieve a complete victory over 3,500 warriors is without doubt the result of advanced weapon technology of civilization. Porter introduced weapons of wholesale slaughter and went on to use them.

After the war Porter again goes up to the summit of the mountain to look back on the villages he devastated and burned one after another to the upper end of the valley. “A long line of smoaking[sic] ruins now marked our traces from one end to the other; the opposite hills were covered with the unhappy fugitives, and the whole presented a scene of desolation and horror” (Porter 403). The blame lies upon them, Porter says, who, mistaken about their power, reject the proposals of “friendship” and finally take the road of sorrow. The Declaration of Possession of Nukuheva Island in the name of the United States is now complete in theory and in reality as far as Porter is concerned. Melville’s indignation is apparent through his narrator.

The invaders, on their march back to the sea, consoled themselves for their repulse by setting fire to every house and temple in their route; and a long line of smoking ruins defaced the once-smiling bosom of the valley, and proclaimed to its pagan inhabitants the spirit that reigned in the breasts of Christian soldiers. Who can wonder at the deadly hatred of the Typees to all foreigners after such unprovoked atrocities? (*Typee* 26)

Melville points out what Porter never touches on: the implied viewpoint of the natives. Porter’s *Journal* is rich in ethnographical information about the natives but is completely lacking in the kind of information about the humane aspect of his subjugated people, including his sailors and marines.

His optimism and habitual self-justification as a naval captain does not allow him to acknowledge any disagreement or criticism.

Porter believes that civilization possesses superior morality and that he is in the position of instructing the savage on civilized virtue by showing them an example. An opportunity is offered him. Plundering, subsidiary to intertribal wars, is, to him without doubt, typical of savagery. The friendly natives accompanying him are intent solely on this object. Porter does not know that war is to them a more synthetic interaction between tribes than he is familiar with. He orders a volley fired the day before his invasion in the expectation that the Typees will know his desire to reduce their suffering from pillage by giving them time to remove their hogs and other valuable property to a safer place. This, he wants to say, is the demonstration of a civilized morality. "I was desirous of impressing them with a high idea of our force" (Porter 395).

The war is caused by the hostile ambition of his friendly tribes against the Typees in relation to their supplying food to the Americans. When the strongest tribe is exempt from the obligation the others share, the result is the obvious greater gap of resources between them. In fact some of them complain that this has become insurmountable. The swift offensive Porter makes is a reflection of his fear of the possibility of overwhelming resistance and his precarious position. Porter does not realize that the plundering inflicted upon the Typees is the adjusting process, an act of retrieving the resources they have been robbed of by the Americans. The natives accompanying him bring back loads of plundered items as spoils of war.

The victory and the following "friendly" relations with the Typees dissipate what little sympathetic reflection he had on the devastated people, and instead he is delighted with the thought that he has established peace between tribes which had never existed before. The next day, the defeated Typees agree to "purchase friendship on any term," and ask the number of hogs Porter desires, to which he answers four hundred, the sum total of all his men and twice the number of the actual attacking force, demanding their delivery without delay. The Americans gather additional food from all the tribes and enjoy the greatest abundance of supplies since landing. The only regret Porter utters concerns the lack of salt to cure a quantity of the pork for their voyage. Friendship is, after all, plundering in disguise.

Melville's narrator can be seen an ironical composite of Milton's rendering of Satan and Porter. But they part with Porter-Satan here. They leave the disorienting inferno-like mountain-top and begin to descend the steep

slopes. They spend further terrifying days with only a daily half-tablespoon of food. On the sixth day, they arrived at the entrance of Eden. They are no heroic figures but mere common-sailor Satans, and also like the first men of creation that crave for fruit to satisfy their hunger. "How to obtain the fruit which we felt convinced must grow near at hand was our first thought" (*Typee* 66). And they do find some of the most delicious fruit on the island. This ambrosia for the Satans, however, is appropriately rotten.

The places Melville visited as a gentleman beach-comber from July 9, 1842 when he deserted the *Acushnet* for the interior of Nukuheva Island, to August 1842 when he signed on with the frigate *United States*, had long been suffering the loss of their traditional cultures and ways of life together with a sharp decrease in population due to what the white civilizers say "civilizing process." Seventy years on from Cook's first voyage, the former world was then disappearing into oblivion except in the memory of the inhabitants or in the journals recorded by white visitors. Civilizing waves propelled by colonizers and missionaries as well as the traders and sailors might not have been uniform, and in some places caused drastic changes while in some others less so, but altogether they were continuously successive waves. The Typee valley, however, it seemed to Melville, had undergone the least change.

Cook saw and grieved over the moral and physical deterioration of the natives accompanying their interaction with the Europeans. Porter in the early 19th century observes the natives closely and concludes that Cook's anxiety is ill-founded and justifies his presence. He soon finds colonizing the island is beneficial both to himself and to his country. The threat of modern war technology helps his exploitation of resources and satisfies his imperialist ambition. His close observation of the people leads him to evaluate their essential human qualities. But his "civilized mind" interprets whatever he sees in a way that places their culture at a childish stage in the history of human development, and consequently his understanding of the native people is colored by his present interests and justification of his behavior.

Porter is a happy Kurtz. Having succeeded in imperial mastery over the Africans, Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* acknowledges "the darkness" which surrounds him. Conrad does not give any clue to fathom its depth and magnitude. But Edward W. Said says that at least "they [Kurtz, Marlow and Conrad] are ahead of their time in understanding that what they call 'the

darkness' has an autonomy of its own."⁴⁷ Porter needs not cry out "The horror! The horror!" because he sees no darkness on Nukuheva.⁴⁸ He believes he understands the natives and is contented with the peace he brings to them. Porter is also captain Delano in "Benito Cereno."

The high and romantic evaluation of native people which Melville emphasizes stems from his strong defense of them against civilization. It may not be inapposite to say that, if *Typee* is deprived of its dubious autobiographical and ethnographic narratives, what remains is his almost exclamatory criticism against the destructive encounter between the South Sea Islands and the civilized European world embodied partly by the colonialist Captain Porter.

The thematic construct of *Typee* is a metaphorical transcription, though ironically twisted, of Porter's *Journal*. The narrator is a victim of an oppressive sea captain from whom he runs away. But this starving common sailor in turn bears the mark of an evil westerner and crawls into the innocence of Paradise. Melville thus attests to the crime of Western oppression and exploitation with the use of mythology. Melville is here partly Porter but he is not Porter in the way his narrator stands in distinct opposition to Porter in the society to which they both belong, and he chooses to defend the South Sea Islanders.

Typee is the first book of Melville's in which his assertion of humanity is anchored to his anti-colonialism. To Melville as well as to Porter the simple dichotomy of "civilized" and "uncivilized" is inevitable, since America has been embracing the issue ever since the Pilgrim Fathers landed on the new continent.⁴⁹ Deeply implanted in Melville is the sense of "humanity," which transcends this simple dichotomy. He observes humanity is being violated in American and European imperialistic enterprises in the South Seas, where colonialism and civilization are synonymous.

⁴⁷ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1993), 30.

⁴⁸ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), 100.

⁴⁹ William Bradford, "History of Plymouth Plantation," *The Puritans*, volume 1, eds. Perry Miller and Thomas J. Johnson (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 91.

