

Theme and Imagery in Melville's Novel *Omoo*

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Omoo is a less very much incorporated book than *Typee*, and the narrator of Melville, whom I'm going to call "the rover," isn't Tommo of *Typee*. Altogether, in transit back to human progress, the Melvillean rover comes back to development by means of Tahiti, a sort of "halfway house" *Omoo* directly depicts the effect of Christian civilization on the island's crude culture, officially pulverized by outside attack and evangelist movement. While the novel is picaresque superficially and comprises of ten comprehensively comic, the reactions of missionary impact uncover the shades of malice of pilgrim colonial policy perseveringly and deliberately.

An evident straying right off the bat in the story articulates a subject on which a significant number of the novel's scenes are varieties played in various keys and rhythms: violence. The narrator reviews that islanders running to the shoreline to see passing boats were shot "as a simple delight." Such "wanton demonstrations of mercilessness" are "not unordinary with respect to ocean commanders arriving on relatively obscure islands." He presumes that "it is almost incredible, the light in which many sailors regard these naked heathens. They hardly consider them human" (*Omoo*, p. 25). Later in the story, when the impacts of colonization are precisely portrayed, the ramifications of this section become clear.

The "innocent" savagery of shipboard life, which stands out distinctly from the compassion of the narrator with men misled by others, fills in as an antithesis to this kind of viciousness. The funny Doctor Long Ghost's tricks and the group's carousel are "good clean fun" for everything except the hapless injured individual. The most loved trick of Long Ghost is to attach a rope to a clueless tar leg and derrick it most of the way up the pole; a standout amongst the most widely recognized casualties of this joke is the poor old dark cook Baltimore. The narrator feels for the casualties of the Doctor in spite of his appreciation for Long Ghost and their fellowship; when the poor sod hugger Ropey is brutally mistreated, the narrator alone is companions with him. His frame of mind toward the high jinks of the shipboard is basic; he sees such cheer as "in strange and shocking contrast with the situation of some of the invalids" (*Omoo*, p. 44). Mock brutality shows up strange in our current reality where genuine savagery is a day by day event; nonetheless, it might be the more fundamental.

A man bites the dust in the bunk by him, his damp hand falling on the chest of the narrator. Men kick the bucket of fever and are tossed over the edge unceremoniously to the sharks. Regardless of his scholarly doubts about the cold-bloodedness of a portion of the jokes of the Doctor, the narrator discovers him "as engaging as one may want for a partner." Aboard the *Julia*, "guiltless" viciousness is "a flat out gift from heaven."

If Melville's rover evident distress for the underdog, he is evenly free of ethnic chauvinism. He communicates compassion toward pitiable Baltimore, absentee slave, and is unmistakably stunned by the dull, unapproachable Bembo, who stirs the element in one-to-one battle with his apparently powerful whale triumph. The dread that he imparts to the next crewmembers is blended with reverence; in the picture of the Mowree there is no trace of haughtiness. Indeed, Bembo has all the earmarks of being the one individual in the savage universe of the *Julia* whose viciousness is extraordinary; he is chivalrous and the entire team regards him. In any case, notwithstanding Bembo's short regard for the whale interest, he is mishandled by Sydney Ben, who grabs a fight with Bembo when the two men drink. Bembo is furiously guarding himself, yet when his attacker is stuck to the floor, the remainder of the team will pull him off the chest of the Ticket-of-Leave-Man and pulverize him with their clenched hands until he is "lowered." In any case, the Mowree feels mortified by the crew members, assuming control on a "fine brilliant night, all moon and stars," attempting to vindicate himself by running the ship straightforwardly on a coral reef. Like Steel kilt, Bembo went into a battle, and after that ended up appraised "a barbarian and a defeatist" by the white group for protecting himself against his attacker. Viciousness induces savagery, and he plans to obliterate the entire/send, even to the detriment of his own life, rather than mortifying himself for the remainder of the voyage.

The shaping of the consciousness of the narrator does not play a role in *Omoa*, although the rover's point of view and reaction to what he sees in Tahiti are consistent with the conclusions drawn about civilization in *Typee*. As Charles Feidelson implies, Melville's rover is the committed traveller; thus *Typee*'s tensions are resolved and released. The vocation issue, which is a theme of the period's major writers, is being resolved momentarily by Melville in the traveler's person. The revelation of unlimited perplexities, the scan for islands of sureness in an ocean of blended actualities and appearances, discovers target detailing in the character of the meandered; consequently the apparently less vague, progressively loosened up environment of *Omoa* and the awesome response in *Mardi*, which stretches the wanderer model to the most remote breaking points and even past.

Although *Omoa* is hardly figurative in character, the propensity that *Typee* developed echoes when the rover appears in Papeete and arrives at the "condemned hull of a large ship.. bilged on the beach." 28 Curiosity prompts him to examine the ruin that proves to be an American whaler's wreck.

What were my emotions, when I saw upon her stern the name of a small town on the river Hudson! She was from the noble stream on whose banks I was born; in whose waters I had a hundred times bathed. In an instant, palm trees and elms canoes and skiffs church spires and bamboos all mingled in one vision of the present and the past (*Omoa*, p. 102).

Other than joining social incongruities into one brief picture, the old wreck of an American ship upon the savage shore is an unexpected counterstatement to the whole story, for despite the

fact that the whole book annals the obliteration of crude culture by attacking powers of human advancement, the mystery image of the book is the foundering of western, dynamic, majestic, Christian venture upon the old "wide, smooth shoreline of blended rocks and pieces of coral" (*Omoo*, p.101). In this image Melville appears to recommend a definitive pointlessness of the maritime westbound development; the destroyed American whaler is a foreboding image in fact for Melville.

The vast majority of *Omoo* is worried about the evil impacts of westernization upon the general population of Tahiti. As James Baird has composed, what Melville is "taking a gander at . . . furthermore, endeavouring to portray is the perplexity set up in an indigenous representative framework when the images of an outsider culture are forced upon the local religious articulation of the Tahitian." (Baird, p.191). Contrasted and life in the crude valley of the Marquesas, life in "humanized" Tahiti is pathetic. The abodes are chaotic and run-down; the general population have turned out to be inert and erratic, in light of the fact that the assembling of tappa and the couple of other local utensils and instruments has been disturbed by the convergence of European items whose utilitarian predominance shapes one article of "proof" in the ministers' deliberate exposure about the excellencies of Christian human headway. The greater parts of the locals, in any case, live in destitution in light of the fact that such merchandise are blocked off to them. They can progress toward becoming hirelings, deal with estates or stay inert, prey to the imported indecencies of inebriation and wanton sex. Their condition is no superior to that of slaves.

The loss of native arts like weaving has led to ridiculous affects; fashion has replaced art. The chapter on clothing in Melville's works, the first of many symbolic clothing uses, symbolizes the unfitness of western ways to indigenous life. Melville indulges in his description of one of Captain Bob's bachelor friends who wooed the ladies in a European clothing suit:

Having a military leaning, he ornamented the coat with a great scarlet patch on the breast; and mounted it also, here and there, with several regimental buttons, slyly cut from the uniform of a parcel of drunken marines, sent ashore on a holiday from a man-of-war. But, in spite of the ornaments, the dress was not exactly the thing. From the tightness of the cloth across the shoulders, his elbows projected from his sides, like an ungainly rider's; and his ponderous legs were jammed so hard into his slim, nether garments, that the threads of every seam showed; and at every step you looked for a catastrophe (*Omoo*, p. 182).

In any case, if Melville has a touch of fun depicting one gay cutting edge aping cultivated designs, his succeeding passages take a progressively solemn view. He comments the difference between "the first national ensemble, which was elegant in the outrageous, humble to everything except the smug, and particularly adjusted to the atmosphere" (*Omoo*, p. 182) and the present outfit, which has turned into a mishmash of generally sewn or push off western pieces of clothing. The local outfit is illegal by law, just like the beautiful pieces of jewellery and festoons of blossoms worn by the ladies. The customary side interests and sports of the network, their athletic challenges and

conventional moves, are seriously prohibited, just like the act of inking and celebrations like the Opio, or collect home of the breadfruit. One can't resist being reminded by Melville's remark about the focal conflict of qualities in Hawthorne's 1837 story "The Maypole of Merrymount."

Melville infers that such strict limitations have had a "lamentable " impact on the locals. On the off chance that one pursues the ramifications of the attire symbolism, obviously the ministers in their misinformed endeavors to change the locals have really twisted them. The ban of time-respected services and beguilement's has brought about drowsiness and guilty pleasure in sensualities "a hundred times more vindictive than every one of the recreations at any point distinguished in the Temple of Tanee" (*Omoo*, p. 183). The strict laws controlling the locals have had the contrary impact from that proposed; venereal illness and indiscriminate obscenity to crude social orders have added to the decimation of the once steady network. Sound agnostic sexiness, which Melville acknowledges as normal and great, has been degraded by unnatural Christian strictures against honest joys and non-utilitarian excellence, for example, laurels and pieces of jewellery of blooms.

All through the book Melville sprinkles genius structure assertions of his confidence in the basic worth of the minister exercises he so forcefully assaults. It is hard to pay attention to these, for their tone is very shallow, while his reactions are clearing and radical in their presentation of the fraud and pretentiousness which underlie Christianization. To answer potential analysis of his reprobation's of the preachers, Melville turns back upon them their own contention. On the off chance that the teachers guarantee to be so fruitful in their endeavors to instruct the locals in obvious religion and ethical quality, for what reason do they go to considerable lengths to isolate the two races? Throughout his contention he uncovers that "human progress" of the island has made regulated isolation. For instance, regardless of the way that the theological school on the island of Imeeo shows close to "the fundamentals of information just might be learned in the local schools," white kids are shown independently from local youngsters, "the avowed reason being, to preserve the young whites from moral contamination (*Omoo*, p.108). White kids are taboo to gain proficiency with any local words, and the greater part of the offspring of the ministers are transported home at an early age to finish their formal instruction. Such a great amount for authority purposeful publicity about the sublime training Christians are giving their local counterparts!" "The two races are kept beyond what many would consider possible from partner on Tahiti, and at the Sandwich Islands the missionaries went so far as to enclose the playground built for white children with a high fence, "the more effectually to exclude the wicked little Hawaiians" (*Omoo*, p. 188). The incongruity of the circumstance with its heartbreaking results does not escape Melville, who takes note of that "strange as it may seem, the depravity among the Polynesians, which renders precautions like these necessary, was in a measure unknown before their intercourse with the whites" (*Omoo*, p. 190).

Clearly, there was a serious response to Melville's assault on the preachers; perusers were scandalized and the general view was communicated by the mainstream press. Just the National Anti-Slavery Standard, checked on by *Omo* on May 27, 1847, seemed to comprehend the more profound ramifications of Melville's analysis and its pertinence to the American contemporary scene. Implicitly, the abolitionist commentator appeared to have made the association that Melville had created in *Typee* among human flesh consumption and prejudice, and he perceived the conspicuous relationship to the copying issue of bondage at home in the talk of isolation in *Omo*.

The pictures appear to be just about an anticipating of the Vivenza sections of *Mardi*. When one recollects the references to bondage and annihilation in *Typee*, woven as they are into discussion on viciousness and human progress which shapes the twist and woof of Melville's social vision, when one adds to this the particular judgment of isolation, one can just reason that Melville was very much aware of the shrewd impacts of racial domination upon the non-western people groups of the world. What ideologues would now allude to as closed-mindedness religious haughtiness, social closed-mindedness, racial bullheadedness, specialized hawkishness is sensationalized and portrayed in its task all through these two early books.

Inside a story loaded with comic scenes and clear portrayals, Melville's not kidding expectation is constantly evident. Precedents could be duplicated, however all point to the equivalent incomprehensible and grievous end: "The Tahitians are less humanized now than once," regardless of whether in religious traditions, sexual conduct, propensities for industry, expressions or physical wellbeing. "Their prospects are miserable" (*Omo*, p. 192). History appears to demonstrate that when human progress and brutality join together, all that is degenerate in either state thrives, "to the avoidance of the excellencies of either state" (*Omo*, p. 192). Thus, "as other savage creatures carried into contact with Europeans," the Tahitians "should here stay stationary until totally wiped out" (*Omo*, p. 192). The dignified savage is neither indestructible nor morally sound. Just savage nature the palm-tree and the coral of the old local song will remain when all hints of humankind have vanished.

Melville's rover, who had been so tired of cruising at the opening of *Typee*, wants to go to ocean indeed, and reflects about "in the end" achieving home. Prophetically he signs on board the whaler Leviathan, yet altogether he shuns submitting himself for her whole voyage. On the off chance that the wanderer has taken in one thing from his stay in the Calabooza Beretanee (and figuratively the island itself is a "Calabooza Beretanee"), it is that he should not unnecessarily tie himself. Accordingly he signs just "for the coming voyage, leaving my consequent developments over the top; for there was no realizing that I probably won't alter my opinion, and incline toward venturing home by short and simple stages" (*Omo*, p. 315). Melville's wanderer, since he had plunged profound, clearly felt that he needed to surface gradually or hazard the twists.

It would surely be a "perplexing destiny" to return home after his encounters in the South Seas. His first look at man-eater humankind in the Marquesas may as a general rule have been seeing a youthful Adam and Eve standing stripped in a forest. How could a man come back to an America enraptured by the Agamic folklore of the "period of positive sentiment" when he saw the white acculturated people groups as the relatives of Cain, desirously twisted after assaulting the heaven they had neglected to make in their very own territories?

Melville's rover found that the crude savages were represented "by an intrinsic guideline of trustworthiness and philanthropy towards one another," while alternately white cultivated man was sharkish and his foundations were a types of sorted out barbarianism. One day he would most likely return home again, yet it could never 'be the equivalent. In the event that he had felt himself peculiarly at home among savages, he would feel himself to be a savage among his kinsmen. Incidentally, Herman Melville in America would dependably be "a man who lived among the barbarians."

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