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American becoming : poetics, space, and race in the travel narratives of Herman Melville and Jack Kerouac

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AMERICAN BECOMING: POETICS, SPACE, AND RACE IN THE TRAVEL NARRATIVES OF HERMAN MELVILLE AND JACK KEROUAC

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AMERICAN BECOMING: POETICS, SPACE, AND RACE IN THE TRAVEL NARRATIVES OF HERMAN MELVILLE AND JACK KEROUAC

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ABSTRACT

American Becoming: Poetics, Space, and Race in the Travel Narratives of Herman Melville and Jack Kerouac

by

SONG Yun

Doctor of Philosophy

This dissertation examines the travel narratives of Herman Melville and Jack Kerouac arguing that these works epitomize a literary "becoming" in American history. Being a crucial component of Gilles Deleuze's positive ontology, this "becoming" mirrors a multiple and constant transformation toward the minor, the marginal, and the non-white and resonates rigorously with the literature of Melville and Kerouac. The representative works by these two canonical American authors, namely, *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846) and *On the Road* (1957), construct aesthetic spaces in which readers are called upon to appreciate the American life of becoming-Pacific and becoming-beat. The geographical and psychological trajectories depicted in both works also allow for an ethical engagement with the Other. Drawing upon anthropology and literary criticism, I further argue that, against the background of imperial expansion and capitalistic production, both Melville and Kerouac's narratives provide cultural insights that gesture toward an Avant-garde and futuristic cosmopolitanism.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

SIGNED

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Date:

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

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This dissertation, unlike the travel narratives it discusses, is not a product of constant and exciting geographical adventures. Due to the still-raging pandemic of Covid-19, I have found myself writing most chapters in a single location—Lingnan, a campus that is, as our vice president Joshua Mok or perhaps the famous E. F. Schumacher would say, small and beautiful. Comparing my circumstances to those of the authors I write about, I realized that mine would have been a lot more difficult had it not been for the generous help from my teachers, friends, and family.

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INTRODUCTION

The Becoming of American Travel Narratives

Several years ago, when going home after work, I met on my way a former English professor of mine who studied British Renaissance. Caring about my recent situation, he inquired in terms of my topic of research. Upon hearing that I was working on travel narratives, the old man frowned and said to me in a gloomy voice "but that's not literature!" Much as wanting to reply and refute, I remained silent knowing that he meant no harm to my pride but a worry over my career. This imposing sentence, however, kept flashing back to me when I began researching for this dissertation. It occurred to me that my old teacher in fact pinpointed the predicament of travel narratives in the past—being digressive and fragmental textual recordings, they seem to lack the movement or poetics which drama, fiction, and poetry are famous for. Holding onto an absolute academic tendency, my bigoted professor failed to realize that to narrate is nevertheless to write, an epistemological activity that links closely to the poetic. As Gilles Deleuze says, "Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come (4-5)." To study literature, therefore, is to seek a plural poetics and to find "realms that are yet to come."

Despite the earlier academic neglect, the scope of travel narratives has been considerably increased since the 1980s. Owing to a critical shift in the academic world, scholars begin to investigate the writteness or the inventiveness in those supposed scientific writings such as works of archeology and ethnography.[1] Works like *The Travels of Marco Polo*, *Heart of Darkness*, and even *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*

[1] Stephen Greenblatt's *Marvelous Possessions* and James Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture*, for instance, are representative works of this kind.

are read now more with a grain of critical salt rather than as authentic accounts of encounters. In addition, also thanks to this shift of attention, the traditional American literary works such as Washington Irving's *The Sketch Book*, James Fenimore Cooper's *Gleanings in Europe*, Herman Melville's South Sea series, Mark Twain's Adventure series, John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley*, and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* are now all under close scrutiny in terms of the truthfulness they represent beneath their ostensible literariness. In this sense, literature can be read as history and vice versa.

For a further complication between literature, travel, and history, I intend to investigate in this dissertation my selected two travel narratives, namely Herman Melville's *Typee* and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, from the perspectives of poetics, space, and race which are my three facets that all point to an ontological becoming proclaimed by Gilles Deleuze. Deleuze's affirmation of the positivity of difference, as Rosi Braidotti rephrases, entails a multiple and constant process of transformation from the Self toward the Other—a becoming that always gesture towards the minor, the weak, and the non-white (111). Employed as my overall angle of critique in this dissertation, this becoming, I argue, is saliently manifested through the three perspectives in the works of Melville and Kerouac.

Let me elaborate more. Regarding the perspective of poetics, I suggest that the two writers, in the burgeoning years of their literary journey, display a Deleuzian orientation in terms of their attempts to write literature through unconventional means. For instance, their poetic rendering of ethnographic and sociological landscapes in the two works blurs the boundary between science and art; their digressive and fragmented narrative style extends the realm of traditional literature and contribute to the poetics of the avant-garde. In this respect, therefore, I find that the two works of literature

perfectly represent a literary becoming throughout the one hundred years from 1850 to 1950 in the American history.

Similarly, the concept of spatial production plays another significant role in my interpretation of Melville and Kerouac's works. For an in-depth explanation, I side myself with the "spatial turn" that took place by way of a theoretical influx represented by works such as *The Production of Space* by Henry Lefebvre and *The Practice of Everyday Life* by Michel de Certeau since the late twentieth century. I want to point out that, keenly aware of the unequal power structure within the social space, my selected writers both implicitly and explicitly construct in their works new social spaces, be they literary, cultural, or ethical. Through these constructed spaces, they help shape the literature and culture of their times and of the future.

Race, a categorization which divides human groups according to physical differences, is my third aspect. To interpret the close encounter between the traveler and his Other, I seek inspiration from the philosophy of ethics of Emmanuel Levinas. In *Totality and Infinity*, the Jewish philosopher prioritizes the infinity of the Other by posing a famous concept—the face, an ethical representation of alterity (197-201). Viewing the racial contact depicted by Melville and Kerouac as a face-to-face encounter with the Other, I contend that the travel narratives of both writers can be read as a fraternal confusion of the racial boundaries between "us" and "them." *Typee* and *On the Road* in this sense, as I will show in chapters that follow, are two outstanding examples of becoming the non-white.

According to these three perspectives, I divide this dissertation into two parts—one for each writer. In the first part on Melville, I start by discussing the sailor writer's notorious penchant to digress. Excavating the anthropological dimension in *Typee*, I argue that Melville, becoming a literary antiquarian in his first book, aims to record

his journey to French Polynesia for the sake of a textual collection. Against the bourgeois mindset that treats men as what they are worth (tools) and not as who they are (men), Melville implicitly reveals his spiritual rebellion through his digressive and "useless" narrative (Chapter 1). Through *Typee*, moreover, he also expands and constructs the social space in a Lefebvrian way. The narrator Tommo's desertion from his ship, his final flight from the Typee valley, and his anti-Calvinistic tendency all contribute to a cultural and ideological expansion of space in the mid-nineteenth century (Chapter 2). Beside the poetic and spatial representations, I further contend that *Typee* should be read as the starting point of Melville's racial empathy which becomes more noticeable in his later works. Through passages pertaining to intercultural transposition, latent fraternity, and a Levinasian egalitarianism, the writer attempts to decolonizes the Polynesian race in his cosmopolitan narrative (Chapter 3).

For the second part, I argue that the structural looseness, the bebop-like syntax, and the final editing perseverance of *On the Road* effectively prove Kerouac's becoming-beat, a truthful attitude toward the life of the subterranean. Eclectically absorbing literary nutrition both from canonic writers and from his beat friends, Kerouac starts to conceive his well-known writing method—Spontaneous Prose—at the time of writing the novel. He is also a keen listener of bebop jazz and poetically adapts the prosody of the popular black music into his syntax. All these textual attempts, I suggest, contribute to Kerouac's line of flight toward the truthful and the beat (Chapter 4). In terms of the spatial production of *On the Road*, I show that Kerouac constructs a new road space through narrating his cross-country road trips, his pursuit of degenerated kicks, and his Buddhist revelations. More importantly, this literary as well as cultural space can also be read as the product of Kerouac's de Certeauean narration of everyday life (Chapter 5). My final chapter argues that

Kerouac is not a racist, as many critics condemn him for, and in fact adopts an idealistic and egalitarian racial perspective in his writing. Being an ethnic of the French-Canadian descent himself, the beat writer is mistaken for being antisemitic mainly because of his distaste for dishonesty and because of his poetic love for truth. Inspired by Oswald Spengler's concept of the fellaheen, Kerouac romantically confesses his envy of the non-white in *On the Road*.

I need to further clarify that, although being separately discussed in different chapters, my three perspectives are in fact deeply intertwined with each other. That is to say, the unconventional literary practice of Melville and Kerouac can be viewed as an extension of poetic space; the racial egalitarianism in the two works also contributes to a production of ethical poetics; the two books' spatial production and racial ethics, in turn, reflect an avant-garde and futuristic cosmopolitanism. To rephrase Fredric Jameson's argument, the poetics in *Typee* and *On the Road* is ethically unconscious, but such unconsciousness is nonetheless ethical.[2] In this sense, I intend the three perspectives to work as a Deleuzian assemblage that connects the dots among literature, culture, and ethics. They are my three interpretive lines of flight, and they show that literature becomes rather than is.

[2] See his *The Political Unconsciousness: Narrative as a Socially symbolic Act*.

PART I

American Literature and Melville's Type-e

Earlier in the 1800s, the British ghost still haunted America. Although politically independent, the young nation was trailing the old empire in many aspects of cultural activities, including literature. British writers generally doubted the level of artistry of their American counterparts. One of the earliest feminists, Harriet Martineau, for instance, though admired America's political freedom, believed that the country had no mind of literature at all. Domestic voices also chimed with foreign criticism. John Pickering, the Harvard alumnus and renowned jurist fretted that, "in this country we can hardly be said to have any authors by profession."[3] However, American readers did not wait long for a rise of their own literature. By the 1850s, a vigorous generation of writers began to emerge against this historical background—Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman, all contributed to what F. O. Matthiessen calls the great "American Renaissance." Now regarded as an American canonical writer, Melville played a significant role in this literary rise. As he states in his manifesto of American literature "Hawthorne and His Mosses," Melville and his fellow American writers aim at escaping the British influence and, more importantly, at leveling or even surpassing the greatness of Shakespeare for a unique literature of their own.[4]

Although obscure for the most part of his life, Melville resurfaced in the 20th century through a critical revival largely owing to his idiosyncratic subject matter and narrative style. Known as "the man who lived among cannibals," he wrote outstanding

[3] See Peter Martin's "Escaping Samuel Johnson" in *Paris Review*, May 30th, 2019.
[4] See *The Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces*, pp.239-54.

nautical literature in terms of the adventurous experiences from his voyages. As I shall demonstrate in this part, Melville, adopting a digressive narrative style and anthropological themes, intends *Typee* as a type-e (a typed recording) for his literary collection of the Polynesian culture. I argue that this literary debut, sharing similarities with his magnum opus *Moby-Dick*, is the germinating seed of the writer's prolific career. More importantly, I further contend that the fledging writer reflects in his novice work a cosmopolitan tendency against the backdrop of a profit-driven and expansionist America in the transpacific.

CHAPTER ONE

Collecting Journeys: Melville's Digression and Literary Anthropology in *Typee*

Herman Melville was a born writer. His first world-famous work *Typee*, with its poetic lines as well as magnificent stories, reaped the eyes of readers right at the start of his writer career. A narrative in terms of an adventurous four months stay on the Marquesan island Nukuheva, the work first secured the praise from family and friends. Thomas Low Nichols, a physician and a friend of the Melville family, convinced of the book's prospective success, suggested the writer's brother Gansevoort to take a copy to England for its publication there. In London, *Typee*'s manuscript received immediate recognition from its British publisher John Murray and the legendary American writer Washington Irving who by that time was taking a sojourn in the city. Irving at once forwarded the book to his American publishers Wiley and Putnam.[5] Within a year, *Typee* met its readers on both sides of the Atlantic. Positive reviews soon followed. Important Publications both from Britain and America like *Athenaeum*, *Spectator*, *Critic*, *Times*, *Mercury*, Argus, *Gazette and Times*, *Tribune*, and *Harbinger* all came up with encouraging comments on Melville's vivacious and pleasant style. Adjectives like "refreshing," "pleasant," "entertaining," "delightful," and "curious" were often chosen to represent *Typee*'s narrative and linguistic charm. Among the waves of reviewers, even Nathaniel Hawthorne and Walt Whitman gave lavish appreciations on Melville's fresh and poetic writing (Higgins and Parker 22, 46). To be more precise, Melville's style in *Typee* was so good that his British publisher John Murray asked him to tone down his stylistic presentation to suit the literacy of a

[5] All these publishing anecdotes could be read in different versions of Melville's biography. See Newton Arvin. *Herman Melville*; Hershel Parker, *Herman Melville: a Biography*; and Charles Roberts Anderson, *Melville in the South Seas*.

contemporary sailor (Howard 279).

Nevertheless, despite its well-recognized stylistic beauty, *Typee* seems to bear a Melvillean problem that features his works throughout the writer's career—constant digressions. Melville's such idiosyncratic penchant often interrupts his flow of narrative and directs the reader into a different topic of narration. And, to reconnect back to his main structure, he has to make many "returns." Many critics took notice of this Melvillean characteristic.[6] If they were relatively placid on Melville's "sailor literacy" in *Typee*, the literati openly attacked his other works like *Mardi*, *Moby-Dick*, and even his long poem *Clarel* in terms of his digression penchant.[7] These attacks were indeed well founded. In Melville's untraditional travel narratives, a reader could be easily vexed by his constant and quite disruptive digressions from the plot.

But we should not conflate the purposefully committed digressions with the writer's inability to stay on his plot. For instance, with *Typee*'s chapter eight, Melville showcases his readers that he can indeed write coherently. But a coherent chapter like this is in fact rare in the book. Early on, one would regularly meet one or two digressions which last several paragraphs in each chapter. To make matters worse, after chapter fourteen in which Toby left the valley Melville organizes his chapters in the fashion of a collage, starting topics entirely at his will. To justify these "otherwise unwarrantable digressions" or perhaps to exempt himself from the reputation of a gibberish narrator, he specifically states the reason in the preface as to relate "great interest in important events" (Melville xiv).[8] He also adds landmark sentences like

[6] For instance, in his *Ten Novels and Their Authors*, Somerset Maugham considers that Melville's digression serves for his hesitation or delay of ending, pp.201.

[7] See Higgins and Parker, *Herman Melville: the Contemporary Reviews*, pp.7, 193, 200, 359, 408, 531, 533. And, according to Leon Howard, chapter 20, 21, and 27 were later added to the manuscript (279).

[8] My choice of *Typee* text is the Northwesten-Newberry edition, not only because it is the edition carefully proofed by Melvillean scholars but also because it is the closest version to Melville's less censored original draft.

"But to return to my narrative" whenever a digression is fully expanded. In addition, the noun-clustered titles of each chapter are probably designed by Melville to help his readers relocate the page when they want to continue from a paused reading. One might ask that, sparing no effort in these troublesome twists and turns, why would Melville be so committed to such a narrative flaw?

A literal reply to this question could be located in *Typee*'s own preface. He writes in the last paragraph:

> There are some things related in the narrative which will be sure to appear strange, or perhaps entirely incomprehensible, to the reader; but they cannot appear more so to him than they did to the author at the time. He has stated such matter just as they occurred, and leaves every one to form his own opinion concerning them; trusting that his anxious desire to speak the unvarnished truth will gain for him the confidence of his readers (xiv).

Here, the intention to tell the "unvarnished truth" seems to justify the ubiquitous and unvarnished digressions throughout the narrative. With the numerous Melvillean turns, he is able to deliver nuanced truths discovered from his living among the "primitive" Typees. However, like what Oscar Wilde would say, the truth is never pure and rarely simple. Despite the contemporary downplays that I have mentioned above, Melville himself later reflects again his digressive "sin" in the beginning of chapter four in *Billy Budd*:

> In this matter of writing, resolve as one may to keep to the main road, some by-paths have an enticement not readily to be withstood. I am going to err into such a by-path. If the reader will keep me company I shall be glad. At the least we can promise ourselves that pleasure which is wickedly said to be in sinning, for a literary sin the divergence will be (13).

Considering the fact that the above paragraph was never published in his lifetime (perhaps its author never expected it to be published), one can reasonably trust Melville's earnestness in this statement. In this passage, rather than regretting his divergences, Melville is obviously defending them with an unswerving conscience. In other words, we could take this explanation as a declaration of perseverance from a writer much ahead of his time.

According to this belated declaration, therefore, I argue another liberal answer to the question: from the start of his career, the writer intentionally designs his work to be "flawed" in this way. As Elizabeth Renker points out, Melville maintains a material relationship with his works in which he often treats words as physical objects without considering their denotations, connotations or even figurations (127). This relationship of materiality facilitates a writer's spontaneity in the scene of writing. And through his spontaneous digressions in *Typee* and his other works, Melville advocates a literary freedom that is needed in his time. Similarly, Yunte Huang contends that the Melvillean digression implies the writer's rebellion against the coercive grand narratives which ground and confine the literary imagination (91). Drawing from the insights of these Melville scholars, I conclude that Melville writes not for the sales of his books, not for his critics, but only for a unique style that contributes to the freedom of literature which is trapped in its contemporary paradigms and taboos. In the chapter "Young America in Literature" in *Pierre*, we find again this Melvillean truth of writing—"I write precisely as I please" (244). One could, therefore, deem the writer's constant digressions not as narrative flaws but as symbols of a Melvillean poetics.

Moreover, by way of such an autonomic act of writing, Melville builds a literary relationship with his Typee journey. As Charles Olson suggests, Melville's South Sea travels mark the writer's epistemological start to which he dates his life, and the Pacific Ocean is a cartographical frontier on which he records his multitudinous adventures (114). In *Typee*, Melville records his life on a remote island. Through this literary recording, he intends to restore that island through a textual duplication of the geographical and cultural characteristics of the Pacific. In other words, through the digressive narrative of his Typee adventure, Melville writes anthropological encounters in the Pacific valley. But, unlike modern anthropologists, as I will show in

my following analyses, Melville did not try to claim his understanding of the Marquesan culture or to secure definite proofs of the Typee "savagery." Instead, he entails in his digressive recording a becoming that emphasizes a futuristic multiplicity, a multiplicity beyond the rules of his contemporary literature (Deleuze 8). In this sense, Melville's digressions in *Typee* are by no means stylistic flaws, quite the contrary, they represent a significant Melvillean device that suits his purpose of a discursive creativity.

Literary Anthropology

Beside *Typee*'s narrative form, its digressive content also invites a closer look, a look that consider literary works as anthropological sketches. As James Clifford proclaims, the focal point of ethnography has shifted from an ideological stasis, which treats anthropological writing as scientific facts, to a more eclectic paradigm that willingly considers literary works as sources of truths (2-3). Similarly, Clifford Geertz contends that cultural forms should be handled as texts, as imaginative works constructed by societal materials, and need to be scientifically interpreted (449). From this perspective, therefore, a digressive narrative with rich cultural manifestations such as *Typee* makes perfectly a work of modern anthropology. There indeed were anthropologists who quoted, indirectly or directly, from Melville's detailed delineations of the Polynesian culture, and *Typee* did function in their eyes as one of the early genuine Marquesan contacts. The famous James Frazer, for instance, quoted from Melville and David Porter's works to support relevant arguments in his ethnographical book *The Belief among the Polynesians* (328–74). Another British anthropologist Robert Wood Williamson also used *Typee* for his South Sea research

(44, 54). Likewise, French scholar Louis Rollin referred to Melville's narratives for his Marquesas ethnography (122, 140, 203). However, although Melville took effort on different occasions to stress *Typee*'s truthfulness, we now know that there is a considerable amount of fictiveness fused into his narrative—he did not keep a journal when he travelled and his writing took place almost three years later after his actual journeys (Howard 278). To use Leslie Fiedler's words, Melville was "blessed with a notable poor memory and a rich imagination" (522). According to Charles Roberts Anderson's *Melville in the South Seas*, despite Melville's own acknowledgment of his references to David Porter and C. S. Stewart's travel journals, there are many other sources that help shape and rebuild the writer's travel narrative (118-20). Thus, to better understand the Melvillean writing in *Typee*, one needs a close scrutiny of Melville's anthropological aspects that are tucked in his digressions.

To be more specific, most of Melville's prolonged digressions are in the chapters after Toby's disappearance. These textual fragments are quite irrelevant in terms of their relationship with the book's main plot, and, spreading on long pages as in chapter twenty-four and twenty-six, they look very similar to the modern ethnographical writings. But, unlike the comprehensive works such as Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Melville only centers his anthropological delineations on five issues: Sexuality, Polyandry, Cannibalism, Tattooing and Religion. Between the lines of his Typee narration, moreover, Melville adopts a highly cynical tone when referring to his fellow white men and the "civilized" West they represent. In order to investigate Melville's balance between truth and literature through his anthropological digressions, therefore, I will examine each of these five issues in the rest of this chapter.

Sexuality

Although there were relevant writings at earlier stages as in the case of Joseph Ingraham and David Porter, *Typee* was without doubt the first widely read book about the Pacific Marquesan sexuality[9]. Much as Melville might have wanted to tell the exact Marquesan sex activities which he had witnessed on Nukuheva island, he worries that his fellow Westerners would be shellshocked if they read a complete story from his book. He told his friend later in 1846 that he "finds it very hard to believe in the existence of a region…where the inhabitants sleep sixteen hours…and feast and make love the other eight (46)." But, despite a certain extent of conservatism, he nevertheless puts forward erotic delineations of the Typee sexuality in his narrative and places them in salient chapters.[10] Based on Melville's telling, one could well draw a complete anthropological blueprint of this social aspect.

Early at the end of chapter two in the English edition, the narrator Tommo features the salacious scene when local Marquesan girls swim aboard the *Dolly* and tempt those bachelor sailors.[11]

> …All of them at length succeeded in getting up the ship's side, where they clung dripping with the brine and glowing from the bath, their jet-black tresses streaming over their shoulders, and half enveloping their otherwise naked form…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? (15)

These explicit indications in terms of a disturbing sexual openness are taken out from *Typee*'s American revised edition probably due to the publisher's censorship suggestions.[12] As the narrative unfolds, this fresh sense of sexuality reemerges in

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[9] See Joseph Ingraham, *Voyage to the Northwest Coast of North America*. And, Captain David Porter, *Journal of a Cruise made to the Pacific Ocean*.

[10] For related research, please see William Heath, "Melville and Marquesan Eroticism."

[11] I refer to Melville's narrator as Tommo due to the reason that there are imaginative parts in the narrative. However, for most occasions, the two names are interchangeable.

[12] See also the Harper & Brothers version, pp.13.

chapter eleven in Tommo's introduction of his first day aboding in Marheyo's house. Like an emperor serviced by his numerous concubines in *The Travels of Marco Polo*, he and Toby are surrounded and attended by young Typee girls with extreme tenderness:

> These lively young ladies were at the same time wonderfully polite and humane; fanning aside the insects that occasionally lighted on our brows; presenting us with food; and compassionately regarding me in the midst of my afflictions. But in spite of all their blandishments, my feelings of propriety were exceedingly shocked, for I could but consider them as having overstepped the due limits of female decorum (77).

The limit of "female decorum" is a line that Melville tiptoes upon as he produces the imaginatively alluring text for his textual collection of sexuality. Any modern fan of Melville could easily tell the restraint which the writer tries to hold while keeping sexual descriptions as less intrusive to his Presbyterian readers as possible. But still, with these descriptions, he presents his readers a textual scene in which one witnesses the lightness of sex of the Polynesian girls.

Greg Dening, in his ethnographical work *Islands and Beaches*, points out that the indigenous females did not approach the ships during the initial European-Marquesan encounters, and the girls' ship-boarding was later developed into a trade of "sex for supplies" between the islanders and the sailors (95-7). He also emphasizes that the girls who boarded the ships are possibly from either *ka'ioi* or *kikino* group among the Marquesan female population. The latter group, which focuses on the training of sexual play and display to celebrate the arts and etiquettes of the island, consists mainly of young boys and girls in their puberty years (127). And according to Robert Suggs, the *kikino* girls are trained to master sexual skills at such stage and will be positioned on their social ladder due to sexual performances and even to the number of men they have had intercourse with (66-96). It is very likely that these girls attended Tommo and it was them who swam toward and boarded the *Dolly* gracefully to tempt

the sex-starved sailors. But Melville also sees that such sexual openness from the *kikino* girls will cause the spread of venereal diseases among the Marquesans. He writes:

> 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 been brought into contaminating contact with the white man (15).

Although the debauchery and contamination could refer to a more general capitalistic material-monomania which will be discussed in the next chapter, what Melville hints here is of course the sex diseases that the sailors carry with them. Hershel Parker finds out that at least one and probably three sailors on board the ship *Acushnet* died because of venereal disease (Volume II 150-1). Dening presents a datum that close to one thirds of the contemporary sailors in the American Navy was treated for syphilis and similar infections but not cured (126). Together with other sickness such as tuberculosis, influenza, and different kinds of fevers, venereal disease resulted a heavy injury for the Marquesans. One could argue that, in their amiable hospitality of receiving the white men's ships, those lovely girls of the Marquesas paid too high a price that would take them decades to realize.

Beside the scandalous activity Tommo sees, another aspect of the Marquesan sexuality is documented through Melville's highly probable lived experience—the "beauteous nymph" Fayaway. It is from the vivacious portrait of this girl that an in-depth peep into the Typee life is secured. Fearing his readers' potential doubt over the truthfulness of this personage, Melville reaffirms early on that the image of this particular Marquesan girl is "no fancy sketch; it is drawn from the most vivid person delineated" (86). But some of his critics seem to take little notice of this significant

emphasis. When introducing Melville's South Sea travels, Gavan Daws calls the significant character merely "a South Sea dream" (84). And a well-received biography writer, Newton Arvin, considers the exquisite Fayaway is simply vaguely drawn and dreamily evoked (86). Even Hershel Parker only mentions the nymph in passing in his discussion of Richard Tobias Greene's later correspondence to Melville in 1846 (217). I argue that Melville's vivid featuring of Fayaway plays a key function for his textual collection of Typee sexuality and this portrait genuinely reflects his life experience on Nukuheva island.

The amiable wordless girl is first introduced in chapter eleven with an evident effort of anthropological collecting. From Fayaway's body figure, complexion, facial form, lips, teeth, hair, bosom, eyes, hands, feet, to her skin, the narrator's focal point goes as comprehensively as possible in the fashion of modern-day portrait photography (85). Moreover, Tommo further emphasizes that she, like other maidens of the valley, is not severely tattooed as their male counterparts, and that she dresses herself attractively and appropriately in accordance with different occasions (86). This detailed description is unparalleled throughout *Typee*. Materially speaking, this descriptive documentation enables Melville to remember or even to possess his favorite Marquesan girl in text. But I further contend that, this possessive textuality undoubtedly gestures toward Melville's personal sexuality.

In chapter eighteen, one will find another apparently erotic passage starring the beauteous nymph which solidly confirms the existence of such a girl and her sexual relation with the writer. First, he draws a comparison between a smoking Peruvian girl and Fayaway:

> …Fayaway and I reclined in the stern of the canoe, on the very best terms possible with one another; the gentle nymph occasionally placing her pipe to her lip, and exhaling the mild fumes of the tobacco, to which her rosy breath added a fresh perfume. Strange as it may seem, there is nothing in which a young and beautiful female appears to more advantage than in the act of

> smoking. How captivating is a Peruvian lady, swinging in her gaily-woven hammock of grass, extended between two orange trees, and inhaling the fragrance of a choice cigarro (sic)! But Fayaway, holding in her delicately formed olive hand the long yellow reed of her pipe, with its quaintly carved bowl, and every few moments languishingly forth light wreaths of vapor from her mouth and nostrils, looked still more engaging (133).

Suggesting the sexual agency possessed by the Typee girl, the expressions such as "to more advantage" and "more engaging" adds to the erotic effect in a tropic mise-en-scene of canoe and cigarro. Tommo's reclining with his girlfriend in a perfectly romantic scenery hints to an extent that he goes beyond mere observation in his relationship with the Marquesan girl. The narrative becomes even more straight forward on the next page:

> One day, after we had been paddling about for some time, I disembarked Kory-Kory, and paddled the canoe to the windward side of the lake. As I turned the canoe, Fayaway, who was with me, seemed all at once to be struck with some happy idea. With a wild exclamation of delight, she disengaged from her person the ample robe of tappa which was knotted over her shoulder (for the purpose of shielding her from the sun), and spreading it out like a sail, stood erect with upraised arms in the head of the canoe. We American sailors pride ourselves upon our straight clean spars, but a prettier little mast than Fayaway made was never shipped a-board of any craft (134).

Precisely, it is this remarkable paragraph that establishes *Typee*'s name of a Succès de scandale: being alone with Fayaway, Tommo secures a perfect moment in his relationship with his naked girlfriend. From these lines, one reads the goddess-like image of Fayaway as vividly as a Hormone-driven painter would strike on the canvas with his brush. Projecting a permanent reminiscence, these lines Melvillean prose echoes a Shakespearean verse—"So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, So long lives this and this gives life to thee." And, actually, a famous painter, John La Farge, followed Melville's pen and portrayed a picture according to the writer's delineation of the romantic scene. I argue that, with these strokes of artistic textual representations, Fayaway's relationship with Tommo (and for that matter, Melville) invokes a far more engaging and egalitarian imagination of exotic love, if compared to its literary successors, such as Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* and its various adaptations. Although critics tend to interpret this canoe episode differently, the focus of their arguments falls

universally on the question of Melville's personal sexuality behind his Fayaway narrative. Disagreeing with William Heath and Samuel Otter, who both regard Melville does not lose morality in Typee, I share John Bryant's opinion and consider that, if Tommo was afraid of the venereal disease that the girls who boarded the *Dolly* might have carried, a deeper inland tribe like Typee is safer for a practice of lovemaking.[13] Still, as will be discussed in the next chapter, Melville's rebellious religious stance against the American Presbyterian tradition would even ignite him into an experiment of sexual intercourse. In this regard, *Typee* not only serves as Melville's Marquesan recording and collection from an anthropological perspective, but more importantly, from a personal perspective to tell the story of his liberal sexuality.[14]

Polyandry

Close to sexuality yet more connected to demography, polygamy is also anthropologically collected in *Typee* and deserves a separate discussion. Melville sets his documentation of the anti-Western Marquesan polyandry, which he calls the "peculiar system of marriage," in chapter twenty-six, a typical chapter that diverges from the adventurous plot of the book. It is presented through cases of two characters—Kory-Kory's mother Tinor and King Mehevi. The first recording is centered on the middle-aged woman Tinor:

> Previously to seeing the Dancing Widows I had little idea that there were any matrimonial relations subsisting in Typee, and I should as soon have thought of a Platonic affection being cultivated between the sexes, as of the solemn connexion (sic) of man and wife. To be sure, there were old Marheyo and Tinor, who seemed to have a sort of nuptial

[13] See William Heath, pp.58; Samuel Otter, *Melville's Anatomies*, pp.9-20; John Bryant, *Melville and Repose: the Rhetoric of Humor in the American Renaissance*, pp.181.

[14] I do not touch on the issue of homosexuality in this part because most homosexual references in *Typee* are allegorical instead of textual.

> understanding with one another; but for all that, I had sometimes observed a comical-looking old gentleman dressed in a suit of shabby tattooing, who had the audacity to take various liberties with the lady, and that too in the very presence of the old warrior her husband, who looked on, as good-naturedly as if nothing was happening. This behavior, until subsequent discoveries enlightened me, puzzled me more than anything else I witnessed in Typee (189).

Melville's use of the term "a Platonic affection" implies a sympathetic mindset in his interpretation on the liberal Marquesan sexuality which I have discussed above. His recording of polyandry in the household of Marheyo and Tinor further supports his such attitude. In this paragraph, the linguistic choices such as "good-naturedly" and "puzzled" generate a Melvillean stylistic humor which seeks a reciprocal affect, both emotionally and moodily, from the readers' end. In the disguise of an innocent and puzzled traveler who hardly has the agency to dispute a different marital mode, Melville buries his sympathetic admiration of the Marquesan culture in his word choices and in his ethnographical collecting.

Following the above reference, Melville reveals his "subsequent discoveries" of the marital status of the Typee king Mehevi:

> As for Mehevi, I had supposed him a confirmed bachelor, as well as most of the principal chiefs. At any rate, if they had wives and families, they ought to have been ashamed of themselves; for sure I am, they never troubled themselves about any domestic affairs. In truth, Mehevi seemed to be the president of a club of hearty fellows, who kept "Bachelor's Hall" in fine style at the Ti. I had no doubt but that they regarded children as odious incumbrances; and their ideas of domestic felicity were sufficiently shown in the fact, that they allowed no meddlesome housekeepers to turn topsy-turvy those snug little arrangements they had made in their comfortable dwelling. I strongly suspected, however, that some of these jolly bachelors were carrying on love intrigues with the maidens of the tribe; although they did not appear publicly to acknowledge them. I happened to pop upon Mehevi three or four times when he was romping—in a most undignified manner for a warrior king—with one of the prettiest little witches in the valley. She lived with an old woman and a young man, in a house near Marheyo's; and although in appearance a mere child herself, had a noble boy about a year old, who bore a marvellous (sic) resemblance to Mehevi, whom I should certainly have believed to have been the father, were it not that the little fellow had no triangle on his face—but on second thoughts, tattooing is not hereditary. Mehevi, however, was not the only person upon whom the damsel Moonoony smiled—the young fellow of fifteen, who permanently resided in the house with her, was decidedly in her good graces. I sometimes beheld both him and the chief making love at the same time. Is it possible, thought I, that the valiant warrior can consent to give up a corner in the thing he loves? This too was a mystery which, with others of the same kind, was afterwards satisfactorily explained (189-90).

In contrast to his blame of the Hawaii King Kamehameha early in the same chapter, Melville hides two topics in his praise for Mehevi, which should be brought to light

from these reportative lines: one, the antinomian element in the etiquette of the Ti monks and officials; two, the egalitarian and the feministic effect of the Marquesan polyandry. In terms of the first topic, according to Tommo's assertion, Mehevi's secret love life appears not as disgraceful and, conversely, reflects an antinomian etiquette that liberates secular desires. Unlike the tone with which John Winthrop condemns Ann Hutchinson in his journals, Melville validates the king's break of monkish protocol as merely a disappointment to the bachelors (197-333). Regarding the second topic, I argue that the above passage mirrors a latent matriarchy as well as an egalitarian social hierarchy in the Polynesian culture. According to Dening's research on marital structure among the Marquesan people, in spite of his prominent political status, Mehevi merely lives in his valley as another man's *pekio*, meaning a secondary mate (80-2). This marital structure enables those sociable and sexy women to keep at the same time as many legitimized lovers as possible while still living in her husband's house. The Marquesan women, therefore, enjoys a Western patriarchal status in the Typee valley in Melville's eyes. This is perhaps why he writes with admiration in terms of the generosity of Mehevi as a man who can "consent to give up a corner" in the woman he loves.

Further on, Melville even hints that a visitor does not suffer any local taboo if he flirts with a married Marquesan woman due to the extraordinary polygamy:

> …A regular system of polygamy exists among the islanders; but of a most extraordinary nature,—a plurality of husbands, instead of wives; and this solitary fact speaks volumes for the gentle disposition of the male population. Where else, indeed, could such a practice exist, even for a single day?—Imagine a revolution brought about in a Turkish seraglio, and the harem rendered the abode of bearded men; or conceive some beautiful woman in our own country running distracted at the sight of her numerous lovers murdering one another before her eyes, out of jealousy for the unequal distribution of her favors!—Heaven defend us from such a state of things!—We are scarcely amiable and forbearing enough to submit to it (191).

On the one hand, regarding the casualness of flirtation on Marquesas islands, Melville's hidden sexuality is further verified; on the other, with an introduction of

polyandry or, perhaps more precisely, female sexual freedom, he intends to reflect on the male domination in the West, a problem that is to be criticized a hundred years later by American writers such as Toni Morrison and Sylvia Plath.[15] Moreover, the naïve jealousy on the part of men invites more critical attention. Melville's travesty of the internecine feud that drives men "murdering one another" is later reflected in his rendering of the monomania of Ahab and the tragedy of the *Pequod*. From a critical perspective, here in *Typee*, the prophetic writer probes a modern and cosmopolitan benevolence in contrast to the Western aggression and vengeance and, at the same time, reveals a geo-political displacement toward an amiable Marquesan depravity.

Also in these paragraphs, Melville makes his reference to the wedlock of Typees—although the local indigenous are in support of the system of *pekio*, they have a stable and flexible mechanism of marriage. Unlike the Western marriage bond, it is a commonly practiced marital pattern that a girl would be wooed and won by a boy of a similar age, and she will be married to a more mature *pekio* who agrees to house both the girl and her young lover. Unlike the jealous competition which commonly takes place in a Western culture, the structure of a love triangle in Typee remains popular and secure (191). In addition, Typees have a fluid attitude toward marriage bond. They do not regard divorce as a socially forbidden law, and, therefore, treat a marital separation as peacefully and pleasant as unimaginable to Westerners (192). Based on these depictions, unlike other Pacific islands which are badly corrupted by Western sailors, Melville depicts the Marquesan polyandry as the contrary to a voluptuous chaos which a Westerner would naively imagine.

[15] One could see various feministic readings on Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Sylvia Plath's "Mushrooms" and "Lady Lazarus," such as Wendy Martin and Sharone Williams' *The Routledge Introduction to American Women Writers*.

Cannibalism

Since Montaigne's "Of Cannibals," the idea of anthropophagy often found its presence in Western literature like Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, but, in Melville's time, it is the genre of travel writing in which the topic mainly circulates and conceptualizes. In his journals, the imperialistic Captain Cook interprets cannibalism as an act generated from an atrocious and gluttonous taste.[16] Quite ironically, after he was killed in Hawaii in an outburst of violence, a means the arrogant British admiral frequently resorted to in his Pacific indigenous encounters, Cook was not devoured by the natives due to the reason he penned in his journal.[17] Similarly, a contemporary writer of Melville, Josiah Priest, shares Cook's analysis of anthropophagic motives, and affectedly describes the ways in which black indigenous people in Egypt and Sumatra eat the flesh off the human beings they catch for food.[18] Beside this interpretation in terms of abnormal taste, there are other contemporary attributions such as to hunger, vengeance, and sorcery.[19] These attributions help shape the discursive context of cannibalism in *Typee*. Through his narration of the Marquesans, Melville gains his lifelong appellation as "the man who lived among cannibals." Whatever emotion the writer himself might hold toward the moniker, he does earn it fare and square with his documentation of the Typee cannibalism. These following moments should be pointed out.

One, the song "The King of the Cannibal Islands" that appears in chapter one

[16] See James Cook, [Journal of Captain Cook's Second Voyage of Exploration, 1772-1775], entry on September 14th and November 22nd, 1772.
[17] See Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific*.
[18] See Josiah Priest, *Slavery, as it relates to the Negro, or African Race*, pp.199.
[19] For a detailed research of Cannibalism in Melville's time, see Geoffrey Sanborn, *The Sign of the Cannibal: Melville and the Making of a Postcolonial Reader*.

is Tommo's first mentioning of the concept in *Typee* (7). According to Geoffrey Sanborn, this contemporarily popular song was written around 1830 with comical lyrics which tell how the king eats his one hundred wives at his own banquets (318-9). Considering the humorous context of the visit of the king and the queen of Nukuheva in the same chapter, Melville's intention of mentioning the song in this scene is primarily entertaining.

Two, in chapter four, Tommo suggests that the word "Typee" signifies a lover of human flesh in the Marquesan dialect and explains that due to the "peculiar ferocity" of Typee clan that this name has been given to them, even though other Marquesan groups commit the same "crime" (24-5). But, according to Charles Anderson, while this unfriendly reputation for the tribe is likely true, Melville perhaps mistakes the Typee expression "kaikais" for cannibals instead of its actual meaning "troublesome fellows." He further argues that the Typee clan's bad reputation is possibly derived from the jealousy and enmity of the neighboring tribes—the Happars and Nukuhevas (Taiohaes) (Anderson 102-3). The reason of Melville's handling of Typees' cannibal reputation in the early chapters could be twofold. One, Tommo's accepting the risk of a cannibalistic death to an extent justifies his later desertion from the *Dolly* (This is supported by *Dolly*'s captain's strategic warning in chapter six [34]. The captain, fearing that desertion might take place after he gives permission for his crew to land, tries to guarantee their return with a bravado of cannibalistic destiny); two, the looming of a cannibalistic encounter carries a structural function and establishes the suspense which turns out to be a safe stay.

Three, the dialogue between Tommo and Toby in chapter twelve echoes many *Typee*'s contemporary travelers' mistake in terms of overreacting to the natives' consumption of meat as cannibalism. Being trapped in the valley, Toby worries that

Tommo and himself would be devoured in a bonfire feast—"Depend upon it, we will be eaten this blessed night, and there is the fire we shall be roasted by," and frets that what Tommo eats is not veal but human flesh—"A baked baby, by the soul of Captain Cook! Veal? Why there never was a calf on the island till you landed" (93-4). But it turns out to be pork or "Puarkee" that was roasted for the feast. Melville's use of this fear serves well for building the cannibalistic suspension in the early part of the narrative. Moreover, a similar pork feast reappears in chapter twenty-two in which Tommo details the process from catching to cooking hogs for the "Feast of Calabashes" (158-160). According to Dening, just as Tommo points out, pigs are rare food materials and are only saved and prepared for important feasts in Marquesan culture (many Marquesan tribes' pig population plummeted due to the unfair trade with Western ships which supports Melville's criticism of the westward expansion in the South Seas in *Typee*.) (236). Without an equilibrated pig population, the Polynesians could not properly perform some of their ceremonial activities and, in turn, gradually lost their relevant cultural traditions. In this sense, Melville's reference to cannibalism in these two places serves further for his purpose of anthropological preservation.

The most salient moment in which Melville describes of cannibalism throughout the whole narrative comes in chapter thirty-two, a chapter solely designed for the topic. Being close to the end of the book, it also signifies the completion of Melville's anthropological documentation of his Polynesian valley. The lurking suspicion of cannibalism is portrayed through two incidents. One concerns the three tappa-enveloped packages hanging in Tommo's residence. He manages to catch a glimpse of their contents:

> Two of the three were heads of the islanders; but the third, to my horror, was that of a white man. Although it had been quickly removed from my sight, still the glimpse I had of it was enough to convince me that I could not be mistaken (232).

However, even if this paragraph is true, the act of preserving the heads of the dead could not be convicted as solid proof of anthropophagy. Tommo needs more concrete evidence to end the suspense of Typee cannibalism. After a typical Melvillean digression which tells Captain Cook's ironical death, the other more persuasive incident depicts a Typee feast at the Ti after their musket fight with the Happars. At first, Tommo saw "three long narrow bundles" with stains of blood being carried to the Ti, but his tracing to the place was stopped by king Mehevi in a fierce and firm denial. And he could not witness the feast with his own eyes. On the third day at noon, Tommo was permitted to visit the Ti. He somehow managed to take advantage of the visit to locate proof for Typee cannibalism. The highlights of Tommo's findings are as follows:

> These four individuals, having been the most active in the late encounter, claimed the honor of bearing the bodies of their slain enemies to the Ti. Such was the conclusion I drew from my own observations, and, as far as I could understand, from the explanation which Kory-Kory gave me (Typee 235).
>
> …As I passed through the noisy throng, which by this time completely environed the Ti, I looked with fearful curiosity at the three packages, which now were deposited upon the ground; but although I had no doubt as to their contents, still their thick coverings prevented my actually detecting the form of a human body (236).
>
> …After staying a short time I took my leave. In passing along the piazza, previously to descending from the pi-pi, I observed a curiously carved vessel of wood, of considerable size, with a cover placed over it, of the same material, and which resembled in shape a small canoe. It was surrounded by a low railing of bamboos, the top of which was scarcely a foot from the ground. As the vessel had been placed in its present position since my last visit, I at once concluded that it must have some connection with the recent festival; and, prompted by a curiosity I could not repress, in passing it I raised one end of the cover; at the same moment the chiefs, perceiving my design, loudly ejaculated, "Taboo! taboo!" But the slight glimpse sufficed; my eyes fell upon the disordered members of a human skeleton, the bones still fresh with moisture, and with particles of flesh clinging to them here and there (236)!

Reading Tommo's horror, we are urged to believe that from the remains of the meal one could conjecture that Typees must have relished upon human flesh in the feast forbidden to the narrator. But the problem remains:

> Kory-Kory, who had been a little in advance of me, attracted by the exclamations of the chiefs, turned round in time to witness the expression of horror on my countenance. He now hurried toward me, pointing at the same time to the canoe, and exclaiming rapidly, "Puarkee! puarkee!" (Pig, pig). I pretended to yield to the deception, and repeated the words after him several times, as though acquiescing in what he said. The other savages, either deceived by my conduct or unwilling to manifest their displeasure at what could not now be remedied, took no further notice of the occurrence, and I immediately left the Ti (236).

Here, with Kory-Kory's denial, Tommo is not capable of revealing the certainty of cannibalism which could affirm the savagery of Typees. Nevertheless, one should also admit that, throughout the whole narrative, Melville never nails concrete evidence to prove that Typees indeed eat humans. But, with a whole chapter thirty-two dedicated to the topic, we can be certain that the writer has a strong suspicion of the practice of cannibalism in his valley.

Despite these four moments, Melville's personal take on the Polynesian cannibalism might be seen in chapter twenty-seven. He writes at the chapter's end:

> The reader will ere long have reason to suspect that the Typees are not free from the guilt of cannibalism; and he will then, perhaps, charge me with admiring a people against whom so odious a crime is chargeable. But this only enormity in their character is not half so horrible as it is usually described. According to the popular fictions, the crews of vessels, shipwrecked on some barbarous coast, are eaten alive like so many dainty joints by the uncivil inhabitants; and unfortunate voyagers are lured into smiling and treacherous bays; knocked in the head with outlandish warclubs; and served up without any preliminary dressing. In truth, so horrific and improbable are these accounts, that many sensible and well-informed people will not believe that any cannibals exist; and place every book of voyages which purports to give any account of them, on the same shelf with Blue Beard and Jack the Giant-Killer; while others, implicitly crediting the most extravagant fictions, firmly believe that there are people in the world with tastes so depraved that they would infinitely prefer a single mouthful of material humanity to a good dinner of roast beef and plum pudding. But here, Truth, who loves to be centrally located, is again found between the two extremes; for cannibalism to a certain moderate extent is practised (sic) among several of the primitive tribes in the Pacific, but it is upon the bodies of slain enemies alone; and horrible and fearful as the custom is, immeasurably as it is to be abhorred and condemned, still I assert that those who indulge in it are in other respects humane and virtuous (205).

In this summary, Tommo calls his readers to note the fictiveness in the attribution of cannibalism to a depraved and glutenous appetite among the South Sea islanders. He even parallels such linkage with the folk tale of Bluebeard and Jack the Giant Killer. What he comes to accept in terms of the true reason of human consumption in the Typee valley is that these natives only feast on the bodies of their killed enemies. According to Dening, Melville, unlike his beachcombing predecessors William Crook and Edward Robarts, never witnessed anthropophagy with his own eyes. He also suggests that Melville's attribution is partial—*heana*, or human flesh, could be selected from various professions among the Polynesians for different rituals, and that,

when violent deaths take place, anthropophagy, like other social activity, has its functions in the creation of order, status, and identity on these islands (247-9). Like his wife Elizabeth Melville says in her correction to an article by Mari Ferris: "Mr. Melville would not have been willing to call his old Typee Entertainers 'man-devouring,' as he has stated that whatever might have been his suspicion, he never had evidence that it was the custom of the tribe (Leyda 137)." Considering the above moments vis-à-vis Melville's documentation of cannibalism in *Typee*, it is proper to conclude that the canonical writer never lay his eyes on such activity in his sojourn in Typee and this cannibalism chapter also functions structurally as his excuse to depart from the "savages." But, as I will show in the next chapter, Melville's partially imaginative and partially anthropological collection of this brutal cultural phenomenon plays a significant role in escaping his puritanic home culture and becoming a free man of the Pacific.[20]

Tattooing

Tattooing makes a significant element of the whole Polynesian culture. According to anthropologist Alfred Gell, the tattooing institutions, tattooed individuals, and the interaction generated by such practice help establish a unique system of identity and hierarchy—a Pacific way of thinking. Rarely found in Western societies, this complicated social semiotics is universally found on various populated islands. Gell believes that, although not identical on all islands, tattoos for the Polynesians stand for a complicated nexus between existence and reproduction, both culturally and

[20] For a relevant discussion on Melville's *Moby-Dick*, see Huang, pp.87-97.

physically speaking. He further concludes that there are as many as nine basic functions of tattooing, such as protection, individuation, sexual excitability, registration, and self-destruction (8-27). [21] Moreover, compared to other Pacific archipelagoes, the Marquesas islands had the most elaborate and institutionalized tattooing, which the natives call *pahu tiki*, meaning wrapped in images (189-217). And, so far as the Marquesan islands are concerned, Melville's *Typee* can readily be recognized as the first American literary documentation of such mysterious phenomenon. Throughout the book, many of Tommo's description of Typees' skin-inking are decent in terms of their veracity, whereas Melville does cook some parts of his writing up with a little fancy.

Targeting the delineation of tattooing, scholars have engaged in polarized discussions. For instance, Jeffery Santa Ana thinks that *Typee*'s manifestation of Melville's white American selfhood should not be ignored, and that, in the backdrop of the nineteenth century America, Tommo's fear of being tattooed on the face represents his rigid concern of his own racial purity (80-123). John Evelev, on the other hand, sees the Melvillean narrative as a critique of the American marketplace writing, in which he considers Tommo's rejection to being tattooed a denial to contemporary literary profession (19-45). Reflecting on these studies, I argue that, in his literary debut, unaffected yet by his late nonchalance to the literati circle, Melville tells his Typee travels with a strong degree of confinement, not intending to anger his contemporary readers and critics with too rigorous a satire. However, having an innate liberal and rebellious imagination, he wishes not to compromise his aim to tell an unvarnished truth of his journey. Thus, Melville's documentation of the Typee

[21] For an introduction of the Polynesian tattooing practice, see Alfred Gell's *Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia*.

tattooing needs to be understood, I assume, as a compositional negotiation between the contending politics of the Pacific and America, "primitive" and "civilized," and, most importantly, writer and readers. Such a documentation, therefore, deserves a closer look.

Typee's first mentioning of tattooing is situated at the end of chapter one when Melville's narrator recalls the Nukuheva queen displaying her inked genitals to a crowd of sailors onboard an American man-of-war. Hershel Parker pinpoints this "catastrophic" moment to be on the seventh of October 1843 when the US frigate *United States* was shortly touching Nukuheva (274-5). Melville's intention with this reference can be construed as twofold. One, the queen's gesture of "bending forward, turning sharply round, and throwing up the skirts of her mantle" might seem obscene in the eyes of the so-called civilized Westerners, but certainly not catastrophic as far as the Marquesan tattooing tradition is concerned (8). According to the narrator's description:

> …She singled out from their number an old salt, whose bare arms and feet, and exposed breast were covered with as many inscriptions in India ink as the lid of an Egyptian sarcophagus. Notwithstanding all the sly hints and remonstrances of the French officers, she immediately approached the man, and pulling further open the bosom of his duck frock, and rolling up the leg of his wide trowsers (sic), she gazed with admiration at the bright blue and vermilion pricking, thus disclosed to view. She hung over the fellow, caressing him, and expressing. her delight in a variety of wild exclamations and gestures (8).

Here, the queen spotted this sailor tattooed with Indian patterns and instantly began her diplomatic interaction as the Marquesan formular of communication requires. For a return display, the queen revealed her own proud tattoos for either a reciprocal exhibition or social status claim or perhaps both (Thomas 58). As Alfred Gell observes, genitalia and lower limbs of Marquesan women are usually immensely tattooed, and the different tattooed hieroglyphs mirror corresponding social significations (163). As the narrator does not portray the schemata of the queen's tattoos, it would be difficult to restore the anecdotal scene as catastrophic or phenomenal, but we present-day

readers would readily laugh with Melville and attribute the Frenchmen's retreat to the retardation of anthropological knowledge. The author's other intention, moreover, is that the early reference to tattooing (also see the meeting between the French admiral and the king of Tior at the end of chapter four) indicates the importance and complexity of this activity in the Marquesan culture, especially when it comes to Melville's character portrait, and therefore, it serves a purpose to prepare the readers for more pertinent delineation in the book's subsequent chapters.

Following this part, permeated among the intervening chapters of Melville's documentation of Typee life, the description of the tattooing of Mehevi, Kory-Kory, Fayaway, the old priests at the Ti, and Marnoo makes up a detailed feature of *Typee*'s main native characters. Among the male characters in question, Mehevi and Kory-Kory's tattoos best represent the Marquesan male body hieroglyphics:

> But that which was most remarkable in the appearance of the splendid islander was the elaborated tattooing displayed on every noble limb. All imaginable lines and curves and figures were delineated over his whole body, and in their grotesque variety and infinite profusion I could only compare them to the crowded groupings of quaint patterns we someti1nes see in costly pieces of lacework. The most simple and remarkable of all these ornaments was that which decorated the countenance of the chief. Two broad stripes of tattooing, diverging from the centre of his shaven crown, obliquely crossed both eyes-staining the lids-to a little below either ear, where they united with another stripe which swept in a straight line along the lips and formed the base of the triangle. 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 (78).
>
> …
>
> Kory-Kory, with a view of improving the handiwork of nature, and perhaps prompted by a desire to add to the engaging expression of his countenance, had seen fit to embellish his face with three broad longitudinal stripes of tattooing, which, like those country roads that go straight forward in defiance of all obstacles, crossed his nasal organ, descended into the hollow of his eyes, and even skirted the borders of his mouth. Each completely spanned his physiognomy; one extending in a line with his eyes, another crossing the face in the vicinity of the nose, and the third sweeping along his lips from ear to ear. His countenance thus triply hooped, as it were, with tattooing, always reminded me of those unhappy wretches whom I have sometimes observed gazing out sentimentally from behind the grated bars of a prison window; whilst the entire body of my savage valet, covered all over with representations of birds and fishes, and a variety of most unaccountable-looking creatures, suggested to me the idea of a pictorial museum of natural history, or an illustrated copy of 'Goldsmith's Animated Nature (83).'

According to Karl von den Steinen, Melville's depictions of both characters' facial strips are quite accurate, sufficiently defining the Marquesan word *pahu tiki* or

"wrapped in images" (128-50).[22] Reading closely the above-mentioned depictions, what appears problematic is that Melville is well aware of the social rank differentiation generated by the tattoos, yet he chooses not to put heavy emphasis on rank issue, and, instead, gives stress on the similarity of tattoos to Oliver Goldsmith's natural history. I see this textual move as a moderate maneuver in terms of withholding his apprehension of a Polynesian culture shock. Not being capable to comprehend the Marquesan skin-inking, he decides to only transcribe the visual memories into a typing of words for an ethnographical collection. By doing so, he probably changes the contemporary spelling of the valley "Taipi" into his rendering of such word "Typee" on purpose—a typed work (type-e) about the Taipi people.

On the other hand, Charles Robert Anderson notices that the introduction of Fayaway's hieroglyphics is not consistent with the description of the queen's tattoos in chapter one. He believes that Melville deviated further from his source travel books and made expurgations and expansions to suit his romantic touch in the narrative (150-1). However, verifying the female tattooing illustrations in Karl von den Steinen and W. C. Handy's works, it is hard to conveniently dismiss Melville's documentation as false. First, according to Tommo's description, Fayaway is a young girl from a commoner's family. The following are Tommo's description of the tattoos on Fayaway's and, later in chapter twenty-six, on matron Typee women:

> The females are very little embellished in this way, and Fayaway, with all the other young girls of her age, were even less so than those of their sex more advanced in years. The reason of this peculiarity will be alluded to hereafter. All the tattooing that the nymph in question exhibited upon her person may be easily described. Three minute dots, no bigger than pin-heads (sic), decorated either lip, and at a little distance were not at all discernible. Just upon the fall of the shoulder were drawn two parallel lines half an inch apart, and perhaps three inches in length, the interval being filled with delicately executed figures. These narrow bands of tattooing, thus placed, always reminded me of those stripes of gold lace worn by officers in undress, and which are in lieu of epaulettes to denote their rank (86).
>
> …
>
> During the second day of the Feast of Calabashes, Kory-Kory—being determined that

[22] For a comprehensive interpretation of tattooing figures, See K. Von den Steinen, *Die Marquesaner und ihre Kunst, i. Tatauierung*.

> I should have some understanding on these matters—had, in the course of his explanations, directed my attention to a peculiarity I had frequently remarked among many of the females;—principally those of a mature age and rather matronly appearance. This consisted in having the right hand and the left foot most elaborately tattooed; while the rest of the body was wholly free from the operation of the art, with the exception of the minutely dotted lips and slight marks on the shoulders, to which I have previously referred as comprising the sole tattooing exhibited by Fayaway, in common with other young girls of her age. The hand and foot thus embellished were, according to Kory-Kory, the distinguishing badge of wedlock, so far as that social and highly commendable institution is known among these people. It answers, indeed, the same purpose as the plain gold ring worn by our fairer spouses (190).

As the tattooing activity takes large proportions of daytime and a long procedure to complete, it is difficult to argue with Melville that the younger Marquesans tend to have fewer or less complicated figures in their tattoos. Moreover, compared to the *pahu tiki* on male islanders, as specified by von den Steinen, females' facial tattooing does look similar to what Tommo describes on Fayaway's lips (103). In terms of the connection between tattooing and marital status, according to the Marquesan locals whom Handy interviewed in 1920, Melville's theory that a definite distinction which classifies married or unmarried women might not universally exist (Handy 14). In this regard, therefore, I will disagree with Anderson in contending Melville's fictionalization over narration in terms of the documentation of the tattooed girls of Marquesas. Conversely, I take his compositional strategy in the case of Fayaway as consistent and similar to the one which he applies to the depiction of Mehevi and Kory-Kory.

Chapter thirty is the last but most significant chapter on tattoos. It unfolds with a reflection on Typee tattooist Karky's urge to tattoo Tommo. Together with the dangling horror of cannibalism, the danger of being tattooed on the face quickens Tommo's decision to escape. Elizabeth Renker critiques that Tommo's fear in the facial tattooing could be construed as Melville's anxiety over criticisms for his copying from various source books. She further contends that both Melville's final escape from cannibalism and facial tattooing signifies his refusal of being a copyist writer (5).

However, given that Melville does a perfect job in hiding his sources which took those well-trained scholars such as Parker and Anderson quite some effort to reveal, Melville's fear for tattoos should still be regarded as the writer's structural arrangement to facilitate a "justified" escape. In other words, I consider that, rather than serving allegorical function to reveal Melville's authorial anxiety, his purpose in describing Karky's tattooing practice is still mainly textual rather than allegorical. One could see this in Tommo's observation of Karky's tattooing procedure:

> I beheld a man extended flat upon his back on the ground, and, despite the forced composure of his countenance, it was evident that he was suffering agony. His tormentor bent over him, working away for all the world like a stone-cutter with mallet and chisel. In one hand he held a short slender stick, pointed with a shark's tooth, on the upright end of which he tapped with a small hammer-like piece of wood, thus puncturing the skin, and charging it with the coloring matter in which the instrument was dipped. A cocoa-nut shell containing this fluid was placed upon the ground. It is prepared by mixing with a vegetable juice the ashes of the "arm or," or candle-nut, always preserved for the purpose. Beside the savage, and spread out upon a piece of soiled tappa, were a great number of curious black-looking little implements of bone and wood, used in the various divisions of his art. A few terminated in a single fine point, and, like very delicate pencils, were employed in giving the finishing touches, or in operating upon the more sensitive portions of the body, as was the case in the present instance. Others presented several points distributed in a line, somewhat resembling the teeth of a saw. These were employed in the coarser parts of the work, and particularly in pricking in straight marks. Some presented their points disposed in small figures, and being placed upon the body, were, by a single blow of the hammer, made to leave their indelible impression. I observed a few the handles of which were mysteriously curved, as if intended to be introduced into the orifice of the car, with a view perhaps of beating the tattoo upon the tympanum. Altogether, the sight of these strange instruments recalled to mind that display of cruel-looking mother-of-pearl-handled things which one sees in their velvet-lined cases at the elbow of a dentist (217-8).

As Michael Frank suggests, this detailed documentation of tattooing, though not materialistically implemented on Tommo's skin, penetrates the surface, and takes a permanent mark on the writer's mind (57). Also, like what Ishmael says in *Moby-Dick*, "these mysteries (of Queequeg's tattoos) were therefore destined in the end to moulder away with the living parchment whereon they were inscribed, and so be unsolved to the last" (351). Following the ceremonial scene of tattooing, Tommo confesses that he does not understand the meanings of the tattoo patterns, and that he begins to feel the motive of leaving:

> The only consolation afforded me was a choice of patterns: I was at perfect liberty to

> have my face spanned by three horizontal bars, after the fashion of my serving-man's; or to have as many oblique stripes slanting across it; or if, like a true courtier, I chose to model my style on that of royalty, I might wear a sort of freemason badge upon my countenance in the shape of a mystic triangle. However, I would have none of these, though the king most earnestly impressed upon my mind that my choice was wholly unrestricted. At last, seeing my unconquerable repugnance, he ceased to importune me.
>
> But not so some other of the savages. Hardly a day passed but I was subjected to their annoying requests, until at last my existence became a burden to me; the pleasures I had previously enjoyed no longer afforded me delight, and all my former desire to escape from the valley now revived with additional force (220).

But Melville is very likely "spinning yarns" here. Unlike what Tommo claims in *Typee* that he makes his determination to escape due to fear of tattooing and cannibalism, Melville's Typee sojourn or even his South Sea roving was not his design of an eternal way to live. In fact, he perhaps never witnessed any sort of cannibalism and was certainly not tattooed on his face. He never manages to comprehend the Typee tattooing, but, through his vivacious documentation, he pulls off the feat of typing the textual patterns of his Typee journey.

Religion

In *Typee*, Melville refers to his collection of Marquesan religion in three main facets: the Ti, the Feast of Calabashes, and the Taboos. Among these three, the Ti serves as the sacred location where many Typee religious as well as nonreligious activities take place, and it should be noted that these activities, mostly feasts in Melville's narrative, are of major social importance to the valley. In another word, the Ti is the geographical center of the Typee society. The feasts in Marquesan culture, from another standpoint, judging from what Melville portrays in *Typee*, play social roles that even extend beyond the boundaries of religious sphere. As I will demonstrate below, Melville's documentation of the Feast of Calabash reflects the anthropological hierarchy in terms of food possession in the Marquesan society. The delineations of

taboo, more salient than the former two (especially those appear at the end of the narrative), reveal a powerful yet unique cultural convention which influences the whole Marquesan religion, or rather, the complete Marquesan existence, and, therefore, shapes Melville's Typee life with "wide-spread and universal" effects (221).

Tommo's delineation of the Ti begins after he has described the "hoolah hoolah" ground in chapter twelve, a parenthetical chapter detailing the silhouette of the Typee valley. As Dening points out, the Marquesans apparently engage in multifarious religious rituals within the sphere of the Ti, such as witching to cure diseases, singing specific songs for ritual preparations, and sacrificing to the gods (165-99). But neither leaning toward academic explanation nor comprehensive storytelling, Melville only picks facets compelling to his eyes. According to Tommo, both the two places in the valley serve as establishments for religious purposes, but the "hoolah hoolah" ground is open to all natives while the Ti only for tabooed males (91). An interesting inconsistency of the tabooed Ti is that although the valley, or the Marquesas archipelago in general, has a polyandry system, patriarchy is nevertheless practiced in the aspects of religious activities. In this case, women in general are forbidden from entering the Ti. Tommo and Toby, on the other hand, although being outsiders, are accepted by Typees as the sacred males, and, therefore, are invited to enter and sit side by side with the old monks of the valley in the Ti.

Another perspective which attracts Tommo's attention is that the Ti serves as the armory of the valley:

> On entering the house, I was surprised to see six muskets ranged against the bamboo on one side, from the barrels of which depended as many small canvas pouches, partly filled with powder. Disposed about these muskets, like the cutlasses that decorate the bulkhead of a man-of-war's cabin, were a great variety of rude spears and paddles, javelins, and warclubs. This then, said I to Toby, must be the armory of the tribe (92).

These muskets stored in the Ti are frequented by Tommo in chapters such as chapter

seventeen, a chapter on Typee's war with their neighbor Happar, and chapter thirty-two, the chapter on cannibalism which has been discussed above. Through this repeated reference to muskets, Melville alludes a local worship of these Western arms and a reasonable explanation which I will discuss in the next chapter—the pragmatism of Western science. The close nexus between Western firearms and the local religion is mainly material rather than spiritual. Quite ironically, as Melville has critiqued in the narrative, Western missionaries was never truly as successful as their military counterparts in conquering the Marquesas, albeit they claimed that Western civilization was established on the prominence of clerical works. In the eyes of Melville, the conquest of the steel and powder acts far more efficiently, if not brutally, than the rigid and in a sense equally violent expansion of Christianity.

Treading on the material side, one could also notice the function of the Ti as the place for religious feasts. Melville writes:

> In a few moments a boy entered with a wooden trencher of poee-poee; and in regaling myself with its contents I was obliged again to submit to the officious intervention of my indefatigable servitor. Various other dishes followed, the chief manifesting the most hospitable importunity in pressing us to partake, and to remove all bashfulness on our part, set us no despicable example in his own person.
>
> The repast concluded, a pipe was lighted, which passed from mouth to mouth, and yielding to its soporific influence, the quiet of the place, and the deepening shadows of approaching night, my companion and I sank into a kind of drowsy repose, while the chief and Kory-Kory seemed to be slumbering beside us (93).

This scene's genuineness is doubtful. Tommo's portrait of the Typee religious center in similarity to a local Western pub house conveniently reveals Melville's literary imagination. But, as discussed above in the cannibalism section, feasts take significant social roles in the Marquesan community, and it takes up large proportions of the Marquesan time as well. Therefore, if the depicted scenario indeed took place, I reckon that Melville's portrait of this scene is based on the Typee's fondness of feasting, a worldly aspect of their life. The pork banquet in the middle of the night following the above reference in chapter twelve is a valid proof (95). More importantly, the Ti's

partial function as a religious restaurant paves way for Melville's documentation of the Feast of Calabashes.

Near the end of chapter twenty-two, Tommo's relating to his choice of costume has formerly hinted toward the significant Feast of Calabashes. Like his documentation of cannibalism, Melville dedicates the complete chapter twenty-three to his discovery of Typee's religious feast. His recording of food preparation is phenomenal. Below is how he reproduces the Marquesan wine-making process:

> "Arva" is a root very generally dispersed over the South Seas, and from it is extracted a juice, the effects of which upon the system are at first stimulating in a moderate degree; but it soon relaxes the muscles, and exerting a narcotic influence produces a luxurious sleep. In the valley this beverage was universally prepared in the following way:—a Some half dozen young boys seated themselves in a circle around an empty wooden vessel, each one of them being supplied with a certain quantity of the roots of the "arva" broken into small bits and laid by his side. A cocoa-nut goblet of water was passed around the juvenile company, who rinsing their mouths with its contents, proceeded to the business before them. This merely consisted in thoroughly masticating the "arva" and throwing it mouthful after mouthful into the receptacle provided. When a sufficient quantity had been thus obtained water was poured upon the mass, and being stirred about with the forefinger of the right-hand, the preparation was soon in readiness for use. The "arva" has medicinal qualities (165).

Melville's description of these procedures of a Typee beverage production is highly graphic as similar to a modern documentary. It is evident that Melville, during his stay on different Polynesian islands, had noticed the significance of all forms of food to the locals. Therefore, he puts a strong stress on the descriptions of this feast for its significance. In the same vein, he even vivaciously details the manner of a Typee hog cracking the nutshell of a coconut (166). Reading the above romantic portrait, one could critique that Melville's "unvarnished truth" steps on the ground of imaginative fiction, but, I argue, his memory in terms of food's religious significance in Typee is adequately verifiable.

But, reflecting from the modern anthropological perspective, Melville's attention to the feast might seem problematic. He observes the way Typees approach the festal food as follows:

> What lavish plenty reigned around!—Warwick feasting his retainers with beef and ale

> was a niggard to the noble Mehevi!-All along the piazza of the Ti were arranged elaborately carved canoe-shaped vessels, some twenty feet in length, filled with newly made poee-poee, and sheltered from the sun by the broad leaves of the banana. At intervals were heaps of green bread-fruit, raised in pyramidical stacks, resembling the regular piles of heavy shot to be seen in the yard of an arsenal. Inserted into the interstices of the huge stones which formed the pi-pi were large boughs of trees; hanging from the branches of which, and screened from the sun by their foliage, were innumerable little packages with leafy coverings, containing the meat of the numerous hogs which had been slain, done up in this manner to make it more accessible to the crowd. Leaning against the railing of the piazza were an immense number of long, heavy bamboos, plugged at the lower end, and with their projecting muzzles stuffed with a wad of leaves. These were filled with water from the stream, and each of them might hold from four to five gallons (163-4).

This reference posits an immediate impression upon Typee's religious rituals and the local food consumption—the valley has an inexhaustible amount of food. This in fact is merely an imaginative impression. As Nicolas Thomas suggests, although food is less restrained in times of feasts, there apparently are limitations, or taboos, to prevent all Typees from unrestricted access to it (89-91). Moreover, considering the frequent food shortage among the Marquesas, Melville's delineation reflects his ignorance of a closer aspect of Typee life (due to his ignorance of the language and his relatively short stay which prevented him from a closer ethnographical understanding), but, as I will explore in the next chapter, this Melvillean romanticism serves for an outward and even cosmopolitan fancy that frees a person from material anxieties.[23]

The third facet of Melville's Typee religious collection is the valley's mysterious taboo system. The word's etymological emergence can be traced to James Cook's journal in which the infamous captain records the English spelling of the Marquesan word *tapu*. Compared to modern interpretation of the Polynesian *tapu*, as in the research conducted by James Frazer, Sigmund Freud, Franz Steiner, and Nicolas Thomas, Melville's early usage of the term in *Typee* falls on a flat connection between

[23] Greg Dening in his *Islands and Beaches* gives a detailed recording of the Marquesan food and famine, pp.239-61.

the word and the Typee religion.[24] In chapter ten, he briefly defines taboo as "sacred" in the footnote (74). And, in his early reference to the word, such as Typee female's prohibition of boarding canoes or entering the Ti, Melville simply presents the act of tabooing in terms of a strong link to the local religion. This could best be illustrated by Tommo's famous canoe scene with Fayaway which have been discussed previously.

But then Melville ponders again over the concept in chapter thirty. In this reflection, the narrator elevates his understanding to a more comprehensive level, realizing the repressive function which the unique term serves. He writes:

> There is a marked similarity, almost an identity, between the religious institutions of most of the Polynesian islands, and in all exists the mysterious "Taboo," restricted in its uses to a greater or less extent. So strange and complex in its arrangements is this remarkable system, that I have in several cases met with individuals who, after residing for years among the islands in the Pacific, and acquiring a considerable knowledge of the language, have nevertheless been altogether unable to give any satisfactory account of its operations. Situated as I was in the Typee valley, I perceived every hour the effects of this all-controlling power, without in the least comprehending it. Those effects were, indeed, wide-spread and universal, pervading the most important as well as the minutest transactions of life. The savage, in short, lives in the continual observance of its dictates, which guide and control every action of his being. (221)
>
> …
>
> I cannot determine with anything approaching to certainty, what power it is that imposes the taboo. When I consider the slight disparity of condition among the islanders—the very limited and inconsiderable prerogatives of the king and chiefs—and the loose and indefinite functions of the priesthood, most of whom were hardly to be distinguished from the rest of their countrymen, I am wholly at a loss where to look for the authority which regulates this potent institution. It is imposed upon something to-day (sic), and withdrawn tomorrow; while its operations in other cases are perpetual. Sometimes its restrictions only affect a single individual—sometimes a particular family—sometimes a whole tribe; and in a few instances they extend not merely over the various clans on a single island, but over all the inhabitants of an entire group. In illustration of this latter peculiarity, I may cite the law which forbids a female to enter a canoe—a prohibition which prevails upon all the northern Marquesas Islands.
>
> The word itself (taboo) is used in more than one signification. It is sometimes used by a parent to his child, when in the exercise of parental authority he forbids it to perform a particular action. Anything opposed to the ordinary customs of the islanders, although not expressly prohibited, is said to be "taboo." (224)

At this point, Melville no longer merely looks at the term as a religious sector, instead, he understands it to be a more encompassing legitimization system. That is to say, the Marquesan tabooing is a customary legal mechanism that guides and governs its

[24] For a systematic research that most applies in the Marquesas, see Nicolas Thomas, pp.61-73. For an illustrative induction of the concept, see James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion,* pp.194-260. For a comprehensive research, see Franz Steiner, *Taboo*. Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, on the other hand, gives a psychological focus on the violation of taboos, therefore, has lesser connection to my discussion here.

citizen's conduct. As Thomas says, specific roles of taboo are formed most likely in accordance with the distinct Marquesan natural and social environment and, therefore, have a pragmatic and materialistic attachment which lays unreligious emphasis on the Marquesan life (62-4). Melville's turn of attitude announces his departure from religion (Christianity included), and this ideological abandonment is furthered in his later works such as *Moby-Dick*, *Pierre*, and *Billy Budd*.[25]

Furthermore, he makes two illustrative taboo examples in the same direction. One involves Tommo's accidental grasp of a Typee cloth material that is reserved only to women. He makes his contemplation as follows:

> I subsequently found out that the fabric they were engaged in making was of a peculiar kind, destined to be worn on the heads of the females, and through every stage of its manufacture was guarded by a rigorous taboo, which interdicted the whole masculine gender from even so much as touching it (222).

Melville's diction here partly reverses his earlier delineation of taboo as gender division. Unlike the taboo that forbids the girls from entering canoes, here, the use of "destined" and "interdicted" produces an equivalent effect on the limitations of the male sex. This, however, is not consistent with what Marquesan anthropologists report in their research. According to Thomas, a considerable portion of the repressive function in the Marquesan taboo system is perceivable in its power over the local women (64-7). Melville's dramatic narration in the above reference, one could conjecture, reveals his aim of constructing the Typee as his egalitarian paradise in the South Pacific, a place different and better than the civilized West. The other taboo instance, which revisits the *Dolly*'s captain, puts the egalitarian gesture even further. An ignorant as well as abhorrent colonizer's image is presented as follows:

> At Tior he evinced the same disregard for the religious prejudices of the islanders, as he had previously shown for the superstitions of the sailors. Having heard that there were a considerable number of fowls in the valley—the progeny of some cocks and hens accidentally

[25] For a related study of Melville's unreligious ideology, see Lawrence Thompson*, Melville's Quarrel with God*.

> left there by an English vessel, and which, being strictly tabooed, flew about almost in a wild state—he determined to break through all restraints, and be the death of them. Accordingly, he provided himself with a most formidable looking gun, and announced his landing on the beach by shooting down a noble cock that was crowing what proved to be his own funeral dirge, on the limb of an adjoining tree. "Taboo," shrieked the affrighted savages. "Oh, hang your taboo," says the nautical sportsman; "talk taboo to the marines;" and bang went the piece again, and down came another victim. At this the natives ran scampering through the groves, horror-struck at the enormity of the act (*Typee* 223).

It is worth noticing here is that, approaching the narrative's end, Melville's discourse becomes more dramatic and drastic. This conspicuous description in terms of the captain's arrogant violation of local taboo echoes with Melville's critique of Western missionary in the Marquesas. The rudeness and barbarity of the captain easily evokes readers' animosity, and, by doing so, calls for a cosmopolitan necessity to "do as the Romans do" when one encounters a different culture. Furthermore, the captain's despotism which Melville's narrator mentions early in the narrative's beginning as a legitimate excuse for his desertion mirrors in turn the inequality between Western ruling class and its subjects. This, as I will discuss in the next chapter, points to Melville's larger objectives in his digression.

In his *The Savage Mind*, Claude Levi-Strauss suggests that anthropologists are the historians of the native societies and he warns his fellow scholars to avoid the urge to teach or to explain history of any domain (261-2). A historical observer, therefore, should elevate himself from confined temporalities and seek a general structure that includes as much as possible. But it is also problematic that, if an anthropologist or historian (or for that matter, any writer) only looks at different cultures from one general structure, then he will be drawn into a vortex of ideological singularity. Melville's literary anthropology perfectly sidesteps such a Levi-Straussian dilemma. Reflecting on what I have discussed in this chapter, *Typee* does not attempt to teach or to explain a culture that its writer does not understand, nor does it adopt a Western structure when engaging the Marquesan "primitiveness." To put it short, it is largely a

literary recording as its writer claims. Yunte Huang, in his *Transpacific Imaginations*, calls Melville a Benjaminian collector, who, with a connoisseurial taste, assembles his target objects for the sake of what they are and not for what they are worth (57-60). In other words, the Melvillean digression suites the writer's purpose of collecting his Typee experience. And, if look at the title "Typee" etymologically, we can even consider the book a typing of Polynesian life, a "Type-e" to be more precise.

But my discussion does not stop here. Beside the above-examined, there are other minor delineations regarding almost all aspects of Typee culture, such as landscape, clothes, food, house, canoe, dances, and swimming, that make up piece by piece Melville's diverse writing of the Typee life. Through this nuanced narrative, he gives the readers a culturally different perspective that extends far beyond "a peep." The compelling and controversial topics such as sexuality, polyandry, and tattooing all tread on a tabooed ground of the writer's own contemporary culture. As Edgar Dryden points out, Melville's truth-telling in his fictions (I should include *Typee* in this category as well), provokes potential agitations, because his truths are too progressive, even destructive, to his time. He further suggests that, by turning to such a literary camouflage, the writer obtains an impunity which protects him from possible social attacks (21-9). But, as I will argue in the next chapter, despite his need for this impunity, we nevertheless need to commend Melville's literature for its futuristic expansion of poetic and cultural space which Henri Lefebvre discusses more than a hundred years later. From a cosmopolitan horizon of expectation, therefore, one can better understand why Melville was desperate to prevent his *Typee* from being labelled as fiction, or even a Succès de scandale. Because he wanted readers to know that, in choosing a digressive style for his narrative, he meant his work, as his famous line from the preface goes, "to speak the unvarnished truth."

CHAPTER TWO

The Deserted Duty: Melville's Production of Space in *Typee*

> "To change life, we must first change space."
>
> —Henri Lefebvre

Thanks to genius ship builders like Donald McKay, the American maritime affairs saw a prodigious growth in Melville's time. As a dominant European geopolitical existence curbed its eastward expansion, the young but equally imperial America turned its face west and merged itself into a Pacific space. Viewed from a Lefebvrian spatiality, the implications of this turn means twofold: one, with the dawning of industrial production, natural space began to shrink in the nineteenth century; two, a new cluster of social spaces is being produced at the same time (Lefebvre 11, 31). The first implication is apparently easy to decipher. Technology improvement shortens travel time between geographical locations, and, therefore, compresses the vast physical space of the Pacific. The second implication, however, is more abstract in the sense of a philosophical shift. According to Henri Lefevre, in the process of industrialization, our interest needs to be shifted from "things in space" to the actual "production of space" (37). This produced space, moreover, implies a combination of four types, namely the absolute, abstract, contradictory and differential space, which also manifest a linear and transformational spatial spectrum. A pertinent production of space, I contend, could also be found in Melville's works and, especially, in his travel narratives.

Through his writing, Herman Melville conceives and reproduces an important transpacific space which can be best classified into the representation of space in the

Lefebvrian social space triad (14-5). By narrating his travels, Melville expands his social space from a contemporary context to a more modern and cosmopolitan realm. In this chapter, I argue that Melville's literary creation voyages out from a stylistic digression to a prophetic poetics that could be best viewed through the lens of a Lefebvrian spatial production. This production, specifically in the case of *Typee*, involves an enlargement of cultural and ideological imagination, a desertion as denial of work ethic and progress, an escape as territorial depossession, and a deconstruction of religious typology. Interwoven with one another, these four expansions help deliver a unique Melvillean space in *Typee*.

Space of Ideological and Political Imagination

In his colossal work, Lefebvre points out a negotiation and infiltration among the abovementioned four types of social space. As naturally located, the absolute space is made up of fragments of nature at sites which were chosen for intrinsic qualities like caves and rivers (48). With the emergence of capitalistic world travel, this space began to lose its significance and give way to a more representational abstract space. Unfortunately, as Lefebvre puts it, this abstract space is a product of hegemony and war and "serves those forces which make a tabula rasa of whatever stands in their way, of whatever threatens them—in short, of differences. These forces seem to grind down and crush everything before them, with space performing the function of a plane, a bulldozer or a tank" (285). Luckily, with differences still circulating within it, this space is simultaneously a contradictory space (352-8). Yet the balance of a contradictory space cannot hold, and, in a condition of constant negotiation and exchange, such space will indefinitely move toward and become the differential space

(373).

In light of these spatial tensions, *Typee* could be viewed as a text that produces a socially representational space of the Pacific using materials from Melville's physical as well as cultural travel. To argue a step further, the writer's encounter with Typee and other Pacific indigenous cultures serves as a lived experience for a contradictory space between the capitalistic America and the "primitive" Polynesia. This encounter not only works as an actual eyeopener for Melville in terms of witnessing a limitless and marvelous nature, but also gives the writer a chance to have a close contact with the national seafaring industry (an epitome of the situation of American lower class) and foreign ethnic peoples (peoples who are considered "not us"). As an eager and rebellious writer, Melville, in the case of *Typee*, concentrates on producing a textual space that could best represent his magnificent travels. Whereas we modern readers find the Melvillean space acceptable in today's cultural context, it is hard or even impossible to imagine the rigid and insular literary establishment which Melville had to deal with in antebellum America.

Let me use some works of Melville's contemporaries from the industrialized West to illustrate my point. In his famous *Actes et Paroles*, Victor Hugo sculptures an iconic role model for the mid-nineteenth century seamen. During his exile in Britain, Hugo was once onboard the ship PS *Normandy* in 1867 and warmly received by Captain Henry Harvey who kindly changed course for him for a harbor tour of the British navy fleet. On an 1870 nightshift, a cargo steamer *Mary*, due to the blockage of an unfortunate fog patch, collided with Harvey's ship and sank it twenty minutes afterward. After having ordered and conducted the abandonment procedures, Harvey stood his post on the bridge and went down with his ship. His choice of death was widely known in maritime history as an exemplary death of duty.

In honor of Captain Harvey, Hugo hails in his work:

> Let him receive the farewell from the exile.
> No sailor was equal to him. Having imposed the duty of man upon himself all his life, he deserves the name of a hero (Hugo xxx, my translation).

Following and developing his respectful tone in this passage, the French writer salutes the heroic death as an example of social norm which implies that duty should stand above life. Easily fallen prey to Hugo's eloquent style, whoever reads the narrative would easily be captured by the moral lesson put forth between the lines. What interests me here, however, is that, in such a text of strong pathos, Hugo manages to create an abstract space of for his readers—a space that serves a phallic formant force to crush any person who dares to think otherwise. From a Lefebvrian perspective, I want to question Hugo's abstract space: while he had responsibly performed his duty as commander of the ship, why would Harvey choose to die instead of trying a late jump or any move that could give his life a chance? Obviously, in Hugo's opinion, the death of duty leaves no room for any question of this kind.

Similarly, the British writer Rudyard Kipling mentions the shipwreck of the famous HMS *Birkenhead* in his poem "Soldier an' Sailor Too," a poetic tribute to the royal marines. *Birkenhead* was an iron-hulled steam troopship and commissioned in the British Navy in 1845. When it hit some uncharted rock not far from Cape Town in Algoa Bay, the ship was conveying around six hundred and forty people, most of whom were infantry soldiers from the British Army and the rest family members of the officers. Due to limited supply of lifeboats, the Captain of *Birkenhead* ordered women and children to board the boats first and commanded his crew and soldiers to remain on the deck of the sinking ship. This disaster made the concept "women and children first" widely known.

In his poem, Kipling coins the term "Birkenhead drill" to commemorate the

chivalry of the soldiers. He writes in the fifth stanza of the poem:

> To take your chance in the thick of a rush, with firing all about,
> Is nothing so bad when you've cover to 'and, an' leave an' likin' to shout;
> But to stand an' be still to the Birken'ead drill is a damn tough bullet to chew,
> An' they done it, the Jollies—'Er Majesty's Jollies—soldier an' sailor too!
> Their work was done when it 'adn 't begun; they was younger nor me an' you;
> Their choice it was plain between drownin' in 'eaps an' bein' mopped by the screw,
> So they stood an' was still to the Birken'ead drill, soldier an' sailor too (*The Seven Seas* 173)!

But while his tributary tone here is reasonable, Kipling's description is inaccurate in terms of two things in this stanza: one, the majority of the troops onboard were not marines and, according to Roger Ayers and Alastair Wilson, there were only four marines involved in the *Birkenhead* wreck; two, as the ship was a paddle steamer, it could never "mop" the drowning men with its "screw."[26] Reading closely, moreover, one could further sense a strongly propagandistic imperialism running through the whole verse. This promotional inclination, on the surface, entails Kipling's choice of an epic tone in his poem, but soon gives away the poet and his imperialistic ideology. What I want to point out here, then, is that this Kilpingesque verse seems to share with the Hugonian prose a static and enclosed space vis-à-vis the representational ideology it constructs. This abstract representation of space casts a powerful and yet confined structure over the span of the nineteenth century and intends to turn anything it considers a cultural Other into a tabula rasa.

Comparing the three contemporary writers, I find that, in the travel narratives of Melville, or in *Typee* in particular, a different representational space could be located in his idiosyncratic textual construction. Bearing in mind the dogmatic sailor ethics under the pens of Western writers such as the above two, a modern reader is immediately hooked by Tommo's candid decision to escape ship. He proclaims the

[26] See Roger Ayers and Alastair Wilson, Notes on "Soldier 'an Sailor too." And, for a detailed narrative of the event, see A. C. Addison and W. H. Matthews, *A deathless story, or, The "Birkenhead" and its heroes*.

legitimacy of his escape in the beginning of chapter four:

> When I entered on board the Dolly, I signed as a matter of course the ship's articles, thereby voluntarily engaging and legally binding myself to serve in a certain capacity for the period of the voyage; and, special considerations apart, I was of course bound to fulfill the agreement. But in all contracts, if one party fail to perform his share of the compact, is not the other virtually absolved from his liability? Who is there who will not answer in the affirmative (20)?

The two consecutive questions in this reference show a gallant challenge to the conventional concept of loyalty and law (a concept elaborately discussed in his *Billy Budd*). Through this Melvillean narration, the prophetic writer fires at the hegemonic maritime hierarchy which virtually is the extension of the equally hegemonic social ladder. I consider Melville's fiery criticism in this reference very crucial in terms of the cultural and ideological expansion it engages. With a well-reasoned desertion, Melville extends his ideological vision much beyond the boundaries of his time and imagines a public egalitarianism among different classes in what Lefebvre would call a multiplied society (8). In *Typee*, the expanded space is a space of differences and multiplicity, which, according to Lefebvre, functions as the most inclusive and advanced spatial type in the history of spatial evolution (372).

Unfortunately, his fellow American readers were not ready for such a futuristic spatial imagination. The two publishers of his book were indeed prescient of possible attacks from critics: John Murray was worried that Melville's authenticity would be a weak point and continued to request further editing of the manuscript; Wiley and Putnam, on the other hand, was concerned with attacks from local evangelical conservatives, and asked Melville to take out his satires on the missionaries (294). And the subsequent reviews did prove the two publishers' fretted anticipation (Stern 28, 38). Although having reserved disagreements, Melville was forced to concede a compromise with Wiley and Putnam and toned down his treatment of missionaries, sexuality, and raciness in a revised American version, which was published soon after

its homeland debut. But I contend that these editorial interferences could only limit but not stop a futuristic writer and his boundary-breaking work.

Desertion as an Emergent Denial

For a further discussion of *Typee*'s expansionary spatiality, I want to zoom the theoretical lens out to a historical length and set my foot into a background of cultural thinking. In *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams looks at cultures from the ways in which mindsets and ideologies, though relatively static most of the time, undergo a constant transformation and, to use Deleuze's term, becoming. He deems that this constant process can be differentiated as a circulation between three types of cultural characteristics, namely the "dominant," "residual," and "emergent" (Williams 121-7). According to Williams, in the protracted and gradual transformation of a culture, although the "dominant" appears as the most effective and hegemonic agent and displays most characteristics of that culture, it is more significant to lay eyes on the "residual" and "emergent." While the "residual" has been established in the past, it nonetheless has an effective element of the present and often is incorporated in the "dominant." The "emergent," on the other hand, though referring to new meanings, values, practices, and relationships, is mainly constituted by the oppositional rather than the alternative forces. In other words, a culture's seemingly inferior and emergent consciousness, once taking shape, will continue to break free from the backdrop of a culture's dominant and residual prejudice and hegemony. Narrowing down to the case of Melville, I argue that, in *Typee*, this Williamsian "emergent" momentum could be mirrored by Melville's repudiation against Western technology, work ethic, and capitalistic economy in general. By way of such denial, Melville expands the cultural

space of his time to a modern and cosmopolitan scale within which the nineteenth century's dominant and residual ideology begins to hear a voice of objection.

Let me first discuss *Typee*'s denial of Western technology. Unlike what Mitchell Breitwiser regards as a false sympathy (396-417), I consider Melville's attitude toward the scientific gap between the West and Typee as rather sincere and prophetic. To him, though leading the Polynesians in terms of technological advancement, Westerners are essentially barbaric and by no means civilized. Conspicuously revealing his attitude, writes Melville:

> The fact is, that there is a vast deal of unintentional humbuggery in some of the accounts we have from scientific men concerning the religious institutions of Polynesia. These learned tourists generally obtain the greater part of their information from the retired old South-Sea rovers, who have domesticated themselves among the barbarous tribes of the Pacific. Jack, who has long been accustomed to the long-bow, and to spin tough yarns on a ship's forecastle, invariably officiates as showman of the island on which he has settled, and having mastered a few dozen words of the language, is supposed to know all about the people who speak it. A natural desire to make himself of consequence in the eyes of the strangers, prompts him to lay claim to a much greater knowledge of such matters than he actually possesses. In reply to incessant queries, he communicates not only all he knows but a good deal more, and if there be any information deficient still he is at no loss to supply it. The avidity with which his anecdotes are noted down tickles his vanity, and his powers of invention increase with the credulity of his auditors. He knows just the sort of information wanted, and furnishes it to any extent.
>
> This is not a supposed case; I have met with several individuals like the one described, and I have been present at two or three of their interviews with strangers.
>
> Now, when the scientific voyager arrives at home with his collection of wonders, he attempts, perhaps, to give a description of some of the strange people he has been visiting. Instead of representing them as a community of lusty savages, who are leading a merry, idle, innocent life, he enters into a very circumstantial and learned narrative of certain unaccountable superstitions and practices, about which he knows as little as the islanders do themselves. Having had little time, and scarcely any opportunity to become acquainted with the customs he pretends to describe, he writes them down one after another in an off-hand, haphazard style; and were the book thus produced to be translated into the tongue of the people of whom it purports to give the history, it would appear quite as wonderful to them as it does to the American public, and much more improbable (170-1).

As Tommo argues here, how a Western traveler represents his encounter with an economically less-developed culture—whether he depicts it as a barbaric and degenerated trip of hedonism or a holy journey of purification—depends entirely on his authorial honesty rather than his proclaimed scientific mind. This Melvillean contention interestingly echoes what James Clifford proclaims in the introduction to *Writing Culture* almost one hundred and fifty years later. Clifford's six ways to

determine a modern ethnographical writing, namely contextually, rhetorically, institutionally, generically, politically, and historically, all suggest that, even in modern ethnographical studies, an individual as well as partial approach to the empirical and historical research of human differences is highly unavoidable (6). Only in Clifford's case, Melville's Tommo is replaced by a variety of professional ethnographers. In other words, the writer of *Typee* presciently pinpoints in the above reference that the predicament of travel narrative lies in the so-called true narratives that are in fact highly fictionalized.

Melville's questioning of technological progress does not stop at the partiality of travel writers, and he further probes the problem of Western science in chapter twenty-five, another significant digression in the book. Through his observation of the drastic contrast between the local and Western technological engagements, Melville reflects on the imperial attitude which pervades his contemporary Western society—scientific progress marks the superiority of a culture. To his amazement, contrary to Westerners who at the moment were engulfed in the vortex of scientific progress, Typees only acknowledge Western science as a utilitarian method such as sharpening a knife or fixing a musket:

> But the muskets, the powder, and the bullets were held in most extravagant esteem. The former, from their great age and the peculiarities they exhibited, were well worthy a place in any antiquarian's armory. I remember in particular one that hung in the Ti, and which Mehevi—supposing as a matter of course that I was able to repair it—had put into my hands for that purpose. It was one of those clumsy, old-fashioned, English pieces known generally as Tower Hill muskets, and, for aught I know, might have been left on the island by Wallace, Carteret, Cook, or Vancouver. The stock was half rotten and worm-eaten; the lock was as rusty and about as well adapted to its ostensible purpose as an old door-hinge; the threading of the screws about the trigger was completely worn away; while the barrel shook in the wood. Such was the weapon the chief desired me to restore to its original condition. As I did not possess the accomplishments of a gunsmith, and was likewise destitute of the necessary tools, I was reluctantly obliged to signify my inability to perform the task. At this unexpected communication Mehevi regarded me, 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. However, after a most labored explanation of the matter, I succeeded in making him understand the extreme difficulty of the task. Scarcely satisfied with my apologies, however, he marched off with the superannuated musket in something of a huff, as if he would no longer expose it to the indignity of being manipulated by such unskilful (sic) fingers (185).

Here, Mehevi's contempt for Tommo's inability to fix the dilapidated musket amazes the sensitive beachcomber. It occurs to the latter that Western colonizers, himself included, though benefiting from the advancement of technology, never reflect on the limitation of science as it is at best a productive epistemology, not truth itself. As Max Weber argues in his inspiring lecture "Science as a Vocation," an unavoidable problem behind those numerous technological achievements is that they become obsolete with astonishing rapidity (1-31). In the period of Renaissance, science was practiced widely for the purpose of religious as well as artistic pursuits. In other words, science meant the path to true art and God. But, in the industrial nineteenth century, people began to forget the fact that science, though being proved a highly productive and profitable epistemology, is nonetheless a "meaningless" game of logic and method. Weber quotes from Tolstoy that science cannot answer the question such as "What should we do" and "How shall we live" and argues that there is not a science without presupposition. To return to the above reference, I consider Melville's seemingly casual narration of Mehevi's contempt for Tommo's awkwardness an emergent version of Weber's interrogation in terms of a neutral and objective stance toward science. In *Typee*, moreover, the writer on many occasions depicts the complex and mysterious crafts of Typee such as Kory-Kory's building of fire and the Typee girls' production of Tappa. In other words, Typees have their own sophisticated system of science and technology. The contempt on the part of Mehevi, therefore, is by no means a disdain of the primitive ignorance of scientific development. Instead, what Melville implies between the lines is an adept and reflective denial on Western science—though powerful as the scientific products seem, whether they are muskets, cannons, or vessels, they are merely means instead of ends. This critical tone, I argue, blows a fresh wind into the antebellum America.

Beside a transtemporal link to the Weberian critique, Melville's denial stems also from his blatant proclamation of a legitimate desertion. Before Tommo's escape, the Melvillean narrator nominally expresses a fret against conservative attacks from readers. But a contrived fret in fact indicates that the writer is completely aware that to desert a ship is against the opinion of his world. He writes:

> Our ship had not been many days in the harbor of Nukuheva before I came to the determination of leaving her. That my reasons for resolving to take this step were numerous and weighty, may be inferred from the fact that I chose rather to risk my fortunes among the savages of the island than to endure another voyage on board the Dolly. To use the concise, point-blank phrase of the sailors, I had made up my mind to "run away." Now as a meaning is generally attached to these two words no way flattering to the individual to whom they are applied, it behoves (sic) me, for the sake of my own character, to offer some explanation of my conduct (20).

By definition, "to run away" offers a hermitic channel for one to resist any social or cultural containment, a channel which does not put stress on meeting the violent with violence. In this sense, what Melville seemingly suggests here is a Thoreauean civil resistance to the maritime hierarchy as there is very little room, both culturally and ideologically speaking, for sailors' rebellion against their despotic mates and captains. However, as discussed in the previous section, although admitting the hazard of being hunted as a deserter, Tommo is by no means passive and conservative in terms of committing an overt crime of his time. By admitting "to run away," he implicitly implies a denial against the contemporary maritime hierarchy which dominantly determines what is behaviorally acceptable and what is not.

Burying his protest in the opening of *Typee*, Melville amplifies his pertinent condemnation of the maritime abuse to a full denial of the Western work ethic later in the book. In chapter twenty-six, he writes:

> The penalty of the Fall presses very lightly upon the valley of Typee; for, with the one solitary exception of striking a light, I scarcely saw any piece of work performed there which caused the sweat to stand upon a single brow. As for digging and delving for a livelihood, the thing is altogether unknown. Nature has planted the bread-fruit (sic) and the banana, and in her own good time she brings them to maturity, when the idle savage stretches forth his hand, and satisfies his appetite (195).

Let alone the biblical reference which I shall discuss shortly, Tommo here ponders over the undisputed work ethic. It occurs at this point to Melville that, in a functional society, there hangs a ceiling of needs for most people. So long as the needs of the majority are generally satisfied, superfluous work becomes an excessive obsession and waste. In other words, as Typees are fortunately supplied by nature, the "digging and delving for a livelihood" is unknown to the tribe. This thinking is backed by Andre Gorz. In *Critique of Economic Reason*, the French philosopher points out that every society has a limit for the need of products, be they air, water, space, silence, beauty, time, or human contact, and, once the limit is reached, work ethic becomes obstructive and obsolete (220). But, with the arrival of Western "civilization," the Protestant and capitalistic work ethic invades the Polynesian islands and eliminates the happy idlers' way of living. By wondering an admirable life of indolence and asserting a legitimate desertion, Melville, as one of the earliest critics of capitalistic work ethic, produces an emergent space, which allows for the imagination of an unrestrained lifestyle, by peeking at the Pacific.

In terms of this Melvillean denial against work ethic, furthermore, I need to relate to other relevant texts of his that appeared later in the writer's career. In *Redburn*, Wellingborough calls Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, the magnum opus of economic accumulation, a dry book that only gets "drier and drier," and, unable to read further, he wraps his jacket around it for the use of a pillow (87). Similarly, in *Moby-Dick*, one could also read Captain Ahab's monomaniac pursuit after the fantom whale as another denial against a shrewd profit-driven capitalistic economics. *Pequod*'s calculating First Mate Starbuck disagrees with his superior and cries out:

> "I am game for his crooked jaw, and for the jaws of Death too, Captain Ahab, if it fairly comes in the way of the business we follow; but I came here to hunt whales, not my commander's vengeance. How many barrels will thy vengeance yield thee even if thou gettest it, Captain Ahab? it will not fetch thee much in our Nantucket market."

…

"Vengeance on a dumb brute! … that simply smote thee from blindest instinct! Madness! To be enraged with a dumb thing, Captain Ahab, seems blasphemous (*Moby-Dick* 132-3)."

But Ahab immediately denies that he is mad with vengeance:

> "Hark ye yet again, —the little lower layer. All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me… (133)"

In this well-known conversation, the business savvy First Mate tries to manipulate his mad captain into obeying the work ethic of capitalistic economy—to go after any whale that can fill *Pequod*'s barrels rather than to pursue madly a mystic Moby Dick that is nowhere to be found.

Ahab's "unknown but still reasoning thing" here is fundamentally different from Starbuck's economic sanity. It is an emergent proclaim of denial against the dominant ideologies of Melville's time. In this sense, the revenge which Ahab madly seeks mirrors the writer's personal preferences in life, preferences that are not subject to the control of the rigid mindset in the antebellum period. Moreover, compared to Wellingborough and Ahab, Melville's best anticapitalistic character is Bartleby. In the homonymous story, its protagonist's denying punchline "I would prefer not to" amply unveils Melville's steadfast rejection of the capitalistic work ethic, and Bartleby's final death from self-starvation further declares a Melvillean rupture with the whole capitalistic exchange system.

Looking through Melville's oeuvre, one could clearly trace such a recursive denial back to his first book, *Typee*. I argue that, in his authorial debut, one saliently detects in various places a hostility, which was rarely expressed at that time by Melville's peers, toward capitalistic economy. In chapter seventeen, a meticulous contrast between Typees and their Western counterparts, the reflective narrator

contemplates:

> In the altered frame of mind to which I have referred, every object that presented itself to my notice in the valley struck me in a new light, and the opportunities I now enjoyed of observing the manners of its inmates, tended to strengthen my favorable impressions. One peculiarity that fixed my admiration was the perpetual hilarity reigning through the whole extent of the vale. There seemed to be no cares, griefs, troubles, or vexations, in all Typee. The hours tripped along as gaily as the laughing couples down a country dance.
>
> There were none of those thousand sources of irritation that the ingenuity of civilized man has created to mar his own felicity. There were no foreclosures of mortgages, no protested notes, no bills payable, no debts of honor in Typee; no unreasonable tailors and shoemakers, perversely bent on being paid; no duns of any description; no assault and battery attorneys, to foment discord, backing their clients up to a quarrel, and then knocking their heads together; no poor relations, everlastingly occupying the spare bed-chamber, and diminishing the elbow room at the family table; no destitute widows with their children starving on the cold charities of the world; no beggars; no debtors' prisons; no proud and hardhearted nabobs in Typee; or to sum up all in one word—no Money! That "root of all evil" was not to be found in the valley (126).

In Tommo's eyes, or Melville's to be sure, the Westerners' long list of multifarious anxieties and worries—worries over foreclosures of mortgages, protested notes, bill payable, debts of honor, unreasonable tailors and shoemakers, duns, assault and battery attorneys, poor relations, destitute widows, beggars, debtors' prisons, and hardhearted nabobs—all, without exception, point to the one word "Money," that "root of all evil." What he conspicuously hails with such a long list is a drastic attack on the "civilized" capitalistic exchange system. Instead of being regarded as advanced, this exchange system, in the eyes of the sailor writer, barely possesses any favorable characteristics that lead to a peaceful and happy life.

In such an anticapitalistic vein, Melville finds the little Typee valley an almost utopian paradise far away from his corrupted home country. As he continues to ponder:

> There was one admirable trait in the general character of the Typees which, more than any thing (sic) else, secured my admiration: it was the unanimity of feeling they displayed on every occasion. With them there hardly appeared to be any difference of opinion upon any subject whatever. They all thought and acted alike. I do not conceive that they could support a debating society for a single night: there would be nothing to dispute about; and were they to call a convention to take into consideration the state of the tribe, its session would be a remarkably short one. They showed this spirit of unanimity in every action of life: every thing (sic) was done in concert and good fellowship. I will give an instance of this fraternal feeling.
>
> One day, in returning with Kory-Kory from my accustomed visit to the Ti, we passed by a little opening in the grove; on one side of which, my attendant informed me, was that afternoon to be built a dwelling of bamboo. At least a hundred of the natives were bringing materials to the ground, some carrying in their hands one or two of the canes which were to form the sides, others slender rods of the habiscus, strung with palmetto leaves, for the roof.

> Every one contributed something to the work; and by the united, but easy, and even indolent, labors of all, the entire work was completed before sunset. The islanders, while employed in erecting this tenement, reminded me of a colony of beavers at work. To be sure, they were hardly as silent and demure as those wonderful creatures, nor were they by any means as diligent. To tell the truth, they were somewhat inclined to be lazy, but a perfect tumult of hilarity prevailed; and they worked together so unitedly, and seemed actuated by such an instinct of friendliness, that it was truly beautiful to behold (203-4).

The picture of the unanimity of beavers reminds one of the North American continent before the beaver trade in the seventeenth century. Prior to the advent of Western civilization, or capitalistic robbers for that matter, the native tribes interspersed across the mainland were enjoying a lazy, happy, and free life. To Melville, had the greedy white men never come, the great land would be a much more joyful place to live in. This is probably why that, reflecting on his personal as well as family misery—his father died from a bankruptcy-caused insanity and left the large family suffering an agonizing destitution—Melville wrote to Hawthorne saying that "Dollars damn me; and the malicious Devil is forever grinning upon me, holding the door ajar" (Davis 128). Melville was not being true in his letter—it was not dollars that damned him, instead, it was him who condemned the filthy lucre. Observing the lazy inhabitants strolling around a utopian tropic island in the South Seas, our denying romancer believed that the capitalistic Western civilization was only going to sink further down to a monetary abyss and only an antiscientific, anti-workaholic, anticapitalistic way of life could reconstruct the quintessential space of his world. Empathizing this Melvillean contention which is additionally echoed by Ahab's monomaniac pursuit and Bartleby's refusal, one can better sympathize or, to an extent, appreciate Tommo's desertion from the despotic *Dolly* and the space of denial which Melville precociously constructed in *Typee*.

Escape as Territorial Depossession

> Knowledge depends upon travel, upon a refusal to respect boundaries, upon a restless drive toward the margins.
>
> —Stephen Greenblatt

Like his desertion, Tommo's final escape from the Typee valley also deserves an in-depth look. When requested by Tommo for assistance to run away, Marnoo reproaches: "Why you no like to stay? Plenty moee-moee (sleep) —plenty ki-ki (eat) —plenty whihenee (young girls) —Oh, very good place Typee! Suppose you no like this bay, why you come (241)?" A similar question might be asked by *Typee*'s readers—why did Melville leave Typee? What Tommo claims to be the reasons that hasten his fleeing from the island—the fear of being tattooed, the anxiety of being cannibalized, and homesickness, as I have discussed in chapter one, seem not to be necessarily the pivotal incentives that drive his final leave. And, taking advantage of a Lefebvrian spatiality, I find that what Marnoo describes as a carefree and licentious life in the utopian tropic valley has compressed Melville's Typee space and transforms it to a contradictory state of assimilation and incorporation. And this contradictory space in *Typee* symbolizes Melville's constant rejection to a territorial centeredness. This rejection, on the one hand, is manifested in the deserted writer's refusal to take dominion of the Pacific valley, and on the other, in his resistance to the power of assimilation on the part of Typee life.

To better clarify that Melville is above Eurocentrism, I intend to mention the concept of cultural dispossession, which, indicating a brutal colonial process to appropriate, was used by Stephen Greenblatt in his *Marvelous Possessions*. As Greenblatt argues, wonder, or the experience of the marvels, encountered through travels and displacements in Medieval times, conveniently leads to a sense of

dispossession, a disclaimer of dogmatic certainty, a self-estrangement in the face of the strangeness, diversity, and opacity of the world (74). These politicized ideologies all try to hide themselves in the discursive construction during the Age of Discovery, as in the case of Columbus and Diaz's journal entries, for the purpose of unjustified and brutal colonialism. Melville's *Typee*, on the other hand, if compared to the journals of Columbus, manifest a reversed mindset in terms of its narrator's rebellious disposition against the colonial grand narrative. Similar to Greenblatt's description of Mandeville's forgetting of Jerusalem in conversation with the Muslim Sultan (29), Melville's escape from the paradisiac Typee mirrors a determined refusal of a territorial centrality and a material dispossession. Therefore, I argue that such escape as refusal further implies a spatial turn, or a re-turn for that matter, toward diversity, difference, and, to revamp and reverse Greenblatt's key word, depossession.[27]

Throughout *Typee*, one can discern an ostensible attempt to escape from the literary mainstream. In other words, he aims to depossess himself from the possessive powers of his contemporary literary tradition. As a rookie writer who combats with an unfamiliarity with his contemporary writing norms, Melville poses a linguistic challenge both to his publishers and to his readers in his first book. On the one hand, as many Melville scholars point out, *Typee*'s manuscript and its early published editions all suffered a considerable number of inconveniences due to its writer's inaccurate spellings.[28] His inconsistent orthography in many places gave not only his readers but most importantly his publishers a big headache. John Murray had to employ an independent reader, Henry Milton, to proofread Melville's manuscript of

[27] My theoretical stance here is inspired by Yunte, Huang's relevant argument. See *Transpacific Imaginations*, pp.87.

[28] See Leo Howard, *Typee*, pp.280; John Bryant, "Melville's L-Word," pp.125; and Hayford, Parker, and Tanselle, *Typee,* pp.303-25.

Typee, and the latter was only paid half the amount of Melville's already little income (283). Nevertheless, we cannot completely blame the young writer of that time for his writing basics as the entire American English was undergoing a slow process of standardization. We can, however, amplify Melville's literary talent for his vigorous breaking-free from a fettering literary tradition despite the temporary greenness in a highly competitive profession.

On the other hand, *Typee* is one of the few works that widely adopts a Polynesian vocabulary. In the preface, he claims his own orthography of the Polynesian words as the "most easily to convey their sound to a stranger" for the reason that "many of the most beautiful combinations of vocal sounds have been altogether lost to the ear of the reader by an over-attention to the ordinary rules of spelling (xiii)." But, according to Elizabeth Renker's in-depth scrutiny of *Typee*'s manuscript, various spellings for a single word, like "Kori Kori," "KoKiri," and "Kiri Kiri," all refer to the same pronunciation and, instead of materializing what Melville aims to achieve in his preface, only betray his anxiety to emphasize the genuineness of his narrative (5-11). But I construe this authorial anxiety as a sign reasonably acceptable in the case of a greenhorn writer whose poetic brook is only starting to gush into the English literary river. Hectic in taking an artistic shape, the immature and somewhat naive style in turn contributes to the diversity of American literature which was trying to break free from a British domination at that time. Moreover, historically speaking, travel writers like Columbus mostly turned to the dispossessive official English or Spanish when recording what they saw, and literary works written in vernaculars was truly refreshing in early nineteenth century literature. By utilizing a Polynesian vocabulary, though without an academically accurate spelling, Melville escapes a linguistic singularity that adored by his contemporaries and, in the meantime, exposes a tendency to

depossess the so-called standard way of writing.

Through Tommo's final escape, Melville also manages to convey his sense of colonial depossession. Different from the travels of Melville, Columbus's voyages to the Americas were in fact executing the role of a state-sponsored conquest. Greenblatt notices that there is a conspicuous dispossession attempt in the discourse of Columbus. As his motive was to occupy, the eager Admiral writes his journal in a formal proclaiming tone that embodies his complete indifference to the consciousness of the Other. Such a discourse, while insouciantly referring to the existence of the native Americans, enables its writer to empty out their existence as something insignificant and irrelevant. In a notorious passage of his log, Columbus writes:

> …They should be good and intelligent servants, for I see that they say very quickly everything that is said to them; and I believe that they would become Christians very easily, for it seemed to me that they had no religion. Our Lord pleasing, at the time of my departure I will take six of them from here to Your Highnesses in order that they may learn to speak (67-9).

Out of an urgent desire to dispossess and appropriate whatever that could be shipped back to Spain, Columbus was in desperate need to secure any valuable yet transferrable resources, including humans. His explorative travels, therefore, mirror a mimetic doubling process (Derrida's term) which does not lead to identification with the Other but to a brutal will to take possession (Greenblatt 98). Melville, on the contrary, traveled for marvel. His digression in *Typee*, as have been looked at in chapter one, serves merely as a recording of the marvels he witnessed in the remote valley. Through a conscious acknowledgement of the Polynesian Other, the writer represents a South Sea wonder from an egalitarian standpoint. Ontologically outward-gazing, his travels put more emphasis on leaving rather than taking or returning. In the same way, his narratives aim to "spin yarns" and "excites sympathies" (xiii). And, in an admirable vein, what the book stresses, is not a desire to claim possession but the respect for the marvelous.

Apart from his repulsion of Eurocentrism, yet another reason for Melville's final escape is that the sailor writer also resists assimilation from Typees. When his intended sojourn turns into a prolonged stay that sees no foreseeable end, the deserted Tommo begins to feel a contradictory space similar to the one his has at home slowly eroding his Typee stay. When reflecting on the taboo which forbids women from paddling canoes, writes Melville,

> …One morning I expressed to my faithful servitor my desire for the return of the nymphs. The honest fellow looked at me bewildered for a moment, and then shook his head solemnly, and murmured "taboo! taboo!" giving me to understand that unless the canoe was removed, I could not expect to have the young ladies back again. But to this procedure I was averse; I not only wanted the canoe to stay where it was, but I wanted the beauteous Fayaway to get into it, and paddle with me about the lake. This latter proposition completely horrified Kory-Kory's notions of propriety. He inveighed against it, as something too monstrous to be thought of. It not only shocked their established notions of propriety, but was at variance with all their religious ordinances (132).

Betraying his overall tone in the narrative which praises the local egalitarianism between men and women, Melville confesses here his aversion against a Typee patriarchy, albeit it being far less powerful than its European equivalent. With time passing by in the Pacific, the writer begins to feel the hegemonic similarities between Typee and the West. By describing Tommo's horror of being tattooed on the face, Melville insinuates that a part of Typee culture, like all cultures across the globe, embodies a tendency to crush the minor and the different for the benefit of political control and hegemony.

To conclude, therefore, the young author's denial of a civilization centeredness entails, in his early years, a constant trajectory of travelling and moving. The reason behind Melville's constant flight is twofold. First, almost bluntly condemning the Western infiltration attempts in the Pacific, Melville takes a time-warping gesture toward a modern cosmopolitan diversity. As Greenblatt wonders, in the very first stage of cultural encounter, equality was in fact a well understood and respected principle, but why, since the Age of Discovery, this equality had shifted and leaned in favor of

the Christians (24)? Reflecting on a similar question brought up by Joseph Needham in his *The Grand Titration* (190), I contend that the favored party in a cultural encounter is usually equipped by material advantages, be they military, technological, or economical. Often times, we see a shifting center that gradually leaves the materially powerless and tilts in favor of the materially powerful, and, in *Typee*'s case, we see a domination, or invasion for that matter, of the West that tolls the death knell of the Polynesian culture in the remains of the century. Thinking of the America controlled Hawaii, Melville prays for the preservation of the paradisaic Typee:

> …All hail, therefore, Mehevi, King of the Cannibal Valley, and long life and prosperity to his Typeean majesty! May Heaven for many a year preserve him, the uncompromising foe of Nukuheva and the French, if a hostile attitude will secure his lovely domain from the remorseless inflictions of South Sea civilization (189).

It is perhaps partially due to his witness of a disappearing Polynesian culture that ignites the rebellious writer's decision to take a flight from Typee for good. On the other hand, apart from an escape from restraint of his own America, Melville is also fighting a Polynesian assimilation, a Typee tendency to force every being to reach a cultural unanimity. Refusing to be taken captive by the local hegemony, I argue, is a similarly significant reason that drives Melville to resort to escape at the end. It is extremely difficult to imagine that, the escaping Melville, a rebel fleeing from his own culture, is willing to negotiate a surrender to another ideological containment. So, our docile Tommo beats on, hook against the ferocious Mow-Mow, roved restlessly toward the future.

Typee's Typological Becoming

> "And some certain significance lurks in all things, else all things are little worth, and the round world itself but an empty cipher, except to sell by the cartload, as they do hills about Boston,

to fill up some morass in the Milky Way…"

—Moby-Dick

The expansion of religious space in *Typee* is my last focus in discussing Melville's social spatiality. As his spiritual orientation is a long controversy, I find a close look at his first important publication and its religious manifestation a necessary stop in my critical trajectory.[29] Being born in a traditional puritan family, Melville initially inherited a dogmatic Calvinism from his parents and, particularly, his mother, and it was his Pacific voyages that helped transform and reshape, though with complexity, the ingenious writer's Christian faith. As Melville declares in his famous "Hawthorne and His Mossese," a review ostensibly on Hawthorne but a literary manifesto for himself, an American Shakespearean writer aspires to a leap from a lingering puritanic gloom to an unshackled democratic spirit of Christianity (*The Piazza Tales* 243, 248). But considering that such a blatant proclamation was made at the prime of the writer's career, it is appropriate to trace that sparkle which simmers in his travel narratives in order to map Melville's democratic growth throughout his career.

Before analyzing Melville's spirituality in *Typee*, I need to ground myself with a reference to his overall religious becoming. To do so, we must first look at his use of a very crucial branch of hermeneutics that was born in the puritan theological discourse—biblical typology. This hermeneutics, as Sacvan Bercovitch points out, originates from medieval and Renaissance interpretation of the New Testament which was brought to the US by the seventeenth-century Puritans from England, and serves as an integral part of the Protestants' linguistic outlook, in their histories, literature,

[29] For the controversial debate over Melville's religious orientation, see Thomas Walter Herbert, *Moby-Dick and Calvinism*; Ursula Brumm, *American Thought and Religious Typology*, pp.162-97; Lawrance Thompson, *Melville's Quarrel with God*.

and especially in religious texts (1). Although its use lies mainly in appropriating types (the original image) from the Old Testament to illustrate the antitypes (the original image's stamp-like reflection) in the New Testament, typology has its convenient application in literary activities. From John Cotton to Johnathan Edwards, the typological structure of type-antitype correspondence permeates almost all aspects of the Puritan literature (Davis 13). Typological hermeneutics is critically problematic, albeit its contemporary popularity. According to Ursula Brumm, the puritanic authors, contemporary with or prior to Melville and Hawthorne, favored merely the interpreted and recognized religious types but not the invented ones, because they refused to acknowledge that men had a say in God's world (15). The biblical authoritarianism immensely curbed writers' power to imagine and create. As F. O. Matthiessen puts, "the tendency of American idealism to see a spiritual significance in every natural fact was far more broadly diffused than transcendentalism" (243). To further a study of *Typee* drawing on the findings of these scholars, I will not lay my critical eye on those religious manifestations that are shaped by an oppressive spiritual hermeneutics, but on a Melvillean endeavor that expands and even reshapes the American literary space.

In his works, Melville avoids the use of the word "symbol" but often employs "type," "sign," and "emblem" (Brumm 18). A significant reason for Melville's peculiar diction could be explained by his own words on Hawthorne:

> …Certain it is, however, that this great power of blackness in him derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free (*The Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces* 243).

Apparently, what the self-proclaimed Virginian (he signed himself as "a Virginian" at the end of the essay) refers to, when ostensibly gestures toward Hawthorne in this case, is a personal reflection in terms of a strong religious remnant that overshadows the antebellum American literature. In *Billy Budd*, Melville calls this remnant the

"Lexicon of the Holy Writ" which I construe as his literary paraphrase of typology (28-9). And, if we put most of Melville's sea narratives under scrutiny, it is evident that the author relates typological exegesis to his literary practice—the ships in these travels equal the Calvinistic American society; the captains of ships carry images of the omnipotent God; and the narrators are often Ishmael-like characters who rover across barbarous seas and return different men. Based on these typological analyses of Melville's works, Brumm maintains that such literary application mirrors Melville's true faith which, though not Calvinistic, is still Christian overall.

However, in my reading of *Typee*, I find Melville, even in this literary debut, sets religious types that in fact mirror unreligious ideologies. This step not only decides the tone of his later works but also signals a turn in the entire American literature. From a Deleuzian perspective that sees an ontological transformation in which the minor begins to become the major, there are three Melvillean unreligious types that draw my attention.[30] The first among these three is more of an open appeal than type—*Typee*'s virtually blunt attacks on the Calvinistic missionary activities in Polynesia. As discussed above, before the publication of *Typee*'s American edition, Wiley and Putnam asked Melville to take out a certain number of passages that are readily understood as offensive criticism on the Polynesian missionaries, and, even so self-censored, the narrative nevertheless received prevalent attacks from evangelical critics (289-90). In the opening of the narrative, Tommo foreshadows his later missionary condemnation by providing embarrassing anecdotes of those white preachers on Nukuheva (6). In chapter seventeen, he again alludes to the failure of Western missionaries in the Pacific (124). But Melville's most trenchant complaints come in

[30] For a nuanced explanation of a Deleuzian becoming, see Todd May's essay "When is a Deleuzian Becoming?"

two significant chapters that diverge from the book's main plot—chapter twenty-four and twenty-six. In the beginning of the former, he insinuates that the narratives written by the missionaries are severely biased.[31] And, in the latter, Melville unleashes his blatant attack against the conduct of the French missionary or, in fact, the entire Christian missionary, such as demolishing the local temples for the establishment of neat villas and gardens, seizing the island's food supply for Western consumption, and, the worst of all, "civilizing" and "evangelizing" the natives into beasts of burden. Melville further depicts a scene in which a missionary's wife cruelly whips two Honolulu coolies to pull her go-cart, a much nastier version of rickshaw (195-7). Through his appeal in the narrative against missionaries, he foresees a baneful future of Christendom for the Polynesian people.

Behind Melville's criticism of missionaries, I notice a latent doubt of Christianity. He writes near the end of the chapter:

> Lest the slightest misconception should arise from anything thrown out in this chapter, or indeed in any other part of the volume, let me here observe, that against the cause of missions in the abstract no Christian can possibly be opposed: it is in truth a just and holy cause. But if the great end proposed by it be spiritual, the agency employed to accomplish that end is purely earthly; and, although the object in view be the achievement of much good, that agency may nevertheless be productive of evil. In short, missionary undertaking, however it may be blessed of Heaven, is in itself but human; and subject, like everything else, to errors and abuses. And have not errors and abuses crept into the most sacred places, and may there not be unworthy or incapable missionaries abroad, as well as ecclesiastics of a similar character at home? May not the unworthiness or incapacity of those who assume apostolic functions upon the remote islands of the sea more easily escape detection by the world at large than if it were displayed in the heart of a city? An unwarranted confidence in the sanctity of its apostles—a proneness to regard them as incapable of guile—and an impatience of the least suspicion as to their rectitude as men or Christians, have ever been prevailing faults in the Church. Nor is this to be wondered at: for subject as Christianity is to the assaults of unprincipled foes, we are naturally disposed to regard everything like an exposure of ecclesiastical misconduct as the offspring of malevolence or irreligious feeling. Not even this last consideration, however, shall deter me from the honest expression of my sentiments (197-8).

One should pay attention to Melville's nuanced attitude toward his own critical position in the above reference. What Tommo adopts here is a pragmatic pattern that aims to mitigate the destructiveness of his missionary complaints. Linguistically

[31] See also my relevant discussion above.

speaking, in a standard pragmatic pattern, the speaker would use a marker to facilitate or mitigate his real intention without interpreting the meaning of the marker (54-71). In the reference's case, the marker is Melville's clarification for the holiness of Christian missions, but, as Angemuller suggests, the speaker's pragmatic intention does not lie in the marker but rather in the main syntactic trunk that follows it (60). Melville, after this clarification, immediately turns to his true intention—"An unwarranted confidence in the sanctity of its apostles…have ever been prevailing faults in the Church." Though euphemistically expressed, this ostensibly devout passage delivers a critical doubt that questions the foundation of religion—confidence, or to use another word, faith. The motive behind the writer's use of the pragmatic marker could be twofold. One, this discursive maneuver might reduce the bitterness of his critique; two, like what Hawthorne does, he chooses to "deceive the superficial skimmers of pages" (*The Piazza Tales* 251). But, as Yunte Huang argues, even as Melville writes in such a cautious and secretive way, his antinomian tendency still stands genuine to us close readers of his (91-4).

The second Melvillean type is that of the captain vis-a-vis God. In the English literary tradition, the Pilot-God type is a longstanding commonplace which could date back to the works of Plato's *Stateman*, Milton's "Lycidas," Dryden's *The Hind and the Panther*, and Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar." Particularly for American Literature in the nineteenth century, we can find abundant examples which refer to this religious trope such as Emily Dickinson's poems, James Fenimore Cooper's romances, Herman Melville's novels, Walt Whitman's free verses, and Stephen Crane's fictions.[32] The difference between the American renaissance period and the long Western literary

[32] For a relevant research, see George Monteiro's "The Pilot: God Trope in Nineteenth-Century American Texts."

tradition in terms of the literary application of this Pilot-God type, however, is that the American writers are more obsessed with utilizing the religiosity of this type to shed light on the unreligious antitype in their works, while their English peers lean more toward discussions on Christian tradition itself. In Melville's case, his typological treatment of captain Ahab is exemplary. Lawrance Thompson, in his *Melville's Quarrel with God*, claims that the characters of Ishmael and Ahab in *Moby-Dick* are pretending to honor and praise a Christian attitude of submission and obedience, and, under the guise of a mischievous style, the biblical Jonah grows into a blasphemous Ahab (9-10). This Melvillean style, argues Thompson, reveals the writer's true quarrel with God.

To turn the critical lens further from *Moby-Dick*, one could also locate this pilot-God type in *Typee* and, therefore, verify an early sparkle of Melville's spiritual rebellion. Tommo's criticisms of captain Vangs of the *Dolly* are evident throughout the narrative. In the opening chapter, the narrator depicts the class privileges of his captain. When the *Dolly*'s food and other supplies reach the state of exhaustion after roving endlessly the far seas, it is captain Vangs who still maintains an appropriate diet of pork and chicken (one might also find the rooster's name Pedro as an irony of Saint Peter). In chapter four, when building his legitimacy to desert the ship, Tommo accuses Vangs of his abuse of himself as well as his fellow shipmates. To ratify his own illegal rebellion, claims the narrator:

> To whom could we apply for redress? We had left both law and equity on the other side of the Cape; and unfortunately, with a very few exceptions, our crew was composed of a parcel of dastardly and meanspirited wretches, divided among themselves, and only united in enduring without resistance the unmitigated tyranny of the captain. It would have been mere madness for any two or three of the number, unassisted by the rest, to attempt making a stand against his ill usage. They would only have called down upon themselves the particular vengeance of this "Lord of the Plank," and subjected their shipmates to additional hardships (21).

This is the first of Melville's adoption, I contend, of his captain-God type. Under this

depiction, one readily deciphers the apparent antitype in which Vangs is compared to the Miltonian God. We can conjecture that Melville, though widely adopting typological references, aims to hint a spiritual rebellion in his works which are disguised under the appearance of biblical conformism. In this sense, Tommo's claim that his reasonable desertion is a result of the despotic captain's rule implies Melville's deep-down anti-God inclination. Moreover, near the end of *Typee* when discussing local taboos, Tommo reveals another ominous blasphemy conducted by the headstrong Vangs—his unbridled shooting of albatrosses on Nukuheva island. Ignoring the birds' sanctity and taking advantage of the Western military deterrence, Tommo's captain shoots down dozens of these innocent creatures on his inland safari and is repudiated by the natives on the way back (223).[33] Seeing the local indignation with his own eyes, Melville concludes that Captain Cook's death was a deserved one (234).

The third type is Melville's early spiritual ideotype, an antinomianism that gestures toward an egalitarian future. Though in its immature state, Meville's religious outlook had already taken an initial shape in his career-starting work. This unromantic antinomianism, argues Yunte Huang, transcended the religious containment of the nineteenth century with unconventional textual strategies, or the "ungainly whale gambols" in the writer's own words. Like Hawthorne, Melville was not interested in a teleological development of the world's history, and, instead, was more attracted to a discursive gathering of cyclical stories. To him, history wickedly repeated itself. The imperial Christian ideology "all my brothers are men, instead of all men are my brothers," which Greenblatt severely condemns (139), therefore, does not reside solidly in *Typee* (139). Read in this way, what Brumm criticizes as a singularly and flatly designed characters among Melville's works could be reconciled by what

[33] Also, see my discussion on this segment in chapter one.

Thompson considers as a consistent necessity for an Ishmael-like persona.[34] It is this particular type of personae in *Typee*, I argue, that facilitates Melville's attempt to leave a puritanic stereotype for an antinomian ideotype.

Chapter twenty-four in *Typee*, a chapter dedicated to Melville's South Sea religious reflection, best endorses my argument. As I have discussed above, Melville arranges a three-faceted collection of the Typee religion—an anthropological elaboration of the Ti, the Feast of the Calabash, and the Taboos. But, unlike these anthropological documentations, chapter twenty-four features Melville's personal reflection in terms of the compatibility between Christianity and Polynesian religion. Though latently, it aims for a religious equality. When describing the islanders' worship of various and even arbitrary gods, Melville confesses his own attitude: "As the islanders always maintained a discreet reserve, with regard to my own peculiar views on religion, I thought it would be excessively ill-bred in me to pry into theirs (171)." And he further uncovers an ungodly antitype in his conversation with Kory-Kory. When visiting the mausoleum of the valley's deceased chieftain, Kory-Kory romantically portrays an abundant and utopian heaven after death. But, when questioned whether himself would go immediately to a heaven like that, Kory-Kory replies with resolute negativity—"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" (173). Following Kory-Kory's un-Calvinistic hedonism, Melville hails a religiously ideal future:

> Whenever in the course of my rambles through the valley I happened to be near the chief's mausoleum, I always turned aside to visit it. The place had a peculiar charm for me; I hardly know why; but so it was. As I leaned over the railing and gazed upon the strange effigy and watched the play of the feathery head-dress, stirred by the same breeze which in low tones breathed amidst the lofty palm-trees, I loved to yield myself up to the fanciful superstition of the islanders, and could almost believe that the grim warrior was bound heavenward. In this mood when I turned to depart, I bade him "God speed, and a pleasant voyage." Aye, paddle away, brave chieftain, to the land of spirits! To the material eye thou makest but little progress; but with the eye of faith, I see thy canoe cleaving the bright waves, which die away on those

[34] See Brumm, pp.162, and Thompson, pp.8-9.

> dimly looming shores of Paradise.
>
> This strange superstition affords another evidence of the fact, that however ignorant man may be, he still feels within him his immortal spirit yearning after the unknown future (173).

Delivered with poetic elegance, Tommo's tendency to convert easily to the superstition of the islanders constructs a religious space in which the writer draws the blueprint of a social trend, a pertinent shift that moves from a puritanic typology to an antinomian becoming. And, through this intricate move, Melville's narrative apparently pertains to an "unknown future" of a religious egalitarianism.

Being one restive and rebellious artist, Melville reproaches the fixedness of allegories in a letter to Hawthorne: "Why, ever since Adam, who has got the meaning of this great allegory—the world? Then we pygmies must be content to have our paper allegories but ill comprehended (Davis 142)." We should note that to use the nomenclature of typology to refer to the specifically religious hermeneutics became an academic focus since the 1950s. To those antebellum writers like Melville and Hawthorne, type was almost a synonym of model, symbol, and, in this letter's case, allegory. What he tries to rebel against, therefore, is the containing and constraining power of a cultural yet linguistic hegemony. To resist or retaliate this power and to "tell the unvarnished truth," the literary Ishmael decides to take advantage of the powerful typological tradition, but he also intends to play it with his aesthetic power. In *Israel Potter*, when describing the naval duel between John Paul Jones's and the English ships, Melville writes: "There would seem to be something singularly indicatory in this engagement. It may involve at once a type, a parallel, and a prophecy (120)." Also in his *White Jacket*, Melville typifies an ideal democracy of America—"And we Americans are the peculiar, chosen people—the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world (151)." With his modified typology, Melville fancifully extends the religious space of his age and artfully alludes to a prophetic and

cosmopolitan faith.

To return to the Melvillean production of space. In nineteenth-century America, the contemporary social space was filled with conflicts between the dominant and the emergent social forces and implied a transformation toward different possibilities. More importantly, a tug of war between the dominant and the residual called forth an ideologically futuristic space, or a differential space in Lefebvre's terminology (352-8). In this sense, Melville's literary practice was not targeted at a petit capitalistic commerciality but at a much larger pluralistic poetics in the first place. His travel narratives, as the unvarnished truths, bear their writer's purpose to leave the antebellum narrowness, the colonial possessiveness, and the typological religiousness, and, by doing so, open up spaces for a cosmopolitan ground of literature.

But Melville's spatial expansion in *Typee* also has a further humanitarian implication. In her famous lecture *Unspeakable Things Unspoken*, Toni Morrison gives a racially egalitarian reading of Melville's *Moby-Dick* which, according to her, reveals the writer's transgression against the white ideology in America. She further proclaims that it is racism that causes the severe fragmentation of the self and the psychosis of the American society, and it is Melville's narratives that reflect an amazement at the philosophical inconsistencies of whiteness as ideology (Morrison 381). Thus, transitioning from my discussion so far in terms of a Melvillean expansion of space, I further explore in the next chapter another critical spectrum—the question of race in *Typee*.

CHAPTER THREE

Facing the Nonwhite: Race in *Typee*

> "A lover of his kind, but a hater of his kindred"
>
> —Edmund Burke said of Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Since the eighteenth century, the world's steady population growth and technological advancement in transportation enabled mass continental migration, which exacerbated, if not started, the racial problems on an international scale. America, being a booming land where human races from almost all continents converge, naturally became a racially controversial place. Throughout the American history, we find racism against various ethnic groups, be they African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, Latino Americans, or Jewish Americans. Among these racial conflicts, one that was particularly severe in Melville's antebellum America was the conflict between the white American slave owners and their black African slaves. Contemporary writers like Harriet Beecher Stowe, Fredrick Douglas, and Solomon Northup all produced texts with profound effect upon their readers in terms of their criticism of slavery and racial discrimination. As an active writer and traveler in the eighteen-forties and fifties, Melville certainly was aware of the racial injustice done to the black Americans and included his racial thoughts in many of his works.

But, for a long time since the Melville Revival, his critics were relatively silent on Melville's racial performances. Seminal critics and biographers like Raymond Weaver, D. H. Lawrence, F. O. Matthiessen, and Charles Orson all focused on various themes of his works. It was not until the nineteen fifties, when UNESCO announced

its "Race Question" statements which triggered a wave of moral condemnation against racist holocausts such as the Nazi concentration camps, that scholars began to include discussions of racism in the research of Melville's works. Early criticisms were indeed harsh in interpreting Melville's last novel *The Confidence Man*. Scholars like John Shroeder, Elizabeth Foster, and even the famous Melville Biographer Hershel Parker all provided somewhat negative perspectives on the character Colonel John Moredock "The Indian-hater."[35] Till the nineteen eighties, new generations of Melvillean critics like Sidney Kaplan, Eleanor Simpson, and Carolyn Karcher started to realize that a simple and singular condemnation of those racial references in Melville's works was by no means an applicable route. In her book *Shadow Over the Promised Land: Slavery*, Karcher discusses Melville's antislavery performances in his different stages from *Redburn* to *The Confidence-Man* and claims that, in consistence with his rebellious religious attitude, Melville was a prophetic egalitarian. But these writers seem to put little emphasis on Melville's first travel narrative *Typee* and, to a large extent, consider it as a novice work with a burgeoning critique of slavery.[36] Drawing on the works of these scholars, I find that, under the present literary context, Melville's debut narrative exerts a more far-reaching effect on his readers in shaping a racial ethics which was later probed by the moral philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. Therefore, in this chapter, I intend to explore and interpret Melville's racial attitude in his first and famous travel narrative *Typee*.

The Face of the Typees: An Ethical Literature

[35] See John Shroeder, "Indian-hating: An Ultimate Note on *The Confidence-Man*;" Charles Foster, "Something in Emblems: A Reinterpretation of *Moby-Dick*;" and Hershel Parker, "The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating."

[36] See Karcher, pp.1-8.

The face resists possession, resists my powers.

—Emmanuel Levinas

To talk about the concept of race is essentially to talk about the idea of the Other, and, in turn, about an ontological belief of our own being. Martin Heidegger, in his famous *Being and Time*, proclaims that death is certain, and it is the end of Dasein. Serving as the genesis of the German philosopher's ontology, the certainty of death ensures a possibility for what he calls being-toward-death, which is not an orientation that brings being to its end, but rather an active mode of existence (Heidegger 238). But this active way of being attains its activeness entirely from the certainty of death. We could, however, throw out a Levinasian question: what if death is not certain? It is this very question that signifies Emmanuel Levinas's divergence from a Heideggerian ontology. To Levinas, death is uncontrollable and uncertain. And, departing from such uncertainty, he contends that death represents something absolutely unknowable that approaches. In other words, the vicinity of death indicates that we are in relation with something that is absolutely made of alterity. Our relationship with death, accordingly, determines our own true existence (Levinas 69-74).

Though both originate from their contemplation on death, Levinas's fraternal ethics precedes Heidegger's existential ontology which merely employs an impersonal gesture toward the Other. In *Time and the Other*, the religious Jewish philosopher starts out from the uncertainty of death to posit the ways in which human being should live. His groundbreaking trajectory points to an ontological relationship between the Self and the Other. Different from its Heideggerian counterpart, this Levinasian Other refers further to an "assumed" alterity, an Other that is assumed or undertaken by the

Self:

> The relationship with the Other, the face-to-face with the Other, the encounter with a face that at once gives and conceals the Other, is the situation in which an event happens to a subject who does not assume it, who is utterly unable in its regard, but where nonetheless in a certain way it is in front of the subject. The other "assumed" is the Other (78-9).

Because the Self is the assumer of the Other, it attains a preference (Levinas's word) that enriches and empowers itself. And, in an intersubjective relationship, "I" am strong and rich, whereas the Other is weak and poor. In this sense, this Levinasian preference implies an ethical preference that gives the Self an inalienable responsibility toward the Other (83-4). In his *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas further facilitates his argument of the primary fraternity with the famous concept of the "face." Unlike our physical appearances, this Levinasian face refers to a presentation of the Other that "exceeds the idea of the other in me" (50). Interiorly, the face of the Other has no form added to it but is by no means formless. And, exteriorly, the face calls for a fraternity that precedes ontology, a responsibility that requires our primary attention. That is, what Levinas tries to propose in the face of a material existentialism is "a plane where the I bears itself beyond death and recovers from its return to itself" (253). It is a plane of love that both presupposes the face of the Other and transcends it to contemplate the meaning of subjectivity.

Compatible to the above debate between an existential ontology and a fraternal ethics is Melville's criticism of his famous fellow American—Ralph Waldo Emerson. The renowned latter, though conducting radical introspection on the American way of life in his essays, emphasizes an individualism with an ostensible aggressiveness that echoes his contemporary American expansionism. His ideas of "man as a sovereign state" in "The American Scholar" and the exclamatory reproach "Are they my poor?" in "Self-Reliance" both project an unfriendly gesture toward the Other. In his *The Conduct of Life*, Emerson criticizes the cult of European travels among Americans and

affirms a constrained self-reliance:

> …Can we never extract this tapeworm of Europe from the brain of our countrymen? One sees very well what their fate must be. He that does not fill a place at home, cannot abroad. He only goes there to hide his insignificance in a large crowd. You do not think you will find anything there which you have not see at home? The stuff of all countries is just the same (90).

Reading such Emerson's limitations in his own copy, Melville marked the "You" sentence and annotated on the top of the page—"Yet, possibly, Rome or Athens has something to show or suggest that Chicago has not."[37] Since travel, as a multimodal way to know the world, contributes undeniably to Melville's intellectual growth, Emerson's American-centered geopolitics appears noticeably narrow to Melville's Pacific cosmopolitanism.

In addition to disagreement on travel, Melville's concept of the Other diverges from Emerson's teleological history and racial evolution, for Emerson's I, as a "transparent eyeball," still emphasizes a relationship with or within the sphere of nature, or an Emersonian God for that matter. Facing an ordeal nature, Emerson's position toward the Other is more utilitarian and assertive. The famous American transcendentalist in his epistemology still leans more toward certain Calvinistic remnants such as the original sin and a teleological temperance.[38] When discussing the racial problem of America in his *English Traits*, though Emerson condemns the adoption of slavery in his country, he nonetheless looks at such matter through the lens of a Linnaeus taxonomy and praises an evolutionary mixture between different races for its pragmatic benefits.[39] Melville, however, questions this teleological development of man after his South Seas travels, and we could evidently find his sympathetic racial attitude from his South Seas series.[40]

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[37] See Melville's Marginalia Online at http://melvillesmarginalia.org/Viewer.aspx.
[38] See William Braswell's essay "Melville as a Critic of Emerson," pp.327.
[39] See Emerson, *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* pp.548.
[40] In chapter 24 in *Moby-Dick*, Ishmael gallantly hails that if there's anything precious in his writing, he

In *White-Jacket*, Jack Chase evocatively encourages his gun-deck bard to stand the criticism of his poetry, "the public and the people! Ay, ay, my lads, let us hate the one and cleave to the other (192)!" Whereas the line pertains to an aesthetic negotiation between a poet's individuality and the public's assimilation, we can evidently detect Melville's ethical position in terms of a poetic assumption of the Other throughout *White-Jacket*. This Melvillean poetics, different from an Emersonian isolation of individuals, mirrors a Levinasian ethics that precedes Melville's time. It also links to a significant point that is usually forgotten by some Melville's critics (such as Wai-chee Dimock, I shall discuss further in the next section)—the primary motive of Melville's sea travels. Why the son from a well-to-do family of trades decided to sleep and work with common sailors from the bottom of American society? Unlike Hershel Parker notes in his Melville biography that Melville and his brother went to sea mainly because of financial difficulty (180-203), Ishmael, in the opening of *Moby-Dick*, gives a confession alluding a more possible answer:

> Call me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off—then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings toward the ocean with me (16).

Here, the famous Melvillean character reveals that lack of money is only a minor reason for his sailor years. What finally pushes Ishmael to the ships, then, is a lust toward different seas and worlds. And, in an Levinasian sense, the "lust" is a fraternal curiosity that embodies a pursuit of the face of the Other.

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would ascribe all the honor to whaling, for a whale-ship was his Yale college and his Harvard (95).

Apart from manifesting itself in his later works like the abovementioned, Melville's ethical literature can be traced to many other works of his. Carolyn Karcher, in her *Shadow over the Promised Land: Slavery, Race, and Violence in Melville's America*, reflects on Melville's struggling critique of the American racial problem from two contradictory perspectives—his vigorous condemnation of slavery and his equally strong hate against any form of violence, be it exerted by the black or white (2-3). John Carlos Rowe puts Karcher's argument further. To Rowe, Melville's racial critique can be seen even in the author's first work *Typee*. He argues that the writer's debut destabilizes his readers' processes of understanding the racial Other by way of his criticism of the US imperialism in the Pacific and his allegory of two types of narratives—the Puritan captivity narrative and the fugitive slave narrative. Rowe keenly links *Typee*'s reference of the American captains like David Porter and Joseph Ingraham and their maritime activities to Melville's latent criticism of the US imitation of its European opponents' imperialism in the Pacific (78-82). Drawing from Karcher and Rowe and from my reasoning in the first two chapters, I notice that Melville's cosmopolitan ethics is evidently present through his anthropological writing of *Typee*, and this ethics, I argue, derived its tendency from his South Sea travels during which the sailor writer saw a domestic capitalistic coercion that drives the Western colonialization in the Pacific. Witnessing the colonial invasion dressed as a civilized exchange of culture on the South Sea islands, Melville writes his sensitive observations and complexed contemplations in *Typee* from a fraternal attitude toward his racial Other.

First, this fraternal ethics is inherently present from the outset of Melville's writing of the book. As I have argued in chapter one, the purpose of his resorting to writing, if not to openly challenge a set of contemporary pride and prejudices, is to

collect his lived experience through a literary engagement at least. In other words, through the recording of his Typee experience, Melville aims initially and crucially at a cosmopolitan outlook toward the Other. And this Melvillean cosmopolitan fraternity starts from his criticism of the white arrogancy which came with the American sailors onto the Polynesian shores. Apart from the abovementioned Rowe's linkage of *Typee*'s reference of David Porter to Melville's criticism of US imperialism, the Melvillean narrator's depiction of the first encounter between him and the Typees is exemplary of a cultural transposition:

> At last the wrath of the chief evaporated, and in a few moments he was as placid as ever. Laying his hand upon his breast, he now gave me to understand that his name was "Mehevi," and that, in return, he wished me to communicate my appellation. I hesitated for an instant, thinking that it might be difficult for him to pronounce my real name, and then with the most praiseworthy intentions intimated that I was known as "Tom." But I could not have made a worse selection; the chief could not master it: "Tommo," "Tomma," "Tommee," every thing (sic) but plain "Tom." As he persisted in garnishing the word with an additional syllable, I compromised the matter with him at the word "Tommo;" and by that name I went during the entire period of my stay in the valley. The same proceeding was gone through with Toby, whose mellifluous appellation was more easily caught.
>
> An exchange of names is equivalent to a ratification of good will and amity among these simple people; and as we were aware of this fact, we were delighted that it had taken place on the present occasion.
>
> Reclining upon our mats, we now held a kind of levee, giving audience to successive troops of the natives, who introduced themselves to us by pronouncing their respective names, and retired in high good humor on receiving ours in return. During this ceremony the greatest merriment prevailed, nearly every announcement on the part of the islanders being followed by a fresh sally of gaiety, which induced me to believe that some of them at least were innocently diverting the company at our expense, by bestowing upon themselves a string of absurd titles, of the humor of which we were of course entirely ignorant (72).

The narrator being called "Tommo" instead of "Tom" and the Typees "diverting at our expense" during the name-exchanging process both suggest Melville's experience of being laughed at by the locals in such encounter. It is possible that, when reading the above referred passages, Melville's white readers would show contempt for the Typee laughter as they believe it is the "civilized" who has the right to laugh. But Melville seems to depict this encounter deliberately this way. Later in *Moby-Dick*, when being ridiculed by Ishmael for his way of shouldering a wheelbarrow, Queequeg replies with an anecdote about a white captain washed his hands in a punch bowl at some islander's

wedding (the captain mistook it as a finger-glass) and a profound question "Didn't our people laugh (57)?" Carrying a fraternal attitude throughout *Typee*, Tommo proclaims at the end of his narrative: "When at Rome do as the Romans do, I held to be so good a proverb, that being in Typee I made a point of doing as the Typees did. Thus I ate poee-poee as they did; I walked about in a garb striking for its simplicity; and I reposed on a community of couches…" (209).

Moving onwards from this inherent fraternity toward the Pacific Other, Melville further romanticizes the Typee image in his book through two literary maneuvers. One, I regard what many Melville scholars have verified to be the fictive part of *Typee* as a significant substantiation of his romanticization of the Other.[41] Pertaining to my previous discussion of his literary anthropology, Melville's description of the reduced tattooing of Fayaway compared to her male counterpart is a salient example as it reveals the writer's romanticizing strategy. Moreover, Tommo's Typee girlfriend's other idiosyncrasies, such as her beautiful look, mild temperament, and luring sexuality, further convince readers of a perfect Pacific Other. Two, as the narrative develops, such romanticization of individuals is expanded to a more general idealization of the Typee society. In the book's chapter twenty-seven, a reflective discussion of the social condition of the Typees, Melville starts with seeking explanations for the prevailing civility among the Typees:

> …During the time I lived among the Typees, no one was ever put upon his trial for any offence against the public. To all appearances there were no courts of law or equity. There was no municipal police for the purpose of apprehending vagrants and disorderly characters. In short, there were no legal provisions whatever for the well-being and conservation of society, the enlightened end of civilized legislation. And yet everything went on in the valley with a harmony and smoothness unparalleled, I will venture to assert, in the most select, refined, and pious associations of mortals in Christendom. How are we to explain this enigma? These islanders were heathens! savages! ay, cannibals! and how came they, without the aid of established law, to exhibit, in so eminent a degree, that social order which is the greatest blessing and highest pride of the social state (200)?

[41] See Charles Robert Anderson's *Melville in the South Seas*, pp.151-6.

It is possible that one would take this passage as an apparent discrimination against the Typees for using words like "heathens, savages, and cannibals." But we should bear Melville's contemporary racial ideology in mind that it is very possible that his white American and British readers were expecting the adoption of these racially prejudiced appellations. And Melville, I argue, takes advantage of this linguistically conformist writing to win the trust of his white readers so that he could go further and idealize an egalitarian and cosmopolitan paradise in the South Pacific:

> …In the darkest nights they slept securely, with all their worldly wealth around them, in houses the doors of which were never fastened. The disquieting ideas of theft or assassination never disturbed them. Each islander reposed beneath his own palmetto thatching, or sat under his own breadfruit tree, with none to molest or alarm him. There was not a padlock in the valley, nor anything that answered the purpose of one: still there was no community of goods. This long spear, so elegantly carved and highly polished, belongs to Wormoonoo: it is far handsomer than the one which old Marheyo so greatly prizes; it is the most valuable article belonging to its owner. And yet I have seen it leaning against a cocoa-nut tree in the grove, and there it was found when sought for. Here is a sperm-whale tooth, graven all over with cunning devices: it is the property of Karluna: it is the most precious of the damsel's ornaments. In her estimation its price is far above rubies–and yet there hangs the dental jewel by its cord of braided bark, in the girl's house, which is far back in the valley; the door is left open, and all the inmates have gone off to bathe in the stream (201).

Unlike what Captain Cook pens as nail-thieves that deserved to be shot at, Melville's Polynesian Typees are inherently virtuous like any other race all over the world—with all their worldly wealth around them, they never lock their doors in the darkest nights.[42] And, to further facilitate his idealization, Melville reminds his readers at the end that, in contrast to the brutal Cook who objectified and possessed the indigenous islanders, the lovely Kory-Kory family, simply out of an empathetic understanding of homesickness, aid Tommo's escape in spite of their communities abrupt detaining order.

But unlike some critics who take Melville's romanticization as an incorrigible exoticism and imperialism[43], I argue a cosmopolitan interpretation of Melvillean racial

[42] On the same page, Melville even take the trouble of explaining the thieving actions recorded by other European travelers in one of his few footnotes.

[43] See Jincai Yang's *Herman Melville and Imperialism* and Wai-Chee Dimock's *Empire for Liberty*.

performances in *Typee*. In many anthropological passages of the book, I read a Levinasian face-to-face from the narrator's seemingly digressive discourse. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas speaks of a face-to-face relation with the Other that produces a critical attitude toward the Self (80-1). Accordingly, an egalitarian meeting with the Other invites the Self to reflect on its weaknesses and narrowness, and in turn makes its existence a meaningful one. In this sense, Tommo's sex experience with Fayaway alludes a prophetic mixture of race which is refused by the majority of Melville's contemporary white American elites (during the Hawaii annexation argument almost half a century later, the Senate and Grover Cleveland's government still worried that the intermarriages which would take place after the annexation would be a big problem for the white-governed US[44]). Also, Melville's reference to Typee's polyandry marital system is rendered with a disguised query in terms of a contrast to the taken-for-granted monogamy in his American society back home. To extend my relevant discussion in chapter one based on a face-to-face ethics, I consider Melville's such anthropological writing of the Typee culture a Levinasian criticism of his domestic racial supremacy.

Connected but different, Melville's attitude toward the Typee Tattooing is another significant manifestation of his face-to-face relationship. As I have discussed in previous chapters, Tommo's fear against being tattooed on the face has no apparent allegorical interpretation and serves mainly as the structural excuse for his final escape. But I need to further such argument with an ethical tone here. If a face-to-face relationship requires Melville to question and criticize his own self and his own culture, it is equally reasonable for us to regard Tommo's refusal of being tattooed on the "face" as a refusal to "lose face." According to Jill Robbins, a Levinasian face-to-face

[44] See chapter 9 in Ruth Tabrah's *Hawaii: a History*.

requires a front-to-front match-up, which is a geometric metaphor for a prejudice-free approach toward the Other, for its ethical effectiveness (18, 68). This means if one party approach the other from an angle, or with an agenda or a mask, he will "lose his face" and in turn lose the opportunity to know the truth.[45] This perfectly explains Melville's anxiety when under the imminent danger of being tattooed on the face. Similar to his critical stance on the Typee religion (like I pointed out in chapter one as well, he is critical of some of the Typee taboos and rituals in the Ti), Melville's face-to-face with the Typees represents a self-respect and self-maintenance while at the same time reflects on his personal and social defects. In short, he intends to keep both his own face and the face of his Typee Other.

From Melville's fraternal and romantic narrative to his rational and face-to-face engagement, I learn that his literary ethics clearly gestures toward an Avant-garde and futuristic cosmopolitanism between different races. When Tommo first lays his eyes on his later rescuer Marnoo, he feels an overwhelming jealousy against the popular indigenous traveler:

> Tinor placed before him a calabash of poee-poee, from which the stranger regaled himself, alternating every mouthful with some rapid exclamation which was eagerly caught up and echoed by the crowd that completely filled the house. When I observed the striking devotion of the natives to him, and their temporary withdrawal of all attention from myself, I felt not a little piqued. The glory of Tommo is departed, thought I, and the sooner he removes from the valley the better. These were my feelings at the moment, and they were prompted by that glorious principle inherent in all heroic natures-the strong-rooted determination to have the biggest share of the pudding or go without any of it (137).

Perhaps Melville read Joel Barlow's "The Hasty Pudding" before his writing of *Typee* and had a compelling resonation with Barlow's cosmopolitan persona in the mock-epic.[46] Here in this dramatic scene of his narrative, Melville completely yields himself to the assimilation into his Typee Other and, therefore, obliges himself with a jealousy

[45] See Yunte Huang, pp.153.
[46] See J. A. Leo Lemay's essay on "The Hasty Pudding."

that only applies to a fellow member of the same group. Likewise, the moment of Tommo's cosmopolitan tendency comes vivaciously in his documentation of the Typee "Feast of Calabashes." Dressed as a Typee dandy, Tommo illustriously proves his cosmopolitan motto "When at Rome do as the Romans do":

> When we reached the rock that abruptly terminated the path, and concealed from us the festive scene, wild shouts and a confused blending of voices assured me that the occasion, whatever it might be, had drawn together a great multitude. Kory-Kory, previous to mounting the elevation, paused for a moment, like a dandy at a ball-room door, to put a hasty finish to his toilet. During this short interval, the thought struck me that I ought myself perhaps to be taking some little pains with my appearance. But as I had no holiday raiment, I was not a little puzzled to devise some means of decorating myself. However, as I felt desirous to create a sensation, I determined to do all that lay in my power; and knowing that I could not delight the savages more than by conforming to their style of dress, I removed from my person the large robe of tappa which I was accustomed to wear over my shoulders whenever I sallied into the open air, and remained merely girt about with a short tunic descending from my waist to my knees.
>
> My quick-witted attendant fully appreciated the compliment I was paying to the costume of his race, and began more sedulously to arrange the folds of the one only garment which remained to me. Whilst he was doing this, I caught sight of a knot of young lasses, who were sitting near us on the grass surrounded by heaps of flowers which they were forming into garlands. I motioned to them to bring some of their handywork to me; and in an instant a dozen wreaths were at my disposal. One of them I put round the apology for a hat which I had been forced to construct for myself out of palmetto-leaves, and some of the others I converted into a splendid girdle. These operations finished, with the slow and dignified step of a full-dressed beau I ascended the rock. (161-2)

From Poetics to Responsibilities: A Literary Decolonization

In his *Guns, Germs and Steel*, Jared Diamond reminds us that, when discussing historical events (especially a notorious one like colonialism), we should not confuse the justification or acceptance of results with the explanation of causes (17-8). As a white anthropologist who studies New Guinean culture in a strong wave of postcolonial criticism, Diamond means to stress that, though colonialism is brutal in many ways, it nonetheless deserves to be revisited, reflected upon and, most of all, reminded of. This academic attitude can be readily adopted in our interpretation of literature with colonial references. As literary critics, we should not fretfully banish those works with colonial images like hot potatoes, but instead, as Roland Barthes

advocates for a boundless utopia in *Writing Degree Zero*, we should jump out of those texts' old historical context and keep rereading their works from a more imminent and more connected structure. In this sense, rather than assuming Melville's literary liberty has to be built on his representation of an American empire like Wai-Chee Dimock claims in her *Empire for Liberty*, I argue that Melville's poetics evolve from a fraternal ethics, as I have discussed in the above section, to a literary responsibility that hints a prophetic decolonization which I will demonstrate in the rest of this chapter.

By this Melvillean evolution, I mean the writer's careful tread over a racial ground that, in contrast with to today's postcolonial stance, is swamped by imperial prejudices and scientific racism. It decides that Melville's racial responsibility is not overtly obvious in many of his works including *Typee*. But critics have noticed his inclination as well as hesitation in telling an honest history of the Pacific. For example, D. H. Lawrence reads in *Typee* and *Omoo* an idealist tendency of telling a fraternal and futuristic relationship that transcends Melville's contemporary ideology (Lawrence's description of this relationship is vague and general, but one could still easily assume that, by relationship, he means a love relationship that crosses the boundary of sex and race), but he scorns Melville's reticent way of telling as timid and even weak (his old guns need to be upgraded and fired).[47] Gilles Deleuze also regards Melville's travel to Typee as a "return" to a more primitive state of man—a return to mommy and daddy, whom he tries to escape from the outset. In other words, Melville's escape leads to a voluntary deterritorialization which at the same time is a helpless reterritorialization.[48] To return or not to return: it is a Hamletian question that Melville has to answer, but, as soon as he answers it, he is torn and ruptured.

[47] See D. H. Lawrence, pp.132.
[48] See Gilles Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateau*, pp.188. And also see, *Dialogue II*, pp.36-7.

This rupture reveals that a radical engagement of responsibility, which post-colonial critics like Edward Said welcome today, would be extremely difficult to employ in Melville's time. Because it was a period when minds and ideologies were static and hegemonic and a young writer being openly revolutionary in his work would be disastrous to his career. Nonetheless, in line with Diamond's ethical attitude, I find the narratology in *Typee* still alludes a brave responsibility that transcends the nineteenth century America. Though not chosen by Melville as an apparent thread of plot, this literary responsibility is manifested in his many digressive social reflections which have been discussed in previous chapters. Through an ostensibly calm and humorous tone, Melville successfully confuses his allusion to a cross-racial and cross-gender future with a relaxed and fragmented mention of his detested hegemonies.

Let me start with Melville's use of pronouns. As Anne McClintock critiques, since the Enlightenment, the imperial discourse often seeks help from the language of sexuality so as to naturalize the hegemonic colonial expansion, and, to do so, its manifestation of power is often articulated through a male penetration to expose the female interior (23). This indicates that, in colonial texts, the Europeans and the whites at most times are "He"s and the natives and the "primitive" cultures "She"s. Interestingly, though lived in the burgeoning years of American colonization, Melville precociously inverts such problematic use of pronoun since the start of his career. In places where Tommo compares the Eurocentric civilization with the Typee society, we only see Melville's preference for the feminine pronoun "she" over the paternal "he":

> The naked wretch who shivers beneath the bleak skies, and starves among the inhospitable wilds of Terra-del-Fuego, might indeed be made happier by civilization, for it would alleviate his physical wants. But the voluptuous Indian, with every desire supplied, whom Providence has bountifully provided with all the sources of pure and natural enjoyment, and from whom are removed so many of the ills and pains of life—what has he to desire at the hands of Civilization? She may "cultivate his mind," —may "elevate his thoughts," —these I

> believe are the established phrases—but will he be the happier? Let the once smiling and populous Hawiian islands, with their now diseased, starving, and dying natives, answer the question. The missionaries may seek to disguise the matter as they will, but the facts arc incontrovertible; and the devoutest Christian who visits that groun with an unbiased mind must go away mournfully asking—"Are these, alas! the fruits of twenty-five years of enlightening (*Typee* 124)?"
>
> In justice to the missionaries, however, I will willingly admit, that whatever evils may have resulted from their collective mismanagement of the business of the mission, and from the want of vital piety evinced by some of their number, still the present deplorable condition of the Sandwich Islands is by no means wholly chargeable against them. The demoralising influence of a dissolute foreign population, and the frequent visits of all descriptions of vessels, have tended not a little to increase the evils alluded to. In a word, here, as in every case where Civilization has in any way been introduced among those whom we call savages, she has scattered her vices, and withheld her blessings (198).

In these two cases, Tommo's consistent choice of the feminine pronoun reflects the Melvillean narrator's less aggressive attitude toward the "uncivilized." As of the latter one, enhanced by the personified figure of speech, one could further see a wicked witch (here I only use this long-discriminated literary figure as a link to linguistic imagination) disseminating her black magic over the islands of the Pacific "dwarves." The endangering aspect of American colonization is self-explanatorily worth being criticized in the eyes of Melville.

Another Melvillean insinuation of the illegitimacy of colonization occurs when he introduces the local "tacit common-sense law" in chapter twenty-seven, a chapter serving as the author's cultural studies of Typee:

> It may reasonably be inquired, how were these people governed? How were their passions controlled in their everyday transactions? It must have been by an inherent principle of honesty and charity toward each other. They seemed to be governed by that sort of tacit common-sense law which, say what they will of the inborn lawlessness of the human race, has its precepts graven on every breast. The grand principles of virtue and honor, however they may be distorted by arbitrary codes, are the same all the world over: and where these principles are concerned, the right or wrong of any action appears the same to the uncultivated as to the enlightened mind. It is to this indwelling, this universally diffused perception of what is *just* and *noble*, that the integrity of the Marquesans in their intercourse with each other, is to be attributed (201).

As a traveler who sees the Typee tribe with his own eyes, Melville disagrees with the popular opinion that the Pacific aboriginals are lawless. To his cosmopolitan eye, this Typee common-sense law is "graven" on the mind to enact the grand principles of virtue and honor that are "the same the world over." From a racial perspective, Melville

reveals his belief in the universal sameness and goodness of human beings. In this egalitarian vein, therefore, he attributes the integrity of the Marquesans to an a priori quality that transcends the boundaries of language and culture. To dig deeper, if look at such "graven precepts" from an ideological perspective of Louis Althusser,[49] we could also read a different and similar egalitarianism: I say different because looking from an ideological angle requires readers to apply the Western materialistic philosophy when reading *Typee*; I say similar because this "tacit common-sense law," or maybe we can call it a Typee ideology, has the manipulative power over the individuals in the tribe, and, like its Western counterpart, it disturbs the equal condition of face-to-face. But, regardless of what approach we adopt in analyzing this textual moment, the author's decolonizing ethics is nonetheless as visible as it is reasonable. In brief, the underling truth of this Melvillean narrative is that the primitives are not primitive and the civilized are not civilized.

Moreover, moving onward from this literary decolonization, Melville evokes a racial responsibility through his seemingly nonchalant reference of Typee culture. He writes through Tommo's discussion of the concept of property:

> So much for the respect in which "personal property" is held in Typee; how secure an investment of "real property" may be, I cannot take upon me to say. Whether the land of the valley was the joint property of its inhabitants, or whether it was parcelled out among a certain number of landed proprietors who allowed everybody to "squat" and "poach" as much as he or she pleased, I never could ascertain. At any rate, musty parchments and title deeds there were none on the island; and I am half inclined to believe that the inhabitants hold their broad valleys in fee simple from Nature herself; to have and to hold, so long as grass grows and water runs; or until their French visitors, by a summary mode of conveyancing, shall appropriate them to their own benefit and behoof (201-2).

The narrator's long and paralleled clauses on the Typee property concept and the writer's restraint of criticism of Western colonialism both unveil an ironical contrast which invites his readers to ask an essential question—exactly who steals from whom?

[49] See his famous essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus," pp.232-72.

Geographically speaking, the Marquesan islands have little commercial value other than being Pacific transfer stations and logistic harbors for ships. They, therefore, were never critically useful to the colonial Westerners, except that their people and natural resources were treated as cheap consumable possessions. When they were exhausted and ruined as the unavoidable expenditure in the European and American expansion, no history would even bother to write about their losses. But Melville's such travel recording in *Typee* restores the truth that, the French and American colonizers steal, or for that matter rob, from the Typees their natural and social properties, and at the same time sugar up their atrocities in the name of civilization. As John Carlos Rowe points out, when writing his first travel narrative, Melville clearly had in mind the parochial mindset of his white readers, and, through this prosaic and even nonchalant narration, he peeps at a strange new world as a means of articulating the horror at home.[50]

Perhaps we should return to *Typee*'s chapter four, when Tommo articulates his indictment of the American Captain David Porter. After ironically calling him "brave and accomplished," the Melvillean narrator reveals Porter and his troops as "invaders" and their engagement with the Typees "unprovoked atrocities." He reflects:

> Thus it is that they whom we denominate "savages" are made to deserve the title. When the inhabitants of some sequestered island first descry the "big canoe" of the European rolling through the blue waters toward their shores, they rush down to the beach in crowds, and with open arms stand ready to embrace the strangers. Fatal embrace! They fold to their bosoms the vipers whose sting is destined to poison all their joys; and the instinctive feeling of love within their breasts is soon converted into the bitterest hate.
>
> The enormities perpetrated in the South Seas upon some of the inoffensive islanders wellnigh pass belief. These things are seldom proclaimed at home; they happen at the very ends of the earth; they are done in a corner, and there are none to reveal them. But there is, nevertheless, many a petty trader that has navigated the Pacific whose course from island to island might be traced by a series of cold-blooded robberies, kidnappings, and murders, the iniquity of which might be considered almost sufficient to sink her guilty timbers to the bottom of the sea (26-7).

Situating prior to Tommo's adventure into the valley of Typee, these passages uncover one of Melville's most significant intentions with his first travel narrative—to describe

[50] See Rowe, pp.95. And Greenblatt, pp.150.

another world in the South Seas. With this description, he displays a disgust at the material-oriented and expansion-motivated ideology in his home country, and at the same time an insight into the lack of basic morality that his civilization claims to have in possession of.

Further looking at his later works, one could evidently observe the author's proactive allusion of a responsible attitude toward the nonwhites. From the superfluous Typee guardian Kory-Kory, the brave New Zealand harpooneer Bembo in *Omoo*, the natives of Tahiti and the slaves of Vivenza in *Mardi*, the dandy mulatto Lavender in *Redburn* to the equitably respected sailor Tawney in *White-Jacket*, Melville's travel narratives are copiously filled with favorable images of other races.[51] His later fictions cohere with these early narratives in terms of such a racially futuristic character preference. In the canonic *Moby-Dick*, Melville's racial reference reaches its climax—we see a kaleidoscopic proliferation of the author's racial representations. The Polynesian Queequeg, the African Daggoo, the Native American Tashtego and the Parsee Fedallah and his "five dusky phantoms," functioning like supporting characters in a Shakespearean play, all become integral to Melville's cosmopolitan racial awakening. Even the seemingly insignificant elements, such as the stereotyped black cook being taunted by Stubb, the Spanish Sailor insulting Daggoo, or the Pequod being named after an Indian village which was wiped out by the white colonists, add seamlessly to the book's theme of racial responsibility. Moreover, as Carolyn Karcher and many other Melville scholars show, Melville's most racially revolutionary works are *Benito Cereno* and *The Confidence-Man*, which both allude their author's explicit

[51] See Edward S. Grejda's book: *The Common Continent of Men*.

accusation of American slavery.[52]

From this line of characters, we see a constant Melvillean escape for an ethical Other, or to put it metaphorically, an Ishmaelian return to Queequeg's bosom. This literary engagement has an immediate indication of slavery in America. Melville reveals that, to the slaveowners and colonizers of the time, it was easier to enslave other races than to realize that humans are all trapped by our own stupidity and weaknesses. Taking advantage of his literary flight, he aspires to leave his time's ideological conservativeness and stasis. As Leslie Fiedler points out, Melville also helps to shape a longstanding American literary tradition in which the white heroes constantly leave the breasts of their beautiful women for the bosom of their nonwhite dudes.[53] His less direct but nevertheless strong critique of America's domestic Calvinism, capitalism, and slavery, therefore, can be construed as his ethical appeal for a social egalitarianism in the antebellum America.

Similar to Levinas's ethics but from a more materialistic point of view, Karl Jaspers, in his *The Origin and Goal of History*, famously proposes that mankind, in the course of history, has grown into a unity that presupposes our difference from other living beings (42-3). But looking back from a racial highland where we now stand, writers like Herman Melville and Nathanial Hawthorne were far ahead compared to their contemporary scientists like Josiah Nott and William Ripley in terms of their understandings of race.[54] And, like Toni Morrison argues in her "The Site of Memory," the age of enlightenment, which many are grateful of for its introduction of science

[52] See Carolyn Karcher's *Shadow Over the Promised Land*; Eleanor Simpson's "Melville and the Negro;" William M. Ramsey's "The Moot Points of Melville's Indian-Hating;" and Stephen Matterson's "Indian-Hater, Wild Man: Melville's *Confidence-Man.*"

[53] See Leslie Fiedler's "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!."

[54] See Martha Baldwin's essay on Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*. Also See Josiah Nott's *Types of Manking* and William Ripley's *The Races of Europe*.

and reason, was at the same time an age of Scientific Racism in which even the famous intellectuals like Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and David Hume had documented their conclusions that blacks were incapable of intelligence (69). Then reading Melville's *Typee* from the perspective of a Levinasian ethics reminds us of what Claude Lévi-Strauss writes in his *Race and History*, "By refusing to consider as human those who seem to us to be the most 'savage' or 'barbarous' of their representatives, we merely adopt one of their own characteristic attitudes. The barbarian is, first and foremost, the man who believes in barbarism (12)."

In this modern sense, Melville's poetic truth in *Typee* is between two locations—the West and the Pacific. It presents itself as a mediation between the Self and Other. Like a freed prisoner in Plato's allegory, Melville walked out of an American imperial cave and aimed to gaze at a truer and more futuristic human society. But, as he pens a cosmopolitan hope in his narrative, Melville was still pessimistic about the solution of an antebellum dilemma—where was the problematic yet dominant wave of colonization directing his humanity toward? Perhaps the answer is already buried in such a Melvillean poetics with a Levinasian morality—if one cannot stop the brutality of colonization, he at least should record it, even just for the purpose of recording. A hundred years later, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* might have provided us with a similar answer of the twentieth century. As I will try to explain in the coming chapters, this famous Beat's work has a coherent characteristic which could be termed Deleuzianly as another American becoming.

PART II

On the Road and Jack Kerouac's Literary Becoming

When New Criticism became a huge hit in the 1940s, the American literary circle seemed to have forgotten about the tradition of romanticism and were eager to embrace the so-called rational analytics of literature. Highlighting elements such as rhyme, meter, plot, structure, irony, and ambiguity, the New Critics, like the aestheticists, sought for intrinsic value and absolute standards of literature. Their critical purpose reminds one of David Hume's famous standards of taste. In his influential essay, Hume claims that, in *Don Quixode*, the ability of Sancho's kinsmen to detect impurities in wine, which merely represents their sharp sense of taste, should be taken as a proof of aesthetic ability.[55] This belief, which regards that the aesthetic abilities belong to the few, or to the elite, was more or less reclaimed by the New Critics (e.g., I. A. Richards acknowledges that an internally necessary work is a successful one regardless of the intention of its writer and the influence of its historical background[56]). However, one may argue that, in the postwar America in the 1950s, establishing arbitrary standards of writing, such as Hume and the New Critics advocate in their works, is in fact a limit to literary creation. In this sense, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, due to its abandonment of the arbitrary standards of its time, suffered from hardships in finding a publisher and from being excluded from the classics of American literature.

Fortunately, as Susan Cheever argues in *American Bloomsbury*, Kerouac's

[55] See Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste." And, according to American philosopher George Dickie, Hume discloses a critical mistake in his reasoning—though admitting differences in tastes, he decides to believe that there is a universal agreement about which characteristics are merits and which defects. See Dickie, *The Century of Taste*, pp.137.

[56] See Richards, pp.252.

America also had a great resemblance to Emerson's 1840s when individual adventure was prized and all the old rules suddenly seemed corrupt (10). Resonating with the spontaneous elements in the narrative, readers were immediately hooked to *On the Road*. They clung to Kerouac's narration of the mad trips despite its incompatibility with the standards of New Criticism. To quote what Deleuze calls a multiplying aesthetics, great literature is written in a sort of foreign language and all mistranslations result in beauty (*Dialogues II*, 5). From Melville to Kerouac, American literature indeed shows a constant-escaping tradition that ultimately becomes the most fascinating scene of writing. In this part of my dissertation, I intend to situate Kerouac in the backdrop of the postwar period to consider his contribution to the materially prosperous but spiritually destitute country, and to show Kerouac's endeavor of traveling beyond the boundaries of literature.

CHAPTER FOUR

Becoming Beat: Kerouac's Digression and Improvisation in *On the Road*

> Uninhibited by customary usage and narrow definitions, language wins a remarkable freedom and power of improvisation which has wrongly been considered to be the monopoly of poetry but which actually defines all types of writing.
>
> —Pierre Macherey

Unlike *The Town and the City* which was mostly ignored when it was published, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* came out as a big hit. To use Joyce Johnson's memorable sentence, on the night of September fifth, 1957, Kerouac "lay down obscure for the last time in his life. The ringing phone woke him next morning and he was famous."[57] Hailed by *New York Times* reviewer Gilbert Millstein as "the most beautifully executed, the clearest and the most important utterance yet made by the beat generation," the book heralded a turn of cultural consciousness in the United States. But sadly, the same did not take place in the literary world. Echoing Truman Capote's curt accusation "it's not writing, it's typewriting," Norman Podhoretz, who happened to be Kerouac's fellow Columbia alumnus, in his essay titled "The Know-nothing Bohemians" attacks Kerouac for his "inability to express anything in words (313)." Norman Mailer, in his famous *Advertisements for Myself*, asserts that Kerouac "lacks discipline, intelligence, honesty and a sense of the novel (465)." Although the long-awaited publication of *On the Road* brought him fame and a short relief from economic plight, Kerouac barely enjoyed the status of a significant writer outside his Beat circle.

Worse yet, the literary attacks continued in the new millennium. Harold Bloom,

[57] See Joyce Johnson, *Minor Characters*, pp.185.

in the introduction of his edited critical anthology of Kerouac, denounces *On the Road* as a transient fad, like *Harry Potter*, that will be rubbed down and out and become rubbish in time. He refuses to put the work on par with Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Melville's *Moby-Dick*, and Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, concluding that, like Ginsberg's *Howl*, it is an effortless Oedipal lament that lacks the delicately nuanced American Artistry (1-2). In a similar tone, Roger Kimball in his famous *The Long March* calls Kerouac an insecure narcissist who spent most of his adult life living with his mother and refused to pay a penny for the support of his own child. He further condemns Kerouac's spontaneous writing style as exactly as Capote puts it—typing (49-50).

But, compared to these peers' attacks, what tortured Kerouac the most was the sad history of *On the Road*'s publication. For nearly six years since its first typescript, the novel had been passing around virtually all the big publishers in New York—Little, Brown; Dutton; Dodd, Mead; Viking; Ace Books; and Knopf (Gewirtz 109-10). They all rejected it. Though Viking finally agreed to reconsider the novel at the suggestion of its advisor Malcolm Cowley, the company nonetheless made clear that Kerouac had to deal with his book's structural digressions before it could be accepted. In a letter to Kerouac, Cowley criticizes that it is exactly the former's structural looseness that hold the novel back from being published, and he suggests Kerouac deal with the problem quickly and effectively (486-7).

Reflecting on these critical problems of *On the Road*, I find that these critics primarily target two features of the book—its digressive structure according to Cowley and its improvisational syntax according to Capote and Podhoretz. To these fellows of the same trade, the novel's two Kerouacian features transgress and betray the principle of literature and only stand as signs for its writer's lack of literary competence. But

thinking this literary judgement prescriptive and conservative, I argue that these critics had unanimously ignored a significant poetics in *On the Road*, a poetics that can be traced to prior works such as Melville's *Typee* a century ago.

Let me be more specific. Earning himself an Ivy League education with his football talent, Kerouac connected his career as a writer with the literary circle—making acquaintances with academic professors and literary students from well-to-do families. But interestingly, his literary orientation did not turn toward any trending streams in his Columbia classrooms, *The Ambassadors* of Henry James and *The Big Sleep* of Raymond Chandler for example, but toward people he famously called the beats (Neal Cassady being a perfect one of the sort), the people who were "poor, down and out, deadbeat, on the bum, sad, sleeping in subways."[58] While he evidently drew aesthetic nutrition from canonical works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Herman Melville, and Thomas Wolfe, Kerouac sought more intently for a beat poetics in his "American-scene picaresque."[59] As Deleuze argues, since one only writes through love, Kerouac's writing should be seen as a means that extends beyond personal life, a becoming that turns American literature toward the subterranean (51). Committed to this beat poetics, Kerouac generates in his works what Rob Wilson calls an eclectic influx that leads to myriads of creativity and cultural-political activism in a time of stalemate and blockage (I will discuss this in chapter five).[60] What the abovementioned critics criticized, I argue, is exactly what makes Kerouac idiosyncratic in the American novel.

To further dig into *On the Road*'s beat becoming, I need to refer to a perspective from Pierre Macherey. In his *A Theory of Literary Production*, the French critic argues that all literary works contain tokens of an internal rupture, a decentering,

[58] See *Good Blonde & Others*, pp.61.
[59] See *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, pp.170.
[60] See Rob Wilson, *Beat Attitudes*, pp.3.

a surprise in relation to a predetermined structure, and therefore any work is never a coherent and unified whole. Following a novel and surprising story, a reader will experience all its shock and infinite novelty and every moment is "a thunderclap, a discontinuity, an advent." [61] To Macherey, a writer uninhibited by customary usage and narrow definitions wins his works a remarkable freedom and power of improvisation, a poetic precondition to all types of writing. This freedom, as spontaneous as it seems, is not indiscriminate. And as long as it makes its own style, the literary work establishes a certain kind of necessity, a necessity that (Kerouac might passionately agree) not a word in the text can be changed. In this sense, to rightfully appreciate a literary product, one has to engage with the decentering, digressive, and discontinuous structure that contributes to the revelation of the literary sublime, or in Kerouac's word, the beatific.

From this Machereyean perspective, one sees an apparent link between *On the Road*'s structural arrangement and the trips he took with Neal Cassady. As I will discuss shortly, Kerouac took extensive notes in terms of his experiences, emotions, and thoughts on his road trips. When returned to a quiet place between his travel intervals, the Beat King would rewrite what he believed as a true recapitulation of those trips in a fashion similar to a fireside talk. Reflecting a Cassadian garrulity,[62] Kerouac's narrative therefore was purposefully designed by its writer as digressive by nature. Similarly, influenced by the Bebop improvisation to a fair degree, Kerouac attempted to imitate the rhythmic and fluid flow of jazz performance on the syntax level and in turn to reach his ideal of a linguistic improvisation. By focusing on these two Kerouacian features in *On the Road*, I intend, in the rest of this chapter, to examine

[61] See Macherey, pp.43-57.
[62] See Tim Hunt, *The Textuality of Soulwork*, pp.20-32.

a detailed process of the novel's constitution and to defend a poetics of beat becoming.

A Pendulumlike Narrative

Interviewed in 1977 recalling his interactions with Kerouac in relation to the publication of *On the Road*, Cowley still insisted that the book's structure had a big problem:

> On the Road was good prose. I wasn't worried about the prose. I was worried about the structure of the book. It seemed to me that in the original draft the story kept swinging back and forth across the continental United States like a pendulum. And one thing that I kept putting forward to Jack was, "Why don't you consolidate some of these episodes so that your hero doesn't swing across the country quite so often and so that the book has more movement (Gifford 205)?"

Calling the zigzagging trips in *On the Road* a motionless "pendulum," Cowley simply tags Kerouac's work under an editorial category of deficiency and denies a poetics of digression embodied in it. In addition, from Cowley's commendation of Kerouac's prose, I notice that the famous editor approaches literature from an empirical perspective—a perspective that mainly focuses on diction, syntax, and structure, in other words a traditional form.[63] But, as Fredric Jameson criticizes the Russian formalists for seeing literature as a uniform mechanism, this critical conventionalism in terms of an ignorance of diachronic changes undermines our ability to recognize a historical link between previous writers, such as Melville, and Kerouac.[64] Retracing Kerouac's literary road and actual travels in a diachronic sense in this section, I look at *On the Road*'s narrative structure as a unique convergence of both classical literature and a Kerouacian beat poetics rather than a ruptured and broken collage.

Standing on the shoulders of present Kerouac study, I first want to point out

[63] Robert Giroux also had an argument with Kerouac, claiming "Poetry is poetry, prose prose." See *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, pp.444-5.
[64] See Jameson's *The Prison-House of Language*, pp.59.

that, in the late 1940s while working on his road novel, the Beat King was following the footprints of his discursive predecessors.[65] Emerson, for instance, displays an early idea of new literary freedom. In his famous work *Nature*, writes the transcendental philosopher:

> … A man conversing in earnest, if he watch [sic] his intellectual processes, will find that a material image, more or less luminous, arises in his mind, cotemporaneous with every thought, which furnishes the vestment of the thought. Hence, good writing and brilliant discourse are perpetual allegories. This imagery is spontaneous. It is the blending of experience with the present action of the mind. It is proper creation. It is the working of the Original Cause through the instruments he has already made (17).

As a New England boy, Kerouac grew up in a literary milieu of Emerson and Thoreau. In his note "Dialogs in introspection," one noticeably reads a creative consciousness kindled by the pioneering transcendentalism.[66] Another line of his inspiration comes from W. B. Yeats's trance poetry. Yeats's poetic collaboration with his young wife Georgie Hyde-Lees, namely *A Vision*, represents his investigation into an occult and even superstitious psychography.[67] In his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," Kerouac notably claims a Yeatsian writing mentality,

> If possible write "without consciousness[sic] in semi-trance" (as Yeats' later "trance writing"), allowing subconscious to admit in own uninhibited interesting necessary and so "modern" language what conscious art would censor, and write excitedly, swiftly, with writing-or-typing-cramps, in accordance (as from center to periphery) with laws of orgasm, Reich's "beclouding of consciousness." Come from within, out - to relaxed and said (70-1).

In this Kerouacian doctrine, one further reads a tendency toward Arthur Rimbaud and Andre Breton's surrealist or automatic writing which encourages writers to rely on the subconsciousness and spontaneous imagination.[68] But we should also be aware that, although these transcendental and surrealist assertions shed their light on the French-Canadian, there certainly are incompatibilities between these writings and the prose

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[65] See different scholarly works on Kerouac's poetics in *On the Road*: John Tytell (1976); Tim Hunt (1981, 2014); Regina Weinreich (1987); Ben Giamo (2000); Michael Hrebeniak (2006); Nancy Grace (2007); and Hassan Melehy (2016).

[66] See *Beatific Soul*, pp.61.

[67] See "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," *Good Blonde & Others*, pp.70. And see George Mills Harper, *The making of Yeats's A Vision*.

[68] See Rimbaud's "The Drunken Boat," pp.136-9. And Breton's *Nadja*.

Kerouac writes. In Emerson's case, the philosophical writer puts more emphasis on liberating the structure of one's mind rather than a particular way to write. His contention, therefore, is more linguistic than literary. Yeats's psychography and Bredon's automatic writing, on the other hand, rely more on streams of random imagination instead of genuine experiences in their practices, hence a fictive element which Kerouac is fundamentally against dominates their texts.

Louis-Ferdinand Celine, Marcel Proust, and Thomas Wolfe are three closer models of Kerouac. Being called "the most compassionate French writer of his time" in Kerouac's 1964 essay, Celine frequents his compatriot's journals and works.[69] His fragmental actions in *Death on the Installment Plan* clearly resonate with the digressive scenes in *On the Road*. Its lumpenproletariat characters and lyrical depiction of emotions also facilitate Kerouac's courage to leave the narrative tradition for a free style of his own. In a similar effect, Proust also propels Kerouac to write lyrical autobiographies. In *In Search of Lost Time*, his flowing text of stream of consciousness summons Kerouac to become a writer of spontaneous prose. Moreover, the enormous character design of *The Town and the City* and *On the Road* mirrors Kerouac's strong Proustian tendency, and such large cast requires Kerouac to arrange carefully for a coherent incorporation so that the multifarious personae will not crumble the whole work.[70] Thomas Wolfe, moreover, cast deeper imprints on the face of Kerouac's writing. Wolfe's works, certainly, are significant templates which Kerouac imitates. Having forged his *The Town and the City* in the mold of *Look Homeward, Angel*, he resonates with Wolfe's sympathetic themes but, more importantly, the latter's disintegrated use of conversations and dialogues. Kerouac inherits Wolfe's ability to

[69] See Kerouac's essay "On Celine" in *Good Blonde & Others*, pp.90.
[70] To do so, Kerouac often plans lists of characters, subdivided by main categories in which each one would belong. See *Beatific Soul*, pp.70.

turn words into image and the skill to revive details of different characters.

Herman Melville and James Joyce, nevertheless, are two writer Kerouac reads intensively when writing *On the Road*. He apparently read a new edition of Melville's *Pierre* in 1949 which, with an introduction by Henry Murray saying, "Melville's impelling intention in writing *Pierre* is better defined by saying that he purposed to write his spiritual autobiography in the form of a novel," might have ignited him to write afresh his manuscript of *On the Road*.[71] *The Confidence Man* and *Moby-Dick*'s character settings, moreover, give Kerouac inspiration in terms of Neal Cassady's character (compatible with William Thompson the swindler and Ahab the madman) in his book. Joyce, compared to Melville, stands as more of a critical influence. In *Vanity of Duluoz*, Kerouac recalls the beginning of his connection to Joyce:

> …It was the greatest fun I ever had 'writing' in my life because I had just discovered James Joyce and I was imitating Ulysses I thought (really imitating 'Stephen Hero' I later discovered, a real adolescent but sincere effort, with 'power' and 'promise' pronounced Arch MacDougald our local cultural mentor later). I had discovered James Joyce, the stream of consciousness, I have that whole novel right in front of me now. It was simply the day-by-day doings of nothing in particular by 'Bob' (me), Pater (my Pa), etc., etc., all the other sportswriters, all my buddies down at the theater and in the saloons at night, all the studies I had rebegun in the Lowell Public Library (on a grand scale), my afternoons of exercising in the YMCA, the girls I went out with, the movies I saw, my talks with Sabbas, with my mother and sister, an attempt to delineate all of Lowell as Joyce had done for Dublin (85).

The Irishman's masterpiece pushes Kerouac along its modern literary wave with a linguistic energy of spontaneous structure, luminous details, and revolutionary temporality. This innovative style of stream of consciousness is probably the invisible hand behind *On the Road*'s jumping time frame and free flow of conversations. Joyce's self-consciously linguistic writing, such as intentional grammar mistakes and lack of punctuation, finds perfect forgiveness for Kerouac's aesthetic pursuit of his own style. Possibly out of his respect for Joyce, the beat writer told an interviewer from *New York Post* in 1959 commenting on his linguistic performance in *On the Road* that he wrote

[71] See Ann Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, pp.310.

"on one long roll of paper with no periods, no commas, no paragraphs, all single-spaced," which we now know is not true for his manuscripts are all traditionally punctuated.[72] Perhaps what he writes in his letter to Malcolm Cowley in 1955 can best represent Kerouac's benefit from Joyce:

> …and am so glad that I self-taught myself (with some help from Messrs. Joyce & Faulkner) to write spontaneous prose…and at the same time what rejoices me most: RHYTHMIC—It's prose answering the requirements mentioned by W. C. Williams, for natural-speech rhythms and words—I'm not doing a pitch for Kerouac, he doesnt[sic] need it any more, he is walking around in ecstasy because his entire life-work is beginning to shape up and he knows that all of it (tho [sic] eventually it will languish among the ruins) is holy and was a well done thing (515).

Apart from being inspired by these Canonic writers of literature, Kerouac's vision in *On the Road* is also widened by his fellow beat friends, namely Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, and Neal Cassady. Among the three, Ginsberg acted as Kerouac's literary agent from 1952 to 1954 and introduced him to Malcolm Cowley. But around the year 1951 during which the scroll was written, Ginsberg's own literary road was still uncertain and his famous *Howl* was yet to be written. Similarly, though Kerouac spoke highly of the manuscript of *Junky*, Burroughs' own "cut-up" method was not fully prepared until his 1957 manuscript of *Naked Lunch* and his help to Kerouac's writing was more in life rather than in literature. Interestingly, it was Neal Cassady, the least literary man in the group (only published posthumously a short biography *The First Third*), that catalyzed the composition of *On the Road*.

To better understand Cassady's significance, we need to return to the letters he wrote Kerouac and the trips they took together. Kerouac first met Cassady in December 1946 when Cassady took his teenage wife Louanne Henderson to New York for a visit. He describes the meeting that hooked the two together in the opening of *On the Road*:

> I went to the cold-water flat with the boys, and Dean came to the door in shorts.

[72] I requote this from Matt Theado's essay in *What's Your Road, Man*, pp.21.

> Marylou was jumping off the couch; Dean had dispatched the occupant of the apartment to the kitchen, probably to make coffee, while he proceeded with his love problems, for to him sex was the one and only holy and important thing in life, although he had to sweat and curse to make a living and so on. You saw that in the way he stood bobbing his head, always looking down, nodding, like a young boxer to instructions, to make you think he was listening to every word, throwing in a thousand "Yeses" and "That's rights." My first impression of Dean was of a young Gene Autry—trim, thin-hipped, blue-eyed, with a real Oklahoma accent—a sideburned hero of the snowy West (4).

From this compelling sight, one can tell that Kerouac was drawn to Cassady because of his Gene Autry personality—a western cowboy, a god among girls, and a Nietzschean hero.[73] Moreover, as a jailkid who wanted to learn writing (Kerouac was shortly in jail himself due to Kemmerer's murder), Cassady perfectly coincided Kerouac's taste in the subculture and also what Norman Mailer calls "the American existentialist," "the philosophical psychopath," and "the sexual outlaw."[74] In other words, Neal Cassady was the perfect buddy for Kerouac. To refer to what I have argued in chapter three in the case of Tommo's Kory-Kory, and again to put it through Leslie Fiedler's theory, Cassady could be read as an appropriate white negro. Similar to Cooper's Chingachgook, Melville's Queequeg, and Twain's Jim, he embodies an American character meme, a "Negro Neal" as Kerouac calls in his journal and "Negro Hassel" in *On the Road*,[75] whom the protagonist narrator is irrevocably enchanted toward.[76]

In March 1947 shortly after the two became familiar with each other, Cassady wrote one of his earliest letters which Kerouac called "The Great Sex Letter" and showed to Ginsberg for its spontaneous and genuine style.[77] In the letter, Cassady recounts his intercourse with two different yet unacquainted women on bus trips on a single day:

> I was sitting on the bus when it took on more passengers at Indianapolis, Indiana—a

[73] See Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, pp.68.
[74] See Norman Mailer's *The White Negro*, pp.337-58.
[75] See *Windblown World*, pp.269 and also *On the Road*, pp.199.
[76] See Note 52 in Chapter 3.
[77] See Cassady's *Collected Letters, 1944-1967*, pp.33.

> perfectly proportioned beautiful, intellectual, passionate, personification of Venus De Milo asked me if the seat beside me was taken!! I gulped, (I'm drunk) gargled & stammered NO! (Paradox of expression, after all, how can one stammer No!!?) She sat—I sweated—she started to speak, I knew it would be generalities, so to tempt her I remained silent.
>
> She (her name Patricia Lague) got on the bus at 8 P.M. (Dark!) I didn't speak until 10 P.M.—in the intervening 2 hours I not only, of course, determined to make her, but, how to DO IT.
>
> I naturally can't quote the conversation verbally, however, I shall attempt to give you the gist of it from 10 P.M. to 2 A.M.
>
> Without the slightest preliminaries of objective remarks (what's your name? where are you going? etc.) I plunged into a completely knowing, completely subjective, personal & so to speak "penetrating her core" way of speech; to be shorter, (since I'm getting unable to write) by 2 A.M. I had her swearing eternal love, complete subjectivity to me & immediate satisfaction. I, anticipating even more pleasure, wouldn't allow her to blow me on the bus, instead we played, as they say, with each other.
>
> …
>
> In complete (try & share my feeling) dejection, I sat, as the bus progressed toward Kansas City. At Columbia, Mo. a young (19) completely passive (my meat) virgin got on & shared my seat. In my dejection over losing Pat the perfect, I decided to sit on the bus (behind the driver) in broad daylight & seduce her, from 10:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M. I talked. When I was done she (confused, her entire life upset, meta-physically amazed at me, passionate in her immaturity) called her folks in Kansas City, & went with me to a park (it was just getting dark) & I banged her; I screwed as never before; all my pent up emotion finding release in this young virgin (& she was) who is, by the by, a school teacher! Imagine, she's had 2 years of Mo. St. Teacher's College & now teaches Jr. High School. (I'm beyond thinking straightly). I'm going to stop writing. (33-4)

This natural letter immediately hooked Kerouac and stirred his passion to hit the road. From late 1947 to early 1951, Kerouac took four long trips which all involved Neal Cassady (respectively recorded in Part 1 to 4 in *On the Road*). The first one, roughly from July to October 1947, was chiefly about Kerouac's own hitchhiking experience from New York to California via Denver in which he shortly partied with Cassady, who was taking hourly shifts to divide his time between his wife Louanne and his new girl Carolyn. It also contained Kerouac's romantic encounter with the Mexican girl Bea Franco. After a little more than a year, in December 1948, Cassady drove a new 49 Hudson with his childhood friend Al Hinkle (the joint owner of the car) to Kerouac's sister Nin's house in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. Thus started the duo's second trip. After helping Kerouac's mother move her furniture back to New York, they rushed to William Burrough's house in New Orleans from where they finally drove to San Francisco. Unlike his itching excitement before Cassady's arrival (in a letter to Ginsberg in December, he writes "Neal is coming to New York" in a new line

for five times[78]), Kerouac realized Cassady's extreme selfishness and the two parted on sour terms. The third trip was not a trip per se but a long stay in Denver. It mirrored the period of his first book's flat reception and his failed plan to move to the Mile High City with his family. In the end, he rode with Cassady back to Chicago in a travel bureau's Cadillac and from there they managed to hitchhike back to New York. In the fourth trip, after reaching Denver from New York, they went to have a fiesta of rides, drugs and prostitutes all the way south to Mexico City where Cassady abandoned Kerouac who was sick at the moment to get back to the Big Apple to get married again.

On each of these trips, Kerouac took extensive journal notes, and he would sort and rewrite them (usually at his mother's Ozone Park apartment) between travel intervals. Comparing *On the Road*'s narrative structure with Kerouac's journal notes, one can readily find that the five trips in the book correlate closely with the notes and drafts he wrote during those years. The initial written materials for the project of *On the Road* grew from the notes (two notebooks respectively signified by Kerouac as "1947-1948 Notes" and "Forest of Arden") he rewrote after his return from the first trip. According to Isaac Gewirtz, the products of this initial plan was a four-page outline and a draft he named *Ray Smith Novel of Fall 1948* which would be reworked by Kerouac in 1969 and published posthumously as *Pic*.[79] His later trips were similarly recorded in notebooks such as "Rain and Rivers," "Road-Log," and "Night Notes" which all, in one way or other, made their way into the original scroll and the final published version of *On the Road*. Moreover, these notes further enabled Kerouac to come up with a collection of pre-scroll drafts, which served as his literary drills before the final combat of the scroll, including "The Hip Generation," "Gone on the Road,"

[78] See *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, pp.176-7.
[79] See Gewirtz, pp.75.

"American Times," a short French-written draft, and "Flower that Blows in the Night."[80]

But none of these early drafts were accepted by publishers. In later 1950 when Kerouac's early version of *On the Road* was rejected by Giroux,[81] it was another Cassady's passionate letters that refreshed Kerouac's narrative outlook. Happy for Kerouac's new marriage to Joan Haverty, Cassady, despite being a clumsy typist, typed his buddy a seventeen-page letter of reminiscence about his Denver years after release from prison in 1945. Known as the "Joan Anderson and Cherry Mary" letter, its spontaneous and conversational confessions were instantly appreciated by Kerouac. Calling his letter "insufferably egotistical,"[82] Cassady writes in recollection of Joan (a pretty nurse who undergoes a terrible Caesarean and becomes barren),

> There was no doubt she was over-joyed to see me, her eyes said so. It was as though the gesture of self-destruction had, in her mind, equalized all the guilt. The courage of committing the act seemed to have justified her to herself. This action on her conviction, no matter how neurotic, had called for all her strength and she was now released. Free from the urge, since the will-for-death needs a strong concentration of pressure to fulfill itself and once accomplished via attempt, is defeated until another period of buildup is gone through; unless, of course, one succeeds in reaching death the first shot, or is really mad. Gazing down on her, with a grin of artificial buoyancy, I sensed this and felt an instant flood of envy. She had escaped, at least for some time, and I knew I had yet to make my move. Being a coward I had postponed too long and I realized I was further away from commitment than ever. Would hesitancy never end? She shifted her cramped hand, I look-down and for the first time noticed the tight sheet covering a flat belly. It was empty, sunken; she had lost her baby. For a moment I wondered if she knew it, then thought she must know—even now she was almost touching her stomach, and she'd been in the hospital ten days—surely a stupid idea. I resolved to think better. The nurse glided up and said I'd better go; promising to return the next visiting day, I leaned over and kissed Joan's clear forehead and left (259).

and of Mary (a rich debutante suffering from schizophrenia),

> At first the mother of this frantic fucking filly confided in me and, to get me on her side, asked me to take care of Mary, watch her and so forth. After awhile, as Mary got wilder, the old bitch decided to give me a dressing down, (I can't remember the exact little thing that led up to this, off hand anyhow) and since she wasn't the type to do it herself—and to impress me, I guess—she got the pastor of the parish to give me a lecture. Now, her home was in one of the elite parishes and so she got the monseigneur—it was a Catholic church—to come over for dinner the same evening she invited me. I arrived a little before him and could at once smell something was cooking. The slut just couldn't hold back her little scheme, told Mary to listen

[80] See Gewirtz, pp.86-103.
[81] See *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, pp.226. This manuscript was likely to be "Gone on the Road."
[82] See Cassady *Collected Letters*, pp.145. Unfortunately, the original letter was lost and what is quoted below is from a survived fragment that is estimated to be less than half of the total.

> closely and began preaching a little of her own gospel to warm me up for the main event. The doorbell rang and her eyes sparkled with anticipation as she sallied forth from the kitchen to answer it. The priest was a middlesized middleaged pink featured man with extremely thick glasses covering such poor eyes he couldn't see me until our noses almost touched. Coming toward me across the palatial living-room he had his handshake extended and was in the midst of a normal greeting, the mother escorting him by elbow all the while and gushing introduction. Then it happened, he saw me; what an expression! I've never seen a chin drop so far so fast, it literally banged his breastbone. "Neal!! Neal!, my boy!, at last I've found my boy!", his voice broke as he said the last word and his Adam's apple refused to articulate further because all it gave out was a strangled blubber. Choked with emotion, he violently clasped me to him and flung his eyes to heaven fervently thanking his God. Tremendous tears rolled down his cheeks, poured over his upthrust jaw, and disappeared inside his tight clerical collar. I had trouble deciding whether to leave my arms hanging limp or throw them around him and try to return the depth of his goodness by turning to it. Golly and whoooooeee!, what a sight!! The priest's emotion had been one of incredulous joyous recognition, Mary's mother's emotion was a gem of frustrated surprise; startled wonder at such an unimaginable happening left her gaping at us with the most foolish looking face I've ever seen. She didn't know whether to faint or flee, never had she been so taken aback, and, I'm sure, didn't think she ever would be, it was really a perfect farce. Mary and her sister—who was there to lend dignity to her mother's idea—were as slack-jawed as any of us. Depend on sweet Mary to recover first, she did, with a giggle; which her sister took as a cue to frown upon, thereby regaining her senses. The mother's composure came with a gasp of artificial goo, "Well! what a pleasant surprise!!" she gurgled with strained smile, feeling lucky that she'd snuck out from under so easily. Oho!, but wait, aha!, she'd made a mistake! Her tension was so unbearable—and she had succeeded so well with her first words—that she decided to speak again, "Let's all go into supper, shall we?" she said in a high-pitched nervous urge. The false earnestness of her tone struck us all as a most incongruous concern and she'd given herself away by being too quick—since her guest was still holding me tightly (266).

According to his wife Joan Haverty, after receiving this long letter on his front step, Kerouac read it on the subway on his way into town and further spent a whole afternoon perusing it. [83] Overwhelmed by Cassady's haphazard and orderless confession, Kerouac argues in terms of its poetic value,

> I thought it ranked among the best things ever written in America and ran to Holmes & Harrington & told them so; I said it was almost as good as the unbelievably good "Notes From Underground" of Dostoevsky…You gather together all the best styles…of Joyce, Celine, Dosty & Proust…and utilize them in the muscular rush of your own narrative style & excitement. I say truly, no Dreiser, no Wolfe has come too close to it; Melville was never truer. I know that I don't dream. It can't possibly be sparse & halting, like Hemingway, because it hides nothing; the material is painfully necessary…the material of Scott Fitz was so sweetly unnecessary. It is the exact stuff upon which American Lit is still to be founded (242).

Feeling this compliment not enough, the inspired beatnik began to write Cassady confessional letters in an imitating style.[84] The reason for Kerouac's literary ecstasy, which seemed amusing in the eyes of Holmes, Ginsberg, Giroux, and even Cassady

[83] See *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, pp.241.
[84] See *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, pp.246-306.

himself as they all took it as words from a stoned dream,[85] was that the long letter coincided a unique form of writing he searched for years, especially when his draft was rejected at the time. When he sat before his typewriter to rework his road novel in April 1951, it was this digressive yet confessional style of Cassady that propelled Kerouac's mad pounding of the original scroll. To borrow his comment on Mark Twain, the Beat King began "writing what he felt like writing, not what he thought 'Literature' demanded of him."[86]

Catalyzed by this "Joan Anderson and Cherry Mary" letter, *On the Road* was meant by its writer to be a recording of life, a free recording of the true self. Written in this journalistic manner, his narration of those drifting trips implies both an outward travel for the satisfaction of desires, including yearnings to see America and to chase girls and kicks, and an inward search for the meaning of life, a search that often turned out to be futile but nonetheless necessary. The poetic product generated from the convergence of these two trajectories is a continuous flow of the memory and mind. For instance, unlike what Cowley may consider as a typical digression, Paradise's long stay with Moriarty in Denver which is narrated in Part 3 chapter 1 to 7 records Paradise's nuanced experience of America's west. In this sense, the digressiveness of the work reflects its writer's multidimensional searches of truth, be they pertaining to a static stay or excursive travel.

Echoing the great cosmopolitan traveler Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Kerouac wrote *On the Road* to "get the most out of himself" without "breaking down or excessive asceticism."[87] And, similar to Goethe's *Italian Journey* in a structural

[85] Kerouac enthusiastically showed Cassady's letter around to the people I listed here and none of them returned his excitement. See Selected Letters, 1940-1956, pp.242-4.
[86] See *Windblown World*, pp.151.
[87] See *Windblown World*, pp.31.

sense, Kerouac's narrative gestures toward a significant yet cosmopolitan poetics of digression. In many ways, similar to the works of Melville and Twain, the book resembles an American version of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and all the soliloquys that fill the gaps between pendulumlike travels turn out to be confessions of his inner truth. Through these confessions, Kerouac restores the historic connection, which Jameson rigorously emphasizes, between a textual reproduction and a personal actuality.[88] In this way, the Beat King attempts to write a new American epic by unfolding the fragmental and honest secrets of his life and, by doing so, to eliminate the Machereyian silence in his work. The product of this Kerouacian truthfulness is a uniquely spontaneous narrative linked by multiple returns and departures of Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty, which Cowley mistakenly took as structurally flawed and having no movement. Appreciating this Kerouacian digression, today's critics feel relieved that he did not follow, albeit with difficulty, his literary sponsor's suggestion to dovetail the unnecessary trips and persevered with his own structural standpoint.

A Bebop Prosody

When confronted by *On the Road*'s brief sentences, permeated with commas, a quick-tempered critic tends to dismiss Kerouac's typewriter improvisation as Truman Capote did. This critical tendency, I argue, is perfunctory and hasty. Tracing back to piles of manuscripts, one readily sees how many revisions Kerouac had labored himself over the years prior to the novel's publication. More importantly, this spontaneous flow of syntax originates, though partly from the influence of Cassady's

[88] See Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, pp.ix-xiv.

garrulity which I discussed above, mainly from another subterranean orientation of Kerouac—his love for bebop.[89] Steeped in this music of the black underworld, Kerouac did not take bebop as a mere entertainment but contemplated on its artistic tendencies and propositions. As I will show below, he appreciated the music style as the virtuoso's truthful and spontaneous release of mind, a musical becoming of pluralism that could be appropriated for his own writing.

Let me start by making clear that Kerouac's fast typing had little to do with his literary improvisation. It is true that, according to Holmes, Kerouac was the fastest typist among his Columbia friends and could also maintain a high accuracy as he dashed over the keys.[90] But when Truman Capote equated Kerouac's typing with an automatic psychography, he was wrong in at least two ways. One, despite the fact that he was a fast typist, Kerouac's attitude toward typing was highly artistic. In other words, speed to him was only a means but never an end. Growing up in his father Leo's printing shop, Kerouac got used to the mechanical text processing technology when he was small. The better editing experience of a typewriter obviously stayed with him for the rest of his life. In a letter to Cassady, Kerouac confesses that to type his words on paper makes him feel like publishing his own work—"I want, want to see the ordered sentences typed up neat on perfect pages under a soft lamp, wild prose describing the world as it raced through my brain and cock once…"[91] On his travels, Kerouac usually resorted to pencil and notebooks for their convenience, but, once settling down to a spacious kitchen where he could lay his notes beside a typewriter,

[89] Tim Hunt acutely points out that Kerouac acutely notices the challenge toward the written language from other emerging ways of storing or transmitting language (such as radio, movies, recording, and computing). And the beat writer means a new mode of literature with his bebop engagement, pp.xlvii.

[90] See Barry Gifford, pp.155.

[91] See *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, pp.474.

the writer would certainly prefer those dashing keys.

Two, due to the limit of typewriter technology of the day, typing was more similar to handwriting as it, unlike the twenty-first century word processing software, disallowed any easy editing function such as traceless deleting or chunk copying and pasting. Considering the difficulty to remove type ink and the cost of changing paper, typists were more attentive and careful in their typing tasks, slowing down speed for accuracy or drafting with pen or pencil before copying onto the typed pages. In this respect, as Holmes points out, Kerouac's typing is his unique form of rewriting during which he heavily draws from his notes and journals as he types, a detail that he chooses to omit in front of the public after the success of *On the Road* in 1957.[92] And, comparing his notes to the original scroll, we find obvious traces of his journal writing between the lines of the scroll, the basis for the published version of *On the Road*. To take an example, Kerouac writes the scene about a girl's suicide in his journal:

> …What was the girl thinking? where was she from? Did her brothers in Ohio scowl fiercely when she was spoken of by men at the taxi stand? Did she walk home nights in the icy streets of winter, huddled in the little coat she had bought from her work savings? Did she sweetly fall in love with some tall, brown, never-available construction-worker who came for her occasionally in his well-pressed topcoat, in his Ford coupe? Did she dance with him at the sad, roseate ballrooms? And make jokes about the moon? And sigh & groan & cry in her pillow? What horror was there in mossy New Orleans, what real final sadness did she see? (In the Latin Quarter streets at night.)
>
> Next day in the paper we read about her suicide, and remembered it; and thought of it (293).

This is what he types in the scroll:

> …Strange to say, too, that night we crossed the ferry with Bill Burroughs a girl committed suicide off the deck; either just before or just after us; we saw it in the paper the next day. The girl was from Ohio; she might as well have come floating down to New Orleans on a log, and saved her soul (249).

Similarly, when recalling his dream of a shrouded traveler, Kerouac pens in journal:

> Earlier in the day he who is known by name, Allen Ginsberg, and I, discussed the "shrouded stranger." This stemmed from a dream I had of Jerusalem and Arabia long ago. Traveling by dusty road in the white desert, from Arabia to the Protective City, I saw that I was inexorably pursued by a Hooded Wayfarer with a staff, who slowly occupied and traversed the plain behind me, sending up a shroud of dust slowly. I know not how I knew he followed

[92] See Barry Gifford, pp.155.

> me, but if I could make the Protective City before he caught up with me, I knew I would be safe. But this was out of the question. I waited to waylay him in a house on the side of the road, with a rifle: yet I knew no gun would save me. Allen wanted to know who this was, and what was meant by this. I proposed that it was one's own self merely wearing a shroud. What does this mean. It will be explained (319).

And the trance is depicted in the scroll as follows:

> …Just about that time a strange thing began to haunt me. It was this: I had forgotten something. There was a decision that I was about to make before Neal showed up and now it was driven clear out of my mind but still hung on the tip of my mind's tongue. I kept snapping my finger trying to remember it. I even mentioned it. And I couldn't even tell if it was a real decision or just a thought I had decided to make and forgot to do…haunted, flabbergasted, made sad. It had to do somewhat with the Shrouded Stranger. Allen Ginsberg and I once sat down together, knee to knee in two chairs, facing, and I told him a dream I had about a strange Arabic figure that was pursuing me across the desert; that I tried to avoid; that finally overtook me just before I reached the Protective City. "Who is this?" said Allen. We pondered it. I proposed it was myself wearing a shroud. That wasn't it. Something, someone, some spirit was pursuing all of us across the desert of life and was bound to catch us before we reached heaven. (225).

As Douglas Brinkley points out, Kerouac's *On the Road* heavily draws from his journal pieces such as the "Rain and Rivers" (283). From this perspective, we can take conjecture and restore the general workflow of Kerouac in his passionate three weeks of typing. Unlike the Beat King himself postured before interviewers, the amazingly short span of time was in fact a very fast sprint of three weeks of rewriting.

Unlike typing, what immensely contributed to Kerouac's writing of *On the Road* both at the scroll stage and in the later revisions, I contend, was his love of bebop, a musical becoming that was deeply embedded in beat writer's mind.[93] When his Horace Mann classmate Seymour Wyse introduced jazz to Kerouac, the music of black artists was about to take a critical change that would impact on the entire American culture. Taking off in the 1920s (the "Jazz Age" as Fitzgerald called it), traditional jazz was a product of the influx of classical European music and African Slave folk songs. In order to accompany dances in the booming nightclubs, early jazz musicians tended to form up large bands following the examples of the old European orchestras. But, due to the outbreak of WWII, an unprecedented event that did not spare the

[93] Kerouac's musical becoming can be first found in his *The Town and the City*, as Warren Tallman first notices in his article "Kerouac's Sound."

entertainment industry from its impact, the dominance of traditional dancing-friendly swing jazz began to lean toward a bebop variant which had a quicker tempo and more freedom in performance.

Compared to the somewhat boring workaday playing in bands, the new bebop genre is freer in its solo improvisation (as indicated by its onomatopoeic name), and therefore highlights musician's instrumental individuality and virtuosity. This individual-oriented turn creates extra space in the genre which allows musicians to add their own emotional expression within an overall planned narrative structure during their performances. Kerouac keenly praises this artistic leap. In the scroll, he writes about both George Shearing (a famous blind white pianist) and a Chicago local band playing the new jazz:

> …And Shearing began to rock; a smile broke over his ecstatic face; he began to rock in the piano seat, back and forth, slowly at first, then the beat went up, and he began rocking fast, his left foot jumped up with every beat, his neck began to rock crookedly, he brought his face down to the keys, he pushed his hair back, his combed hair dissolved, he began to sweat. The music picked up. The bassplayer hunched over and socked it in, faster and faster. It seemed faster and faster, that's all. Shearing began to play his chords; they rolled out of the piano in great rich showers, you'd think the man wouldn't have time to line them up. It rolled and rolled like the sea. Folks yelled for him to "Go (229)!"
> …"You see man Prez has the technical anxieties of a money-making musician, he's the only one who's well dressed, see him grow worried when he blows a clinker, but the leader that cool cat tells him not to worry and just blow and blow---the mere sound and serious exuberance of the music is all HE cares about. He's an artist. He's teaching young Prez the boxer. Now the others dig (337)!!"

As portrayed in these two references, bebop music is insanely fast. Let me take Charlie Parker's hit piece "Koko" for example. Although the tune's overall structure is still conventional ("Koko"'s melody basically replicates Ray Noble's "Cherokee"), but Parker's rendering of two 64-bar melody bridges is twice as fast as the original. According to Danial Belgrad, because of the fast tempo and more flexible chord arrangement, bebop gives its performers more room for improvisation and in turn gesture the genre toward a higher level of artistry, meaning the music for being listened

to rather than danced with.[94] What Kerouac describes in the above reference, therefore, is very likely to be the impromptu sessions in which the beboppers reveal the most creative and spontaneous part of their performances. As a sensitive writer searching to capture the truth of his art and of life in general, Kerouac is enormously inspired by this enhanced narrative fluidity and starts to convert and reshape his writing into an in-the-moment mode of creation, as Isaac Gewirtz calls it.[95] In the opening of his *Mexico City Blues*, to reaffirm his jazz complex, writes Kerouac:

> I want to be considered a jazz poet
> blowing a long blues in an afternoon jam
> session on Sunday. I take 242 choruses;
> my ideas vary and sometimes roll from
> chorus to chorus or from halfway through
> a chorus to halfway into the next (1).[96]

Due to this bebop enlightenment, though the writer has not perfected his spontaneous prose style as in the cases of *The Subterranean* and *Visions of Cody*, Kerouac nonetheless begins to make attempts in the scroll period of *On the Road* in which he already has a concept of spontaneous prose in mind. As he states in "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," bebop jazz inspires him to write accordingly in at least three aspects:

> METHOD. No periods separating sentence-structures already arbitrarily riddled by false colons and timid usually needless commas - but the vigorous space dash separating rhetorical breathing (as jazz musician drawing breath between outblown phrases) – "measured pauses which are the essentials of our speech" – "divisions of the sounds we hear" – "time and how to note it down."
> SCOPING. Not "selectivity" of expression but following free deviation (association) of mind into limitless blow-on-subject seas of thought, swimming in sea of English with no discipline other than rhythms of rhetorical exhalation and expostulated statement, like a fist coming down on a table with each complete utterance, bang! (the spacedash) - Blow as deep as you want - write as deeply, fish as far down as you want, satisfy yourself first, then reader cannot fail to receive telepathic shock and meaning-excitement by same laws operating in his own human mind.
> CENTER OF INTEREST. Begin not from preconceived idea of what to say about image but from jewel center of interest in subject of image at moment of writing, and write outwards swimming in sea of language to peripheral release and exhaustion - Do not afterthink except for poetic or P. S. reasons. Never afterthink to "improve" or defray impressions, as, the best writing is always the most painful personal wrung-out tossed from cradle warm protective

[94] See *The Culture of Spontaneity*, pp.187.
[95] See *Beatific Soul*, pp.188.
[96] See Jack Kerouac's *Collected Poems*, pp.1.

> mind – tap from yourself the song of yourself, blow! - now! - your way is your only way – "good" - or "bad" - always honest. ('ludicrous') spontaneous, 'confessional' interesting, because not 'crafted.' Craft is craft (69-70).

This can be put in short as three jazzy rules of Kerouacian poetics: comma-permeated and dash-scattered syntax (or breath length lines as Olson claims)[97], digressive or deviated transitions (similar to Melville's style in *Typee* as I have discussed in chapter one), and first and honest thought being the best thought (as Ginsberg and Trungpa argue[98]).

All three of these poetic principles make their way appropriately into Kerouac's composition of the original scroll. In terms of the first rule, the most compelling feature of the scroll text is that the whole 120-feet long teletype paper contains only one single paragraph, only vaguely separated by capitalized part numbers from "BOOK TWO" to "BOOK FIVE." Although not showing what is reported in the *New York Post* as having no punctuation, the scroll version indeed put forth a style which takes flight from traditional syntax. For another example, aiming to perform the close-knit and free-flowing narration, Kerouac pens his most-quoted sentence in *On the Road*,

> The whole mad swirl of everything that was to come then began which would mix up all my friends and all I had left of my family in a big dust cloud over the American night---they talked of Burroughs, Hunkey, Vicki, ... Burroughs in Texas, Hunkey on Riker's Island, Vicki hung up with Norman Schnall at the time .... and Neal told Allen of people in the west like Jim Holmes the hunchbacked poolhall rotation shark and card player and queer saint ... he told him of Bili Tomson, Al Hinkle, his boyhood buddies, his street buddies ... they rushed down the street together digging everything in the early way they had which has later now become so much sadder and perceptive .. but then they danced down the street like dingldodies and I shambled after as usual as I've been doing all my life after people that interest me, because the only people that interest me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones that never yawn or say a commonplace thing .. but burn, burn, burn like roman candles across the night (112-3).

Separating such a large stack of chunks with commas, dashes, ellipses and only a single period, the reference here perfectly coheres the spontaneous continuity of a jazz song.

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[97] See Olson, *Collected Prose*, pp.241.
[98] See *Deliberate Prose*, pp.458-464

But, perhaps because of the Viking editors' conservative editing, the published version does not keep this avant-garde jazz moment and, instead, renders it in a more traditionally punctuated fashion.[99] What Kerouac's editor and his contemporary critics failed to understand, however, is that similar to a fast improvisation of bebop, occasional and minor mistakes in a spontaneous literature reveal the truth of its virtuoso's artistry and thereby should be considered as authentic components of that work. Resonating with beboppers in their spontaneous improvisations, Kerouac restates his typing poetics to Gregory Corso in *Desolation Angels*, "you're a greater poet than ever – you're really going now – great – dont stop – remember to write without stopping, without thinking, just go, I wanta hear what's in the bottom of your mind (126)." Opening "The Beginning of Bop" humorously claiming that bebop is born from a noise from a clothing store's loudspeaker, Kerouac explains in his commentary that musicians like Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie are great because they "saw its (jazz) history vicissitudes and developments" and "heavily carried it clanking like posts across the enormity of a new world philosophy."[100] According to Rob Wilson in this sense, when typing the scroll of *On the Road*, Kerouac begins consciously converting his poetics of literature in accordance with what he believes to be the true poetics of bebop jazz.[101]

An Editorial Perseverance

Though *On the Road* was meant at the outset by Kerouac to be a new American novel in terms of becoming beat, he was frustrated and desperate when his manuscript

[99] See the third manuscript of on the road (T3), *The Beatific Soul*, pp.119.
[100] See *Good Blonde & Others*, pp.117-8.
[101] See *Be Always Converting, Be Always Converted*, pp.105-6.

was rejected repeatedly by publishers. So desperate that, when Malcolm Cowley showed interest in the manuscript in 1953, he threw away his Machereyean pride and promised to cut and dovetail as much as his editor wanted.[102] After several discussions with Cowley, Kerouac indeed produced a structurally tighter manuscript which was heavily excised and added by its writer. However, in the final editor's typescript, the Beat King surprisingly abandoned those excisions and additions and returned to his pendulumlike structure as we read in the original scroll and the final published version. As I explain in the following, Kerouac's such editorial perseverance again demonstrates his beat becoming.

Aside from the manuscripts of *Pic* and *Visions of Cody* which I will not touch upon here, there are three extant manuscripts of *On the Road*: the original scroll Kerouac typed during April 1951 (only dotted by small typographical corrections and phrasal edits) and now edited and published by Howard Cunnell (Typescript 1, abbreviated to T1 henceforth); a heavily added as well as excised retyped version based on the scroll (T2); a less-excised retyped version based both on the scroll and T2 (T3).[103] Isaac Gewirtz, based on Kerouac's switching to fake names in this manuscript, considers that T2 was written after Kerouac received Cowley's warning letter regarding the obscenity and libel danger in September 1955 (I conjecture that the name changing could possibly started even earlier in late 1953 after Cowley and Kerouac met in person). He, noticing the abnormally heavy additions and excision in T2, further believes that, unlike T3 which sticks more to the original scroll, it can best demonstrate Kerouac's willingness to comply with the publishing industry while keeping, or rewriting, the best parts of his book (122).

[102] See *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, pp.519.
[103] See Matt Theado's essay "Revisions of Kerouac" in *What's Your Road, Man?* and Isaac Gewirtz's *Beatific Soul*.

T2 and T3 are interesting because of their stark contrast in terms of Kerouac's editorial approaches. As Gewirtz points out, Kerouac appears very desperate in T2 and disfigures his novel not only by long crossing-outs in black crayon, but also by compressing its plot severely, and by modifying the characters' descriptions. According to his examination, Gewirtz further finds that most of the additions and excisions match what Cowley demands in his warning letter, and in turn concludes Kerouac's editorial surrender in this manuscript (118-46), which becomes arguably a different novel (Cowley might say a structurally better novel). But T2 obviously did not make its way to Viking editors and the novel was still not accepted. Frustrated by publishers' disparagement of his work, on January 23rd, 1955, to his agent Sterling Lord writes the beatnik,

> I think the time has come for me to pull my manuscripts back and forget publishing. Clearly, publishing is now in a flux of commercialism that began during World War II; for instance. I wonder if Thomas Wolfe's wild huge books would be published today if he was just coming up, like me. But they'll swing back to the ardor of the Thirties, maybe in 1960. Meanwhile I get nothing out of it but headache and the uneasy feeling that there's too much arbitrary free reading of my hard-worked manuscripts (466).

But this devastated discouragement at the stage of T2 is replaced by a structural return to the scroll and, one might say, an elevated enlightenment of his own poetics in T3. One significant reason behind this Kerouacian return, I believe, should be attributed to his discovery and research of Zen Buddhism.[104]

In his Buddhism journal written around the time of T3 (posthumously published as *Some of the Dharma*), Kerouac keeps repeating the advent of sweet bliss (36-7). Moreover, he does edit some of these Buddhist epiphanies into this manuscript of *On the Road*. If we compare Part 2 chapter 10 in the Viking version with the original scroll, we will find that the scroll lacks this passage:

> …And for just a moment I had reached the point of ecstasy that I always wanted to reach, which was the complete step across chronological time into timeless shadows, and wonderment

[104] See Nicosia, pp.459-462.

> in the bleakness of the mortal realm, and the sensation of death kicking at my heels to move on, with a phantom dogging its own heels, and myself hurrying to a plank where all the angels dove off and flew into the holy void of uncreated emptiness, the potent and inconceivable radiancies shining in bright Mind Essence, innumerable lotuslands falling open in the magic mothswarm of heaven. I could hear an indescribable seething roar which wasn't in my ear but everywhere and had nothing to do with sounds. I realized that I had died and been reborn numberless times but just didn't remember especially because the transitions from life to death and back to life are so ghostly easy, a magical action for naught, like falling asleep and waking up again a million times, the utter casualness and deep ignorance of it. I realized it was only because of the stability of the intrinsic Mind that these ripples of birth and death took place, like the action of wind on a sheet of pure, serene, mirror-like water. I felt sweet, swinging bliss, like a big shot of heroin in the mainline vein; like a gulp of wine late in the afternoon and it makes you shudder; my feet tingled (173).

Reading his *Some of the Dharma*, one will immediately recognize the similarity between this reference and a typical Kerouacian Buddhist revelation. As Gewirtz notices, this reference is added to T3 by Kerouac himself (122). Receiving tranquility and confidence from the less-assertive eastern religion, Kerouac, I argue, manages to return to his structural arrangement and his beat poetics in the process of, as Rob Wilson says, religious conversion.[105] In this way, his ubiquitous digression is redeemed by way of a religiously beat becoming. In a letter to his editor friend Robert Lax, he criticizes the work ethic of Christianity, declaring that there's no difference between Karl Marx and Fulton Sheen when both advocates work, production, needs, and obeisance, and self-realization and ecstasy of transcendental insight could only be achieved in solitude, poverty, and in a gathering of homeless brothers.[106] Perhaps with such a Buddhist enlightenment Kerouac gains the courage to refuse the publishing industry but also regains the determination to assert his beat poetics in T3. In this sense, we have to agree with Kerouac—beat is beatific.

Let me return to Kerouac's literary road. After the immediate fame of the book, the Beat King was much annoyed by the loss of privacy and the overwhelming public attention.[107] Unlike Truman Capote who much appreciated the spotlight, Kerouac's

[105] See Rob Wilson's *Be Always Converting, Be Always Coverted*.
[106] See *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, pp.447.
[107] See *Selected Letters, 1957-1969*, pp.136.

personality was in accordance with his beat poetics—to live the life of a "Fellahin." Moreover, although Kerouac did not go as far as not changing a word of his writing as Macherey argues, his return in terms of a poetic perseverance in the final manuscript of *On the Road* revealed his faithfulness to his poetic beliefs. His novelistic voice, unlike that of his friend Allen Ginsberg, is purely poetic and politically unconscious. But in Jamesonian terms, such a politically unconscious poetics is nonetheless political. As I will discuss in the next chapter, extending further from literature to culture, Kerouac's *On the Road* goes from a poetic practice to an enlargement of social space, opening "new pathways down which thinking and living can travel."[108] In this sense, to put it through Deleuze's words, Jack Kerouac knows "how to leave, to scramble the codes, to cause flows to circulate, to traverse the desert of the body without organs. He overcomes a limit, he shatters a wall, the capitalistic barrier."[109]

[108] See Todd May's essay, pp.151.
[109] See *Anti-Oedipus*, pp.132-3.

CHAPTER FIVE

The American Road: A Delinquent Space

> If the delinquent exists only by displacing itself, if its specific mark is to live not on the margins but in the interstices of the codes that it undoes and displaces, if it is characterized by the privilege of the tour over the state, then the story is delinquent.
>
> —Michel de Certeau

In addition to those literary attacks which are discussed above, Kerouac's *On the Road* also suffered from contemporaneous criticism in terms of its references to minor offences, casual intercourse, and drug use. In *Playboy* (a controversially erotic and consumeristic publication itself), Herbert Gold condemns Kerouac and his fellow Beats for missing a vital and central part in their mind and that their soul, sense of meaning, and individual dignity have been excised by society as unnecessary parts.[110] Robert Brustein wrote in *Horizon* claiming Kerouac's "reverence for life" is actually "a disguised disgust and boredom of life."[111] John Ciardi moreover, with his article "Epitaph for the Dead Beats" calls Kerouac a "Krazy Kat" and a "Zen-lunatic" who only knows to "sit still" when not finding "kicks in marihuana."[112] But similar to the jazz-hating Theodor Adorno, these critics make inaccurate interpretations of the cultural aspects in the beat literature. Though living in a postwar capitalistic prosperity, their mindset is still entrenched in the remnant of Protestant ethics, believing that material abondance is the cure for mental anxiety. As I will show in the rest of this chapter, although not a politically conscious writer per se, Kerouac, through his racy

[110] See Gold's essay in *A Case Book on the Beat*, pp.253-4.
[111] See Brustein's essay "The Cult of Unthink."
[112] See Ciardi's essay in *A Case Book on the Beat*, pp.257-261. Krazy Kat is a simple-minded comic cat, and its spelling suggests a French mixture.

depictions of the American road, produces delinquent spaces that unprecedently impact on the American social development in the 1950s and 60s.

These Kerouacian spaces, though explicable from the perspective of a Lefebvrian spatial production, can be better clarified according to Michel de Certeau's concept of "a practiced place." In his *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau argues a less violent spatial production on the individual level that will change, or even improve, the way we live. He considers that, through individuals' physical mobility in everyday life, i. e. through walking in a city, taking a car, train or plane, reading a map, and telling a story, one will reverse the panoptic and disciplined spatial structure which Foucault acutely points out in his *Discipline and Punish*.[113] In other words, the powerless lower class can only regain its power through the act of moving. This de Certeauean movement pertinently coheres *On the Road*'s spatial practice in at least three facets: Kerouac's making of a westward highway, his search for holy kicks, and his conversion to Buddhism. Through a nuanced interplay with each other, these three facets help construct a new road space of America.

A Highway West

The American culture in the 1910s to 20s was heavily reliant upon its European counterpart. This was especially true in the literary circle. Although the US military and economic strength emerged as one of the world's dominant forces after World War I, American writers continued to toil across the Atlantic for literary inspirations and materials. For instance, the renowned poet T. S. Eliot abandoned his American citizenship and even converted to British Anglicanism in the late 20s; the famous Stein

[113] See Michel de Certeau, pp.91-130.

salon was located in Paris instead of the poetess's hometown Oakland, California; *The Great Gatsby* was written during Fitzgerald's stay in France and Italy; Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* recounts its writer's Italian war experiences and this list of American writers goes on. In his *Exile's Return*, Malcolm Cowley rightly complains of this European literary dominance:

> Almost everywhere, after the war (WWI), one heard the intellectual life of America unfavorably compared with that of Europe. … Everywhere, in every department of cultural life, Europe offered the models to imitate—in painting, composing, philosophy, folk music, folk drinking, the drama, sex, politics, national consciousness—indeed, some doubted that this country was even a nation; it had no traditions except the fatal tradition of the pioneer. As for our contemporary literature, thousands were willing to echo Van Wyck Brooks when he said that in comparison with the literature of any European country, "it is indeed one long list of spiritual casualties. For it is not that the talent is wanting, but that somehow this talent fails to fulfill itself (94)."

Through this protest and his scrutiny of the Lost Generation, Cowley signals a reflection on the location of American literature. Echoing F. O. Matthiessen's effort in enacting an American renaissance in the English literary world, this reflection entails a critical necessity for an American identity and recognition. But both the two patriotic critics still could not deny the fact that during the early decades of the twentieth century, the American writers continued to travel eastward and to pen their American works on the European continent.

Similarly, America's East Coast around the same period cast a strong economic and political shadow over the rest of the country. In the first half of the twentieth century, the dominant bourgeoisie in Eastern cities, to use Daniel Bell's words, were radical in economics but conservative in morals and cultural tastes.[114] As Max Weber observes, an old Protestant tradition which favored economic accumulation over consumption (just as Benjamin Franklin rigorously hails in his autobiography) had somehow merged with the spirit of capitalism and led America into a stupendous

[114] See Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, pp.17.

material affluence.[115] But under such an abundant and dynamic exterior lay a singular and static bourgeois ideology which finally directed the alcohol prohibition in the 20s and the McCarthyite nationalism in the 40s. Both movements can be seen as manifestations of the capitalistic propaganda for soberness and loyalty. These sociopolitical movements, points out Bell, divided the American continent geographically into the East Coast and the rest (78). Just as Norman Mailer argues, "The only life-giving answer to the deathly drag of American civilization is to tear oneself from the security of physical and spiritual certainty, to divorce oneself from society, to exist without roots, to set out on that uncharted journey with the rebellious imperatives of the self (339)."

In order to escape this geopolitical suppression of Europe and the capitalistic boredom on the East Coast, the beat writers embarked on a quest for a new space of Americanness and freedom. And, different from their Lost Generation predecessors, the beatniks selected a westward trajectory, an epic trail which their pioneering forebears had trodden upon a century ago. In the opening of *On the Road*, unlike Fitzgerald's Nick Carraway who starts out east in hope of a better career but similar to Melville's Tommo and Ishmael who sail west into the Pacific, Kerouac's Sal Paradise romantically picks out a westward red line on his roadmap,

> …So, leaving my big half-manuscript sitting on top of my desk, and folding back my comfortable home sheets for the last time one morning, I left with my canvas bag in which a few fundamental things were packed and took off for the Pacific Ocean with the fifty dollars in my pocket.
>
> I'd been poring over maps of the United States in Paterson for months, even reading books about the pioneers and savoring names like Platte and Cimarron and so on, and on the roadmap was one long red line called Route 6 that led from the tip of Cape Cod clear to Ely, Nevada, and there dipped down to Los Angeles. I'll just stay on 6 all the way to Ely, I said to myself and confidently started (9-10).

One should not confuse the purpose of this westward journey with the colonial

[115] See Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Manifest Destiny. Influenced by Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, Kerouac's quest pertained more to a spiritual escape from eastern cities and consumerism than to a chase after materialistic desires and ambitions.[116] Along this long red line of Route 6 that led almost straight from Massachusetts to California, Kerouac hoped to rediscover the old West and thereby regain an authentic American space. Only halfway through the first trip, he seems to have achieved this goal,

> We stopped along the road for a bite to eat. The cowboy went off to have a spare tire patched, and Eddie and I sat down in a kind of homemade diner. I heard a great laugh, the greatest laugh in the world, and here came this rawhide oldtimer Nebraska farmer with a bunch of other boys into the diner; you could hear his raspy cries clear across the plains, across the whole gray world of them that day. Everybody else laughed with him. He didn't have a care in the world and had the hugest regard for everybody. I said to myself, Wham, listen to that man laugh. That's the West, here I am in the West (18-9).

Sadly, this western bliss evaporates soon enough—Sal Paradise's subsequent sojourn in Denver and San Francisco turns out to be shrouded in his lack of money and the necessity to find a job. After seeing the equally modern and equally industrial California, Kerouac's romantic fantasy of the West becomes beat. As he reflects in *Lonesome Traveler*,

> The American hobo has a hard time hoboing nowadays due to the increase in police surveillance of highways, railroad yards, sea shores, river bottoms, embankments and the thousand-and-one hiding holes of industrial night. –In California, the pack rat, the original old type who goes walking from town to town with supplies and bedding on his back, the "Homeless Brother," has practically vanished, along with the ancient gold-panning desert rat who used to walk with hope in his heart through struggling Western towns that are now so prosperous they dont want old bums any more (*Road Novels*, 764).

In this sense, Kerouac's trips in *On the Road* are modern versions of Miguel de Cervantes's sallies four centuries ago, signifying a failed search of the Beats for a place that is free from capitalistic corruption.

Whereas Kerouac fails to take flight from a capitalist era, he nonetheless produces a literary space availing himself of a typical invention of capitalism—cars.

[116] For a Spenglerian influence on Kerouac's cosmopolitan belief, see Sebastian Sampas's letter to Kerouac. *Selected Letters, 1940-1956,* p65-70.

In *On the Road*, these mechanical mounts of the modern cowboys compress the vast geography of the west and function as bridges to the ever-changing destinations of Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty. Despite the fact that the two protagonists are basically living from hand to mouth throughout the novel (another aspect which I will return to later in this chapter), they tried a variety of ways, such as hitchhiking, car-stealing, and carpooling, to ride on the American highway in these expensive transportation devices. And their wild country-roaming drives, similar to the de Certeauean city walks, produce an anti-authoritarian space of free mobility and free mind in postwar America.

Among these ways of car travel, hitchhiking is the most popular one among *On the Road*'s readers. But few realize that it is also the most anti-capitalistic way to travel as it is free of charge. Although leading a romantic trend in the 50s and 60s, this travel mode dates back to a much earlier time. According to Jack Reid, the Great Depression from the late 1920s to the early 1930s disrupted the plain sailing of American capitalization and forced among the American communities a sense of sharing rather than a previous self-reliant lifestyle.[117] In addition, with America's involvement in WWII during the 1940s, the US government put forth gasoline rations countrywide which not only encouraged but even enforced citizens to share automobiles.[118] In other words, this social and economic milieu of hitchhiking was much less romantic than what we read in Kerouac's book. But, under Kerouac's vivacious delineation, a hitchhiker becomes a modern knight, dashing through the plains of America for freedom and dream. In chapter 4 in Part 1, we read a salient recount of Sal Paradise's "greatest ride in life" on his way to Denver,

> By and by we came to a town, slowed down, and Montana Slim said, "Ah, pisscall," but the Minnesotans didn't stop and went right on through. "Damn, I gotta go," said Slim.

[117] See *Roadside Americans*, pp.15-8. Kerouac also mentions the Depression scenario in chapter 3, Part 1, pp.18.
[118] See *Roadside Americans*, pp.46-51.

> "Go over the side," said somebody.
>
> "Well, I will," he said, and slowly, as we all watched, he inched to the back of the platform on his haunch, holding on as best he could, till his legs dangled over. Somebody knocked on the window of the cab to bring this to the attention of the brothers. Their great smiles broke as they turned. And just as Slim was ready to proceed, precarious as it was already, they began zigzagging the truck at seventy miles an hour. He fell back a moment; we saw a whale's spout in the air; he struggled back to a sitting position. They swung the truck. Wham, over he went on his side, watering all over himself. In the roar we could hear him faintly cursing, like the whine of a man far across the hills. "Damn...damn..." He never knew we were doing this deliberately; he just struggled, as grim as Job. When he was finished, as such, he was wringing wet, and now he had to edge and shimmy his way back, and with a most woebegone look, and everybody laughing, except the sad blond boy, and the Minnesotans roaring in the cab. I handed him the bottle to make up for it.
>
> "What the hail," he said, "was they doing that on purpose?"
>
> "They sure were."
>
> "Well, damn me, I didn't know that. I know I tried it back in Nebraska and didn't have half so much trouble (28-9)."

Taken place in 1947, this convivial ride coincided the hightide of hitchhiking before it began to wane due to surge of car ownership in the 1950s. But, thanks to the exciting anecdotes and discoveries narrated in Kerouac's book, the intrigued American drivers, for decades after the peak of hitchhiking, continued to enjoy picking up hikers and hobos on the road.[119]

Unlike Sal Paradise who is not interested in driving, Dean Moriarty must sit behind the wheel. In *On the Road*, this madman always has to get a car. In real life, when young and poor and could not afford one, Neal Cassady would steal cars for wild drives with girls in the Colorado mountains and would park them casually elsewhere when there was no petrol left in the tank. Though Kerouac does not open the novel with what causes Cassady's imprisonment, he confesses his road buddy's crime in chapter 6:

> …Dean was the son of a wino, one of the most tottering bums of Larimer Street, and Dean had in fact been brought up generally on Larimer Street and thereabouts. He used to plead in court at the age of six to have his father set free. He used to beg in front of Larimer alleys and sneak the money back to his father, who waited among the broken bottles with an old buddy. Then when Dean grew up he began hanging around the Glenarm poolhalls; he set a Denver record for stealing cars and went to the reformatory. From the age of eleven to seventeen he was usually in reform school. His specialty was stealing cars, gunning for girls coming out of high school in the afternoon, driving them out to the mountains, making them, and coming back to sleep in any available hotel bathtub in town (37).

[119] See *Roadside Americans*, pp.75-7, 117-8.

Apparently, Sal approves of Dean's behavior. As a transgressive act, stealing cars for joyrides represents a delinquent gesture that sacrifices social production and economic order for relief and play. Moreover, this passage is in line with Kerouac's description of the beats who are ignorant minor offenders in need of free mobility and fun. To excuse Cassady's theft, Kerouac writes in a letter—"That we stole a little bread and cheese and one time a whole tank of gas, was simply because we had no money to MOVE ON. We did not steal from individuals who would suffer (289)."

To cope with their constant poverty, moreover, the two find another way to stay on the road—carpooling, or travel bureau carpooling to be more precise. As Kerouac explains, travel bureau carpooling enabled a driver to find at the travel bureaus a hitchhiker who is willing to share gas and toll (162). In another word, instead of hitchhiking themselves, Sal and Dean become the postwar Uber drivers who intend to make profit on other poor travelers. However, Dean, under Kerouac's characterization, shows his romantic trait and refuses to become the exploiter. In Part 2 of the novel, their carpooling appears as a hopeless one,

> Now we had fifteen dollars to go all the way. We'd have to pick up hitchhikers and bum quarters off them for gas. In the Virginia wilderness suddenly we saw a man walking on the road. Dean zoomed to a stop. I looked back and said he was only a bum and probably didn't have a cent.
>
> "We'll just pick him up for kicks!" Dean laughed. The man was a raged, bespectacled mad type, walking along reading a paperbacked muddy book he'd found in a culvert by the road. He got in the car and went right on reading; he was incredibly filthy and covered with scabs. He said his name was Hyman Solomon and that he walked all over the USA, knocking and sometimes kicking at Jewish doors and demanding money: "Give me money to eat, I am a Jew."
>
> He said it worked very well and that it was coming to him. We asked him what he was reading. He didn't know. He didn't bother to look at the title page. He was only looking at the words, as though he had found the real Torah where it belonged, in the wilderness.
>
> "See? See? See?" cackled Dean, poking my ribs. "I told you it was kicks. Everybody's kicks, man!" We carried Solomon all the way to Testament (137).

Prior to this scene in the book, the beat boys have just been fined by the cops for twenty-five dollars. Though desperately in need of money, Dean's generosity to take on a hobo free of charge shows an aspect of his sympathetic character. Through their

car sharing, the duo approaches the truth of life—instead of blaming the world for their plight, they respond with a rare and commendable generosity. Moreover, in Part 3, Kerouac describes how Dean enjoys the weary long-distance drive and turns a boring trip into a wild race in a travel bureau Cadillac,

> …As we passed drowsy Illinois towns where the people are so conscious of Chicago gangs that pass like this in limousines every day, we were a strange sight: all of us unshaven, the driver barechested, two bums, myself in the back seat, holding on to a strap and my head leaned back on the cushion looking at the countryside with an imperious eye—just like a new California gang come to contest the spoils of Chicago, a band of desperados escaped from the prisons of the Utah moon. When we stopped for Cokes and gas at a small-town station people came out to stare at us but they never said a word and I think made mental notes of our descriptions and heights in case of future need. To transact business with the girl who ran the gas-pump Dean merely threw on his T-shirt like a scarf and was curt and abrupt as usual and got back in the car and off we roared again. Pretty soon the redness turned purple, the last of the enchanted rivers flashed by, and we saw distant smokes of Chicago beyond the drive. We had come from Denver to Chicago via Ed Wall's ranch, 1180 miles, in exactly seventeen hours, not counting the two hours in the ditch and three at the ranch and two with the police in Newton, Iowa, for a mean average of seventy miles per hour across the land, with one driver. Which is a kind of crazy record (237-8).

In this moment, we see a beat and beatific road—a travel bureau car, a madly-driving Dean, varied hitchhiking passengers, a melancholic Sal, and the vast landscape of America. It is a road without the care of money and class. Through Kerouac's delineation of this shared car ride, a sense of economic and social freedom pervades the lines and in turn facilitates the novel's spatial production of a free American road.

As de Certeau's proclaims, every story is a travel story—a spatial practice (115). In a sense, *On the Road*, a travel narrative by nature, categorically showcases Kerouac's escaping practice. Through his westward flight, he quintessentially persuades and appeals to his readers to move with him to complicate the binary of East and West and to re-mark the boundaries of America. Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty's different modes of car travel, moreover, imply their practice to get out of a geopolitical suppression from the capitalistic East Coast. In other words, taking advantage of their fast jalopies and the American highway network, their drive tours become practices to appropriate the topographical system of the US. To drive, for them, is to retake and

repossess. Compared to an immobile and incarcerated space of a railway or ship compartment which de Certeau criticizes as essentially immobile and fantastic, a car seat in *On the Road* shows its superiority as its driver can stop anytime whenever he wishes to rejoin the outside world (111-4). To argue a step further, the car is Kerouac's Pequod and the road his Pacific. They echo a Melvillean transgression of the Protestant norm and a disobedience of the capitalistic law.

A Road of Kicks

As I mentioned above, contemporary critics such as Robert Brustein, John Ciardi, and many others found *On the Road* unacceptable mainly because of Kerouac's depiction of what he calls "kicks" in the book, be they sex, drinks, or drugs. To them (mostly middle-class men of letters), whereas the characters' geographical escape can be conceded as somewhat romantic and adventurous, Kerouac's explicit pursuit after those kicks in the novel treads on a moral territory which should never be stepped into and let alone be desecrated with the book's explicit descriptions. Succeeding the Protestant ethics, the bourgeois morality of these critics' functions similarly in terms of shackling people's mind and body in an age of mass production and adds further to the legitimacy of Kerouac's rebellion through his kick pursuit.

Later critics such as John Tytell and James Jones reject these narrow critiques of *On the Road*. But in their rereading of the book, Tytell and Jones exaggerate an existential element and stress more in terms of Kerouac's political engagement.[120] Their readings align Kerouac with a politically enthusiastic Allen Ginsberg and, to an extent, the British angry young men (those who hate the upper class while in hope of

[120] See Tytell, pp.9. And Jones, pp.254.

taking their place) and, therefore, also misrepresent Kerouac's such descriptions. To better reconsider the kicks of Kerouac, I look at relevant characters in *On the Road* as de Certeauean delinquents who intend to escape a capitalistic morality by turning to the sexuality of Wilhelm Reich and the intoxication of Friedrich Nietzsche to reconstruct or reterritorialize a space of the beatnik road.[121] Kerouac's kick search then, in a de Certeauean sense, mirrors an exit from the hegemonic society and a tour that sublimates the writer's delinquent story.

Let me first discuss sex. Even judged by its contemporary moral standards, *On the Road* is by no means an obscene book. In contrast to Vladmir Nabokov's erotic *Lolita* and another beatnik William Burrough's *Naked Lunch*, Kerouac's novel in fact contains very reserved scenes of sex. For instance, some of these scenes are merely narrative references of lovemaking:

> "Dean is in Denver. Let me tell you." And he (Carlo) told me that Dean was making love to two girls at the same time, they being Marylou, his first wife, who waited for him in a hotel room, and Camille, a new girl, who waited for him in a hotel room. "Between the two of them he rushes to me for our own unfinished business (41)."
>
> …
>
> That night Terry and I went to bed in the sweet night air beneath our dewy tent. I was just getting ready to go to sleep when she said, "You want to love me now?"
>
> I said, "What about Johnny?"
>
> "He don't mind. He's asleep." But Johnny wasn't asleep and he said nothing (95).
>
> …
>
> Then Marylou began making love to me; she said Dean was going to stay with Camille and she wanted me to go with her. "Come back to San Francisco with us. We'll live together. I'll be a good girl for you." But I knew Dean loved Marylou, and I also knew Marylou was doing this to make Lucille jealous, and I wanted nothing of it (125).

In these passages, Kerouac in fact reports rather than portrays Dean and Sal's sexual engagements in a simple and straightforward style. Although the Beat King complained about the Viking editors' excisions of his book and, according to Gewirtz, several sex scenes even lose their original linguistic fluidity that exists in the manuscripts,[122] one, if returns to the untouched original scroll, still reads the writer's

[121] See de Certeau, pp.129-30.
[122] See Gewirtz, pp.119-20; pp.145.

reserved manner in relevant paragraphs. In addition to the above-referred passages, even Dean and Sal's visit to the Mexican brothel is swarmed with sad depictions in terms of the poverty in Mexico rather than a racy sex fiesta. The little money those teenage girls begged for their service, the dilapidated decoration inside the brothel, and the indolent cops, waiters, and pimps all divert readers' attention from sex to sympathy (286-90). Moreover, the homosexual scenes in terms of Cassady having sex with Ginsberg in Denver and later with the travel bureau car owner on his way to Chicago, though tampered and excised by Viking editors for fearing lawsuit of obscenity, also intend to convey a matter-of-fact description of sex (41, 210). With these sporadic and straightforward narratives of sex, *On the Road* resembles in no way a sexually obscene novel.

However, if we look closer, there are nonetheless differences between Kerouac's attitude toward sex and that of his Lost Generation predecessors. In works of Fitzgerald, Steinbeck, and Hemingway, the reference to sex is often portrayed with connection to a particular social problem. For instance, in *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald depicts sex as apparently money-oriented (the love affairs and marriages in the novel all built on the premise of money); in *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck arranges Rose of Sharon breastfeeding a dying hobo to project a utopian political perspective; in *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway hides his patriarchal mindset behind Jake Barnes impotency (that if Barnes were potent, Brett Ashley would never go after other men). Kerouac is different from these Lost precursors of his. From his narration of Dean and Sal's anecdotes mentioned above, we interpret a frank and truthful attitude toward sex, an attitude that magnanimously regards human intercourse as simply a natural desire that should be free from any political and ideological control, be they Protestant chastity or capitalistic morality.

Kerouac's such attitude can be traced to the American sexual revolution which took place in the 1930s and 40s. Since Sigmund Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* in 1905, psychologists and sociologists began studying the psychological abnormal behaviors caused by sexual repression and abstinence. Reflecting on the deficiency of previous approaches, they started to detach sexual intercourse from its connection to social morality and to reevaluate the nature of this bodily need. Wilhelm Reich in his *The Sexual Revolution*, for instance, radically extends Freud's study domain from a family scale to a society sphere. Drawing a link between the father's dominant figure in a family and the capitalist authoritarian state in society, he asserts that all modern psychological disorders originate from the repression of sex. To Reich, through its justification of sexual repression, the capitalist government intentionally advocates a repressive morality with which the father's dominance in a family unit can be secured and the exploitation of workers (mostly males according to Reich) for economic surplus can be guaranteed.[123] In this sense, if the public intend to break free from the authoritarian control, they must first break free from social repressions of sex. Similar in result but from a sociological perspective, Alfred Kinsey's famous *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953) discloses elaborate accounts of both men and women's sexual conduct and popularizes a wide range of sexual knowledge that is not known to the public before. Although Kinsey releases these research results in a manner of academic output, the publication of the two Kinsey Reports caused a social sensation and promoted sexual revolution on a less noticeable level.

The beginning of a sexual turn apparently had its impact on the Beat King. Appropriating Reich's sex theory for literary writing, Kerouac proclaims in his

[123] See Reich, pp.74-82.

"Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" that his excited typing "cramps" are in accordance with "laws of orgasm" and Reich's "beclouding of consciousness."[124] This, of course, is a Kerouacian exaggeration. But, in his 1948 journal "Forest of Arden," we read a more authentic confession that perhaps reveals the reason for Kerouac's straightforward narrative of sex in *On the Road*,

> …We have our Reichians, our Orgonists, who mostly all smoke marijuana, listen to a frantic 'bop' jazz, believe in homosexuality (epigonism?), and are beginning to recognize the existence of an 'atomic disease' of sorts. And all these people are enemies of 'Bourgeois culture (141-2).'

From these lines, we see more clearly that Kerouac, unlike Reich who in the later years of his career promoted a hedonic sexual freedom through his infamous "orgone" concept, mainly intends a rebellious disclosure of sex in his narrative. In other words, through his frank narratives of sex in *On the Road*, the Beat King repels his contemporary morality and produces a natural and unrepressed space of sexuality for his readers.

The novel was indeed successful in this respect. Through Sal and Dean's confessional anecdotes, *On the Road* kindled the burgeoning of other works of beat literature such as Ginsberg's "Howl" and Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* and led a wave of other sexually more audacious works such as John Updike's *Rabbit, Run* (1960) and Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* (1961). Additionally, the novel's liberationist attitude further extended its impact onto the "Make love, not war" movement in the late 1960s. In this sense, to argue with those who condemned Kerouac for his inclusion of sexual insinuations in *On the Road*, I borrow the motto which Judge Clayton Horn quoted in dismissing the obscenity charges of "Howl"—"Honi soit qui mal y pense" (Evil to him who evil thinks). If there's anything to blame, it's the rigid sexual concept of those

[124] See Good Blonde & Others, pp.71.

condemners.

Beside sex, Kerouac's straight forward attitude also manifests in his narration of drinks and drugs in *On the Road*. These two kicks have a similar effect on human body and mind—drunkenness, an irrational state that is unproductive and hazardous to capitalistic economy. But in contrast to his sex narrations, Kerouac pens the drinking episodes of Sal and Dean with apparent boldness. A recurring line "I was drunk and didn't care" frequents almost all the party scenes throughout the novel. In one of these scenes, writes the drunk Sal,

> …We (Montana Slim and Sal) picked up two girls, a pretty young blonde and a fat brunette. They were dumb and sullen, but we wanted to make them. We took them to a rickety nightclub that was already closing, and there I spent all but two dollars on Scotches for them and beer for us. I was getting drunk and didn't care; everything was fine (33).

In this passage and many that resemble it in later chapters, Kerouac shows his readers that getting drunk is an effective gimmick for Sal and Dean to cope with social anxieties, whether they are love affairs, crowded parties, or lonely nights.

More importantly to Kerouac, drunkenness is not a big deal that should be worried about because "everything was fine." This forgiving mentality, I contend, has two implications. One pertains to the French-Canadian's uncontrollable alcoholism. According to many close friends of his, the Lowell boy resorted to alcohol to ease off his shyness and to make himself more comfortable in public occasions.[125] Later on, when his health declined, alcohol served additionally as an alternative painkiller for his phlebitis problem during the middle of 1940s. The lifestyle of a brute alcoholic finally killed the Beat King with an internal bleeding at the age of forty-seven, further impairing his reputation as a serious and sober writer.

The other implication of Kerouac's self-forgiveness is more implicit and has a

[125] See Barry Gifford, pp.47, 208, 234, 244.

deep connection to a Nietzschean rebellion against capitalistic economy. To Americans of Kerouac's time, the decades-long Volstead Act in the 1920s and the all-pervasive spirit of capitalistic production have long suppressed their body and mind and alienated them from their natural needs which philosophers such as Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche have famously defended. In chapter 1 Part 1, the very opening of his novel, Kerouac highlights the names of these two philosophers, the only ones of their kind in the book,

> …First reports of him (Dean) came to me through Chad King, who'd shown me a few letters from him written in a New Mexico reform school. I was tremendously interested in the letters because they so naively and sweetly asked Chad to teach him all about Nietzsche and all the wonderful intellectual things that Chad knew (1).
>
> In the bar I told Dean, "Hell, man, I know very well you didn't come to me only to want to become a writer, and after all what do I really know about it except you've got to stick to it with the energy of a benny addict." And he said, "Yes, of course, I know exactly what you mean and in fact all those problems have occurred to me, but the thing that I want is the realization of those factors that should one depend on Schopenhauer's dichotomy for any inwardly realized ... " and so on in that way, things I understood not a bit and he himself didn't (3).

This reference to German philosophy, I argue, suggests a link between Kerouac's drunkenness and Nietzsche's famous concept of intoxication.[126] In his *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche opposes Western rationalism proclaiming that the purpose of mankind is fulfilled in a metaphysics of art that heavily depends upon the Dionysiac state of intoxication (40). In other words, to drink wine and to create art are of immediate priority to human beings. Having read Nietzsche as early as in 1944,[127] Kerouac finds that this Dionysiac spirit perfectly reconciles his drinking penchant and his passion to write. From this perspective, we may find it easier to understand why he keeps encouraging Cassady to take up a pen and write his own novel, albeit the fact that the latter never seriously paid attention to such suggestion.[128] To Kerouac, to write is to live.

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[126] See *The Birth of Tragedy*, pp.14-5.
[127] See Charters, *Kerouac: a Biography*, pp.53.
[128] See *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, pp.243, 315, 471.

This Dionysiac spirit also predicts Kerouac's engagement with drugs. Though do not appear as frequent as the book's references to alcohol, narrations of prohibited drugs nonetheless take noticeable places in the text. In the opening chapter, Sal describes that he, as a writer, sticks to his craft like a "benny addict" (3). In addition to this veiled allusion to his own drug use, the writer further portrays Jane Burroughs' addiction to Benzedrine (142), Ginsberg's use of heroin to stimulate his writing of poetry (158), and Cassady's love of the uncured marijuana (184). Despite these light touches in *On the Road*, however, we know further from Kerouac's other works that he indeed tried out drugs such as Benzedrine (he could simply purchase it from local pharmacy without a prescription), heroin (see "Chorus 57-9" in his *Mexican Blues*[129]), and marijuana (he used it with Cassady[130]). But he, unlike William Burroughs the "Connoisseur" of drugs, only hung on to Benzedrine and was careful not to become addicted to the other two.[131] Moreover, when he tried the trending LSD in the 1961, Kerouac experienced constant paranoia, which made him vigilant about the straying drug production and he later began claiming that psychedelics should be banned in America. Therefore, when Ken Kesey invited him to a party with the Merry Pranksters in 1964, Kerouac showed up only for the sake of seeing Cassady for the last time.[132] Connecting Kerouac's dots on drugs, I find that the beat writer treats drugs merely as another form of alcohol—a kick that provides ways to reach a Dionysiac intoxication which ultimately supports and sustains his writing, or life for that matter.

To return to my topic of a road space. Although, from my critical stance, it is inaccurate to condemn Kerouac as morally degenerated and as politically aggressive

[129] See Kerouac's *Collected Poems*, pp.44-46.
[130] See *Visions of Cody*, pp.88.
[131] See Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, pp.59-66, 345. And also see Gifford, pp.153.
[132] See Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, pp.363-5.

for depictions of these Reichian and Nietzschean kicks on the road, we nevertheless need to recognize a spatial intention behind his narrative maneuver, a delinquent rebellion that gestures toward a new American space. Interestingly, Kerouac's Sal and Dean are not alone in their reterritorialization of civil space. In his *The Writer of Modern Life*, Walter Benjamin notices a similar civilian revolt against alcohol prohibition,

> …There the tax-free wine which was called le vin de la barriere was dispensed. If one can believe H.-A. Fregier, section head at police headquarters, workers who imbibed that wine displayed their enjoyment—full of pride and defiance—as the only enjoyment granted them. "There are women who do not hesitate to follow their husbands to the barriere [town gate] with their children who are old enough to work. Afterward they start their way home half-drunk and act more drunk than they are, so that everyone may notice that they have drunk quite a bit. Sometimes the children follow their parents' example (50-1)."

Rather similar to *On the Road*'s bold depiction of the drunkenness of Sal and Dean, the civil disobedience depicted by Benjamin shares Kerouac's perspective of expanding the social space. Through the mild offenses, the common people find their way to resist a state control and hegemony. In literary terms, by opting a natural and straightforward fashion in his narrative of sex, drinks, and drugs, Kerouac's kicks point out for his readers a free road on which the Americans can connect more immanently to the purposes of life. Again, in a de Certeauean sense, those characters in *On the Road* are similar to the populace of Olympian gods, living on their roads and in their cars in the most delinquent form.[133]

The Road of a Dharma Bum

Kerouac was born, raised and died a Catholic. Therefore, many Kerouac scholars tend to regard the writer's short span of Buddhist piety (from the middle to

[133] See *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp.129-130.

the end of the 1950s) simply as a consolation for disappointments in life.[134] Though partly reasonable in view of Kerouac's extremely miserable situation around that time, this explanation does not suffice to substantiate his sudden reconversion back to Catholicism in another depressive work *Big Sur*—"I lie there in cold sweat wondering what's come over me for years my Buddhist studies and pipesmoking assured meditations on emptiness and all of a sudden the Cross is manifested to me (205)." Considering his beat poetics which I discuss in chapter four and a bum life which he always pursues in *On the Road*, Kerouac's converting to Buddhism, I contend, was not because he was seeking comfort from it but because the eastern religion had an essential proposition that resonated with the Beat King's worldview, a refreshing mindset that emphasized renunciation and austerities. In this sense, manifested in *On the Road* and other Kerouac's works after it, the Beat King's pursuit of a bhikkhu life, or to use Rob Wilson's term—the American Buddhism-cum-post-Catholic quest (106), further facilitates his escape beyond the American west and helps construct a religious space on the American road.

In *Some of the Dharma*, the notebook of Kerouac's Buddhist study, he begins with the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha, a condensed entirety of Buddhist ontology, epistemology, and ethics.

1. All Life is Sorrowful
2. The Cause of Suffering is Ignorant Craving
3. The Suppression of Suffering can be Achieved
4. The Way is the Noble Eightfold Path (3)

As a kid who lost his brother at four, a son who lost his father at twenty-four, a husband who had divorced twice, a father who refused to see his daughter, and a writer who was poor and barely published, Kerouac echoed the first truth which ontologically

[134] See Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, pp.190. Necosia, pp.462.

explains the essence of life—a sorrowful journey through the world. While it shares Schopenhauer and Nietzsche's pessimistic worldview (but it's more likely that the two Germans obtained their ideas from the Eastern religion), Buddhism offers a different epistemological route to reach the goal of life by suppressing worldly desires. Later in the same book, Kerouac pens his own interpretation of the second and third noble truths in all capitals "DESTRUCTION OF CRAVING DESIRES" (24). This Buddhist doctrine that appeals for a life of renunciation and austerities perfectly coheres with the writer's spiritual pursuit. With a meticulous study of *The Buddhist Bible* by Dwight Goddard, the Surangama Sutra, and the Diamond Sutra, Kerouac claims that he leans more toward the Mahayana group which, as he notes, preaches that one has to "cease to cherish any arbitrary conceptions as to your own self, the selfhood of others, of living beings, of a Universal Self" to attain the inestimable and illimitable blessing and merit (53). It was Kerouac's conversion to the Mahayana Buddhism, I argue, that helped defend his poetics in *On the Road*. And as I will suggest below, it also helps convey his detestation of the capitalistic economy.[135]

Contrary to the capitalistic spirit that depends on the chase of money, the Buddhist precepts denounces wealth—"Not to wear jewelry or expensive clothes, but to practice humility…Not to have anything to do with money or precious things, but to practice poverty (Goddard, 648)." In fact, the hate of money had been inside Kerouac's mind since he set foot on the road. In a letter to one of his Denver friends, the writer blames the California gold rush for starting the profit-chasing chaos and confesses that "wanting money is wanting the dishonesty of wanting a servant. Money hates us, like a servant; because it is false (193-4)." And, in *Some of the Dharma*,

[135] Also see my previous discussion in chapter four on his perseverance in returning to a more faithful manuscript compared to the original scroll.

empowered by the Mahayana self-forgiveness, Kerouac goes further in poking fun at the capitalistic universal equivalent—gold,

> Everybody rushing around selling their pile of shit
> What difference is there between shit and gold?
> Shit on gold---shit is gold---goldshit---shit.
> A car has no shit when it loses its compression,
> It is just a pile of shit
> Shit on shit
> And honor Mind (26).

To counter the evil impact of money as the last line reads, the Dharma writer prefers a Buddhist rule of conduct which urges people to value mind rather than money. In his 1954 letter to Robert Giroux, Kerouac, lamenting their past friendship in which they both were aficionados of literature, confesses his divergence from the capitalistic economy,

> And I also mean, what has happened to our friendship or was it just based on business? ... I really have no interest in business and thats why Im confused about what happened I guess ... —I cant seem to do anything but write anymore.
> Maybe I've gone crazy but by God I like to remember the times we talked about Yeats and watched pigeons (445).

Taking his editor for a pure businessman (the same happened to Lawrence Ferlinghetti when Kerouac tried to publish *Mexico City Blues* with City Lights), Kerouac was published late perhaps because of his hate toward business and his Buddhist mindset.

Moreover, compatible with his condemnation of money, Kerouac, like a Melvillean Bartleby, had a natural aversion to jobs. One could evidently tell from the variety of short-term labors during his years on the road (namely, sports reporter, sailor, parking lot driver, security guard, script synopsizer, railroad brakeman, fire lookout, etc.) that, to the beat writer, they are meaningless repetitions that he reluctantly yields to in exchange for money, the universal equivalent he hates at the outset. Thinking that working on those jobs is a waste of his time, Kerouac would rather be regulated by a Buddhist ethics of daily meditation.[136] Therefore, when Neal Cassady keeps pressing

[136] See *The Dharma Bums*, pp.16.

him with the advice to stick to a well-paid job (brakeman) and to save up for houses and cars, Kerouac keeps refusing his hero in *On the Road* and visits daily the San Jose Library to study Buddhist sutras instead.[137] In *Some of the Dharma*, reflecting on a material anxiety in the American society, he questions the shallow modern needs created by capitalistic consumerism such as automobiles, washing machines, expensive clothes, up-to-date furniture and cultural excitements like TV and movies and every kind of unreal hassle to kill time (35). To the beat Buddhist, the capitalistic production blindly creates unnecessary desires that must be fulfilled through man's taking of meaningless jobs. Rejecting those monotonous jobs, Kerouac seeks the meaningful life as a writer.

But the strongest yet subtlest Buddhist manifestation of Kerouac is his hate of war. Compared to money and work ethic, war represents an unavoidable consequence of capitalistic expansion, a vicious activity that the sympathetic beatnik ultimately objects to. Though naively volunteered for the US Marine in hope of becoming a war hero in early 1942, Kerouac escaped service on the same day due to an immediate fear to kill and to be killed. Turning to a seaman job instead, he moaned for his German enemies after witnessing a US escort destroyer sank a German ship—"the Germans should not have been our enemies, I say this and stake my life on it." After trying again later the same year with the US Navy Training School, he quit once and for all his fantasy of being a hero because of the inhumanity of military life.[138] Later on as a writer, unlike Ginsberg who openly and politically involved in antiwar campaigns, Kerouac chose to reveal his antiwar orientation by excluding war-related passages in his novels. For instance, in *On the Road*, with the work's background set in postwar

[137] See Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, pp.191-5.
[138] See Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, pp.35-8.

America, Kerouac's single mentioning of the war reads as follows,

> We arrived in Washington at dawn. It was the day of Harry Truman's inauguration for his second term. Great displays of war might were lined along Pennsylvania Avenue as we rolled by in our battered boat. There were B-29s, PT boats, artillery, all kinds of war material that looked murderous in the snowy grass; the last thing was a regular small ordinary lifeboat that looked pitiful and foolish. Dean slowed down to look at it. He kept shaking his head in awe. "What are these people up to? Harry's sleeping somewhere in this town .... Good old Harry .... Man from Missouri, as I am .... That must be his own boat (135-6)."

I strongly doubt that it is Kerouac himself rather than Cassady who gives the above sarcastic comment on President Truman showcasing the US military might. With a Dharma sympathy for the world and its people, just as Ginsberg writes in his introduction to *Visions of Cody*, Kerouac leaves "the pseudo-heroic pseudo-responsible masculines of Army and Industry and Advertising and Construction and Transport and toilets and Wars" out of his beat literature and his holy America (xii).

Before moving further into my last chapter, let me reflect on the impact of Kerouac's literary space. Unlike what Bloom predicted that "Kerouac's works would be rubbed down and out and become rubbish in time," Bob Dylan, a central figure of rock & roll in the 60s with his albums (such as *Highway 61 Revisited*) immensely influenced by Kerouac's *On the Road*, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016, signaling that apart from the American critics, a wider literary world, namely the Swedish Academy at least, recognizes the legacy of the Beat Generation. More importantly, as Herbert Marcuse appeals for a rebellion against the one-dimensional authoritarian society in his famous *One-dimensional Man*, Kerouac's *On the Road* and its extension of cultural spaces foresaw the counterculture movement throughout the 60s and 70s and contributed to a delinquent reterritorialization of American culture henceforth. Moreover, on the other side of the Pacific in the 1980s and 90s, Chinese writers such as Ma Jian and Wang Shuo began to follow the same beat spirit of the

road and wrote their Chinese versions of *On the Road*.[139] Like what Dean Moriarty says on the highway of Nebraska flying at the speed of one hundred and ten miles per hour, "what a dreamboat (dreamroad as I would say), … Yes! You and I, Sal, we'd dig the whole world with a car like this because, man, the road must eventually lead to the whole world (231)."

[139] See Ma Jian's *Red Dust* (2001); Wang Shuo's *Ferocious Animals* (2004).

CHAPTER SIX

Becoming Fellaheen: *On the Road* and Kerouac's Racial Attitude

> At this level all Civilizations enter upon a stage, which lasts for centuries, of appalling depopulation. The whole pyramid of cultural man vanishes. It crumbles from the summit, first the world-cities, then the provincial forms, and finally the land itself, whose best blood has incontinently poured into the towns, merely to bolster them up awhile. At the last, only the primitive blood remains, alive, but robbed of its strongest and most promising elements. This residue is the Fellah type.
>
> —Oswald Spengler

> No, I want to speak *for* things, for the crucifix I speak out, for the Star of Israel I speak out, for the divinest man who ever lived who was a German (Bach) I speak out, for sweet Mohammed I speak out, for Buddha I speak out, for Lao-tse and Chuang-tse I speak out, for D. T. Suzuki I speak out ... why should I attack what I love out of life. This is Beat. Live your lives out? Naw, *love* your lives out.
>
> —from "The Origins of the Beat Generation"

Kerouac's delinquent road not only reveals his construction of social space, which is discussed above, but also pertinently gestures toward my last point—his racial ethics. Although not a writer known by his depictions of race, Kerouac is nonetheless condemned for his racial manifestations since the publication of *On the Road*. For instance, Mark Richardson, in Bloom's critical anthology on Kerouac, criticizes the Beat King for his kitsch romanticization of the Mexican peasants in chapters on Sal's affair with Terry the Mexican girl.[140] In his article, Richardson mocks in detail at Sal's dependance on his aunt's remittance and his flight from the arduous cotton picking,

[140] See Harald Bloom, *Jack Kerouac's On the Road*, pp.212-7.

ascribing the narrator's bourgeois superiority to his white imagination of the colored Mexicans. Similarly in his essay on Norman Mailer, James Baldwin appreciates Mailer's racial attitude in "The White Negro," arguing that, unlike Mailer whose insights are radical and masculine, Kerouac's racial fantasy regarding the Denver colored section in *On the Road* is an ignorant nonsense and, if he were to read his passage in Harlem publicly, he would face an unimaginable end of his life.[141] Baldwin also argues that Mailer's seminal essay should have avoided the concept of the hipster, which, as he sees it, merely belongs to the "Suzuki rhythms boys" (beatniks such as Kerouac who is interested in Zen Buddhism and Jazz for the sake of escaping their social responsibilities).

In addition to these complaints in terms of his romanticized racial delineation, what has further jeopardized Kerouac's reputation is his comical behavior on the 1968 PBS talk show *Firing Line* hosted by William Buckley, Jr. Sharing his conservative opinions on the civil unrest in France and the yippie counterculture in general, the apparently drunk Beat King patronizes his two fellow guests—a professor of sociology, Lewis Yablonsky, and his own fervent beat worshiper Ed Sanders, a lead singer of the rock band The Fugs. Throughout the show, Kerouac, rudely interrupting with words of contempt and even derisive noises, acts in an antisemitic way toward the two Jewish guests and earns himself a reputation as a Catholic antisemite.

This public display of his racial stance causes Kerouac a wave of criticisms. For instance, in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari, though praising Kerouac's literary flight toward a beat-becoming in an early chapter, condemns the beat writer "who later finds himself immersed in dreams of a Great America, and then in search

[141] See James Baldwin, *Collected Essays*, pp.277-8.

of his Breton ancestors of the superior race."[142] It is likely that the two French thinkers draw their racial interpretation of Kerouac after they watched *Firing Line* or, as Susan Pinette suggests, they read Kerouac's equally awkward book *Satori in Paris*, a travel narrative caught in between the writer's American patriotism and his search of a Breton origin.[143] Apart from the denunciative white critics such as Deleuze and Guattari, the Jewish intellectuals, Norman Mailer and Harold Bloom for instance, naturally take Kerouac's drunk bickering as his personal attack on their race and in turn made their respective harsh reprisals on the value of his works.[144]

However, heavy attacks as such appear too assertive in the case of *On the Road*. As Nancy Grace points out, Kerouac, in works such as *Maggie Cassady*, *The Subterraneans*, and *Tristessa*, nevertheless exposes his underprivileged and marginalized whiteness, a whiteness that is collapsed onto, or hybridizes with, the colored femininity.[145] Hassan Melehy, in his *Kerouac: language, poetics, and territory*, also confronts Mark Richardson and Jon Panish's stance which readily considers Kerouac as a white supremacist and contends that the beat writer's engagement with racial depictions in his works in fact appeals for an all-American cosmopolitanism and deliberately pushes his unwary narrator forward to take the blame of racism.[146] Drawing from studies of Grace and Melehy, I find that contrary to Baldwin and Richardson's denouncing interpretation, the beat writer's racial vision, especially his engagement with the "fellaheen" people on the road, is in fact futuristic and cosmopolitan and deserves a nuanced revisit in light of the writer's later

[142] See *Anti-Oedipus*, pp.277.
[143] See Susan Pinette, pp.122.
[144] See my previous notes on Mailer and Bloom in chapter 4.
[145] See Nancy Grace, "A White Man in Love: A Study of Race, Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in Jack Kerouac's *Maggie Cassidy*, *The Subterraneans*, and *Tristessa*," pp.40.
[146] See Hassan Melehy, pp.7. And also see Jon Panish, *The color of Jazz*, p110.

ambivalent display of antisemitism. I also want to point out in this chapter that Kerouac's racial ethics is closely intertwined with his own ethnic background and, more importantly, his beat poetics.

The French-Canadian as American

In their criticism, Baldwin and Richardson have overlooked a crucial point—Kerouac's own ethnicity. Being a French-Canadian writer, Kerouac was appreciated by Malcolm Cowley not only because of his literary gift but also because of his ethnic background. Thanks to Cowley's promotional effort, an excerpt from Kerouac's manuscript of *On the Road* (Part 3 chapter 4) leads other emerging pieces by writers such as Heinrich Böll, Joseph Heller, and Dylan Thomas in the seventh volume of the prestigious *New World Writing* series in 1955. It was his only publication since *The Town and the City* came out. As the short introduction before the excerpt says "Jean-Louis is the pseudonym of a young American writer of French-Canadian parentage," the editors, Cowley included, were hooked by the fact that Kerouac was a French-Canadian who could represent an ethnic group that was "seriously underrepresented in American literature."[147]

More importantly, deciding to use his christened name "Jean-Louis" as authorship for the excerpt in *New World Writing*, Kerouac reveals his ambivalence to overcome and, at the same time, to maintain his own French-Canadian ethnicity. The anxiety of being a French-speaking minority haunts him during the entire drafting and editing process of *On the Road*. But, as Joyce Johnson points out, the success of the novel in 1957 shrouds the French-Canadian's alien identity and packages him under

[147] See Malcolm Cowley, *The Literary Situation*, pp.155.

the guise of a pure American.[148] Therefore, arguing against critics such as James Campbell who naively believes that Kerouac has no proficiency in French,[149] I will investigate below in terms of the ways in which the beat writer deterritorializes and reterritorializes his own ethnicity in *On the Road*.

Let me start from Kerouac's effort to de-French or Englishize himself. Unknown to many Kerouac admirers, the beat writer has an ambivalent relationship with his first language—Joual, a dialect of Canadian French. As an American-born French-Canadian in a migrant-populated Lowell, Massachusetts, Kerouac grows up in a bilingual environment, talking to his family and neighbors in Joual and working with teachers and classmates in English. But linguistic anxiety begins to confuse him after he decides to become a writer. Identifying himself as an American novelist, Kerouac designs his first work *The Town and the City* to be an American story by toning down its French elements such as using English names and settings. To better authenticate such attempt, he writes to a local reviewer of the novel in English saying that he has no proficiency in his native language—"Excuse me for writing in English, when it would be so much better to address you in French; but I have no proficiency at all in my native language, and that is the lame truth."[150] This piece of correspondence is perhaps where Campbell gets his conclusion that Kerouac speaks poor French, but, as I am about to point out in the following, the French-Canadian can indeed write in passable French. Interestingly, later in the same letter, the French-Canadian nevertheless confesses the uneasy relationship between his English and his native tongue,

> …All my knowledge rests in my "French-Canadianness" and nowhere else. The English language is a tool lately found…so late (I never spoke English before I was six or seven). At

[148] See Johnson, *The Voice is All*, pp.xvii.
[149] See James Campbell, "Road Ready" *New York Times Book Review*, January 18, 2013.
[150] See *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, pp.227.

> 21 I was still somewhat awkward and illiterate-sounding in my speech and writings. What a mixup. The reason I handle English so easily is because it is not my own language. I refashion it to fit French images (228-9).

But this confession of his language ambiguity, I contend, also foresees Kerouac's another effort of linguistic deterritorialization—constant and fast rewriting.

As I have discussed in chapter four, Kerouac consistently claims that he finishes *On the Road* in a typing outburst of three weeks. Although not true, this claim is in fact compatible with the writer's purpose to de-French himself and it mirrors his linguistic anxiety from a different aspect. As shown in the above reference, Kerouac adopts a relaxed writing attitude to counteract the disturbance from his French so that his flow of inspiration will not be hindered or interrupted. The following two essentials from his spontaneous prose manual aptly reaffirm the beat writer's such linguistic attitude,

> LAG IN PRODUCERE. No pause to think of proper word but the infantile pileup of scatological buildup words till satisfaction is gained, which will turn out to be a great appending rhythm to a thought and be in accordance with Great Law of timing.
> TIMING. Nothing is muddy that runs in time and to laws of time - Shakespearian stress of dramatic need to speak now in own unalterable way or forever hold tongue - no revisions (except obvious rational mistakes, such as names or calculated insertions in act of not-writing but inserting). (69-70)

With these two spontaneous doctrines, the beat writer points out an effective writing strategy for second language writers—to deliberately force oneself to keep dashing forward in a trance of ideas and inspirations and to only come back for grammar mistakes. As such, constant linguistic outbursts prove to be extremely conducive for Kerouac to overcome his French disturbance in writing and rewriting of *On the Road*. In this sense, we see a layer of genuineness in Kerouac's somewhat exaggerated and self-advertising "three weeks."

On the other hand, whereas he tries to de-French himself in *On the Road*, Kerouac at the same time contradictorily reprimands himself for not admitting his French-Canadian identity in his novel. In his 1950 journal, Kerouac writes about a

dream in which his brother Gerard comes to him and "strike home and heavy" telling him to "become a Frenchman again and write in French."[151] The haunting image of his brother and his urge for Kerouac to be true to his ethnicity grow stronger in a time when the writer begins to prepare for his second novel, especially when the flat reviews of the *The Town and the City* emerge and when the anxiety for a unique voice keeps hitting him. Through the reprimand of his brother, Kerouac realizes that "Ginsberg & Meyer Shapiro & Kazin were great men because they were not trying to dejew themselves & therefore I should not try to defrench myself."[152] Moreover, in a manuscript he calls "Gone on the Road" shortly prior to the scroll, Kerouac notes that he will be true to his ethnic roots: "No Martinization this time, the real F-C soul—the real F-C feeling about cats & everything. About the sky."[153]

More significantly, the results of this ethnic return are several manuscripts of *On the Road* written either entirely in French or containing a considerable portion of French passages, such as "Ecrit en Francais" and "La Nuit Est Ma Femme / Les Travaux de Michel Bretagne," which we can now look up in the Kerouac Archive in New York Public Library. To scholars' surprise, all these manuscripts are rendered in fluent French and some of their contents even make way into the scroll.[154] But moreover, as Gewirtz notices, there are several distinctive features regarding these French experiments. One, the French, or Joual to be more precise, in these manuscripts seems heavily influenced by English, for the writer constantly seeps English words into his French sentences; two, in "Ecrit en Francais," however, Kerouac sometimes

[151] See *Windblown World*, pp.258-9.
[152] See *Windblown World*, pp.258.
[153] See *Beatific Soul*, pp.93. The word "martinization" here refers to his efforts in *The Town and the City* to de-French himself, which he now regrets.
[154] For instance, in the "Ben Boncoeur" excerpt, Ben (the later Sal Paradise in the novel) talks about leading a beat life in the west rather than being a writer in the evil New York. See *Beatific Soul*, pp.99.

writes in French first and then translate the French paragraphs into English, a habit that indicates his superior French literacy; three, in "Les Travaux de Michel Bretagne," Kerouac inserts a two-page English narration claiming Michel Bretagne, who is Kerouac himself, as an American writer.[155]

From features which all point to Kerouac's tug-of-war between English and French, we see that the beat writer, though tries very hard to reterritorialize himself on a linguistic level, realizes that a mere switch from English to French does not suffice. His patriotic urge to reinforce his French-Canadian identity begins to return to a cosmopolitan subconsciousness of becoming an American writer. This linguistic spontaneity, or concession for that matter, reminds one of Emmanuel Levinas's ethical view of language.[156] In Levinas's terms, Kerouac's determination to return to French mirrors a naïve concentration on linguistic forms, which Levinas calls "the said," and therefore, implies a lower level of ethical understanding. But, when he starts to oscillate ambiguously between French and English in his manuscripts, Kerouac prioritizes the will to say, which the Jewish philosopher calls "the saying," over the preference of a single language. In other words, reflecting on his attempt to return to French, Kerouac realizes that it is dangerous to prefer only one tongue over many others, or, as Levinas would say, it is in languages, rather than a single language, that the human race is founded.[157]

Therefore, realizing that he should be spontaneous in his linguistic choices, Kerouac turns again from French to English in the original scroll and in the published version of *On the Road*. But this turn, or re-turn for that matter, is not a one-dimensional movement, for he nevertheless maintains French linguistic features in this

[155] See *Beatific Soul*, pp.93-101.
[156] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, pp.45-50.
[157] See *Collected Philosophical Papers*, pp.123.

new novel. For instance, in the second and third versions of typed manuscripts, French titles are given to key characters such as his Columbia buddy Henri Cru (Remi Boncoeur), his mother (Mary Bettencourt), and Carolyn Cassady (Camille).[158] And this habit of using French names have been retained in his later works, especially *Desolation Angels* and *Vanity of Duluoz*. On a sentence level, moreover, Kerouac's syntactic arrangement in the scroll has a residual feature of French orality, a linguistic feature of his hometown Lowell.[159] In "Book Four" in the scroll, one may read a typical scene of Kerouacian road talks, which makes its way unchanged into the published book:

> …We all decided to tell our stories, but one by one, and Frank was first. "We've a long way to go" preambled Neal "and so you must take every indulgence and deal with every single detail you can bring to mind—and still it won't all be told. Easy, easy," he cautioned Frank who began telling his story "you've got to relax too." Frank swung into his life story as we shot across the dark. He started with his experiences in France but to round out ever-growing difficulties he came back and started at the beginning with his boyhood in Denver. He and Neal compared times they'd seen each other zooming around on bicycles. Frank was nervous and feverish. He wanted to tell Neal everything. Neal was now arbiter, old man, judge, listener, approver, nodder. "Yes, yes, go on please." We passed Walsenburg; suddenly we passed Trinidad where Hal Chase was somewhere off the road in front of a campfire with Ginger and perhaps a handful of anthropologists and as of yore he too was telling his life story and never dreamed we were passing at that exact moment in the hiway headed for Mexico telling our own stories (370-1) …

To use historian Walter Ong's term,[160] this "residual orality" keeps revealing itself through inserted dialogues, brief sentences, pervading commas, and, especially, through the eye-catching three-word parallels such as "See? See? See," "burn, burn, burn," and "yes, yes, yes." And, according to Tim Hunt, Kerouac's anxiety over his French orality is blisteringly suppressed in his first novel, but, thanks to the twists and turns of his language choice, this orality begins to release itself in the rest of the French-Canadian's writings.[161]

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[158] See *Beatific Soul*, pp.118.
[159] For a detailed discuss in terms of Kerouac's orality, see Tim Hunt's *The Textuality of Soulwork*, pp.26-32.
[160] See Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy*.
[161] See Tim Hunt's Kerouac's Crooked Road, pp.xliv.

In this linguistic as well as literary sense, Kerouac is never, as many critics think, a pure American. And he owes significantly his escape from a personal literary dilemma and his development of a spontaneous prose to his French-Canadianness and in turn to a futuristic cosmopolitanism which grows out of such ethnicity. On the other hand, moreover, as I will argue in the following section, this poetics of truth and spontaneity indeed is at odds with the writer's later racial view displayed in *Firing Line* in which he erroneously equates Jews as financial bloodsuckers, and further brings the beat writer into a wide disrepute of antisemitism.

Against Frauds, not Jews

In his essay "On the Jewish Question," Karl Marx criticizes the Hegelian thinker Bruno Bauer who, in his answer to the "Jewish problem," proposes that the Jews give up their religion so as to achieve political emancipation. Marx argues that Bauer's suggestion puts the religious cart before the political horse, which is essentially wrong. In his opinion, it is the political structure that should first be changed in order to assume the religious Other (174). And, as Stephen Greenblatt points out, in his rational analysis of the very "problem," Marx invokes that human emancipation can be achieved through the abandonment of Judaic economic egoism.[162] It is the economic egoism, I argue, that perhaps ignites the historic animosity against Jews in the American literary tradition in which we find talented writers, such as Hamlin Garland, Ezra Pound, Theodor Dreiser, and Willa Cather, all reveal in their works certain antisemitic ideology.[163] Kerouac, though not engaged openly in his works in

[162] See Greenblatt's essay, 1978, p307.
[163] See Donald Pizer's *American Naturalism and the Jews*.

terms of antisemitic expression, is nevertheless criticized due to his racial expressions in *On the Road* and, more directly, to his controversial behavior in *Firing Line*.[164] But as I am going to discuss in the rest of this section that, similar to the abovementioned writers in terms of poetic and economic beliefs, Kerouac's antisemitism mostly originates not from a fascist racial discrimination but from a poetics of truth and sincerity which fundamentally negates the economically egoistic worldview. In other words, he hates the frauds but not the Jews.

Although, according to his biographer Barry Miles, Kerouac's antisemitism had its strong connection to his family background—his parents both had displayed Jew-hating ideologies which were largely inherited from the French-Canadian culture in Lowell, Massachusetts,[165] the beat writer in fact had a good relationship with Jewish people in his early life. Having acquainted Jewish kids in his childhood years, Kerouac first established relationship with the diasporic race during his years at Horace Mann, a school that was attended mostly by Jewish students from wealthy families.[166] As Nicosia points out, the young French-Canadian had a good time with the Jewish majority at his prep school and he was even accepted into cliques of his fellow Jewish buddies. In a way, taking advantage of a good education, Kerouac managed to leave behind his family's bigoted discriminations and narrow ideologies.

Another example of Kerouac's friendly attitude toward Jews which dates to his early twenties is his lifelong relationship with Allen Ginsberg, who was indeed Jewish. When the two met in 1944 on Columbia campus, they were immediately hooked up with each other as they were both passionate about literature. Because Kerouac was

[164] See Christopher Orlet, "Why Kerouac's Anti-Semitism Matters" *The Hedgehog Review*, Jan 13th, 2013. And also see Barry Miles' *Jack Kerouac King of the Beats: A Portrait*.
[165] See chapter 12 in *Jack Kerouac King of the Beats: A Portrait*.
[166] See Gerald Nicosia, pp.62-4.

four years older and already determined to pursue the career of a writer, he had excelled Ginsberg in both social and literary abilities and, therefore, he often encouraged and inspired his Jewish little brother in writing. In *The Paris Review* interview with Ted Berrigan recalling his first impression on Ginsberg, Kerouac shares an anecdote, which more or less clarifies the French-Canadian's racial attitude,

> Allen Ginsberg asked me when he was nineteen years old, should I change my name to Allen Renard? You change your name to Allen Renard I'll kick you right in the balls! Stick to Ginsberg ... and he did. That's one thing I like about Allen. Allen Renard (78)!!!

To his critics' surprise, Kerouac was in effect strongly supportive of Ginsberg's racial identity since they became friends. And, as their brotherhood developed, Kerouac's support persisted. In 1947 when Ginsberg was unhappily neglected by Cassady in Denver and therefore wrote his sadness into the "Last Stanzas in Denver," Kerouac writes cheeringly to criticize his friend's mixture between art and personal sadness, which is expressed in the line "So I enact the hope I can create/ a lively world around my deadly eyes,"

> …Your eyes are not "deadly" – they're only the eyes of a poet and a Jew of the ancient kind, not the new city jew, but the old prophet jew: not the political jew but the jew of the wilderness ... really "of the mountains (120)."

From his encouragement and his lifelong connection to Ginsberg, we see an evidently different attitude compared to what he initially displayed in *Firing Line*.

Moreover, Ginsberg, in his later reminiscence about Kerouac's ethics, defends his Canuck friend's antisemitic words and points the blame toward his manipulative mother,

> I remember visiting earlier, in the late fifties, his house in Northport, Long Island, and we sat by the television set and there was a retrospective news broadcast about Hitler and the concentration camps. Kerouac and his mother were both drinking. She was also a great tippler, both were drunk, and they began arguing among themselves. And then some German refugee came on the screen and talked about the Holocaust and Kerouac's mother said in front of me: "They're still complaining about Hitler, it's too bad he didn't finish them off." Kerouac agreed with her. I sat there and nodded. Then he said to her, "You dirty cunt, why did you say that?" And she said, "You fucking prick, you heard me say that before." And then began an argument of violence and filth such as I had never heard in any household in my life. I was actually shocked (359).

To Ginsberg, in spite of the exchanging of verbal curses with his mother which reflected their domestic mode of talking, Kerouac was simply too obeisant to break away from her control, especially in his later years as an alcoholic who nonetheless needed some sort of disciplinary hegemony. But considering Ginsberg's constant visit attempts during Kerouac's late reclusive years, we could be persuaded that were Kerouac an antisemitic at heart, it would be impossible for the two to maintain a connection that stood the test of time.

One would ask why, then, would Kerouac, while being congenial to Ginsberg and his other Jewish acquaintances, present himself with those controversial remarks on a national television show?[167] To find out a working answer to such question, we could, however, take the beat writer's other resentment into consideration, namely his open hatred against Communists and the LSD-enthusiastic hipsters in the 60s. On the one hand, to Kerouac, Communism was essentially a political propaganda rather than a genuinely ethical liberation movement. What the beat writer believed, or would love to see, was a truly liberated communist society ruled by the "fat, happy peasant women" instead of those hypocritical Politburo chauvinists.[168] On the other hand, according to Kerouac's personal experience, LSD (Lysergic acid diethylamide) was a perilous drug which intensifies fantasized thoughts, emotions, and senses. When Ginsberg convinced him to give it a try in 1961, Kerouac instantly rejected the drug as he argued that a "psilocybin-induced instant enlightenment" was impossible and the hallucinogens were not panaceas.[169] From the way the beat writer saw it, dissimilar to

[167] We should not take his drunkenness into account as, according to Gary Snider, the Beat King's consciousness functions well even under the intoxication of alcohol. See *Kerouac: a Biography*, pp.242-3.
[168] See *Windblown World*, pp.31. And also, see *Selected Letters, 1957-1969*, pp.268.
[169] See *Selected Letters, 1957-1969*, pp.279.

Benzedrine or Marijuana, LSD was a fake kick which only generated ingenuine and harmful hallucinations.

Kerouac's resentment against Communism and LSD naturally led further to his equal umbrage of the hippies, a younger generation of beatniks as they call themselves. Before the 1968 *Firing Line* was actioned, Ed Sanders met Kerouac in the elevator and cottoned him up with a greeting "Hello, Dad," which annoyed the latter immediately and perhaps somehow triggered his initial hostility in the show.[170] To Kerouac, the hippies embracement of Communism as well as their advertisement for LSD betrayed the beat spirit which him, Cassady, Ginsberg, and Burroughs initiated and defended, a lifestyle away from politics, usuries, and ingenuine experiences. Therefore, when Ken Kesey arrived in New York in 1964 with Neal Cassady and the Merry Pranksters in their cross-country bus "further," Kerouac was uncomfortable with the stoned group and their political extremism and did not engage into congenial talks with Cassady as before, though it was the last time that the two saw each other.

Thus, if compare these antipathies of Kerouac, be they against Jews, Communists, or hippies, we find that they share a common characteristic that links them in the eyes of the Beat King—duplicity, a fake, false, and hypocritical quality that is fundamentally against his worldview and, more importantly, his poetics. In a letter to his agent Sterling Lord after his finished the draft of *Big Sur*, Kerouac accuses the Jewish producers of the TV series *Route 66* for stealing his ideas in *On the Road* and the literary critics for crediting his "greatest contribution to modern literature" to Allen Ginsberg. Asking forgiveness for his antisemitism later in the same letter, Kerouac accentuates that it is the dishonesty, i.e., the continuous stealing of his ideas,

[170] See Barry Miles, pp.289.

or his money for that matter, that exasperates him.[171] Finding similar dishonesty in the communist revolutions (they often entail small political cliques wooing the ignorant mass for help and sacrifice), in the hippie counterculture (a group of angry youngsters who, instead of writing hard for the sake of literature and poetics, unwittingly follow the communist propaganda hailing, to use Kerouac's words, "Down with this, down with that. Throw eggs at this, throw eggs at that."), and even in the profit chasing capitalistic finance (the capitalistic concept of work is "essentially Faustian," and Capitalism and Communism are "Tit and Tat"),[172] Kerouac naturally categorized these three social groups in his blacklist of the frauds, the same way as he belittled his first work *The Town and the City* due to its fictive elements.

As Nancy Grace argues, in works such as *Maggie Cassidy*, *The Subterraneans*, and *Tristessa*, Kerouac in fact bears an appreciation of the racial Other, conflating his poetic principle and his racial attitude.[173] But, more importantly as I will show in the last section that the beat writer in fact grounds a fraternal racial assertation in his best-known work. In *On the Road*, Kerouac, through his adaptation of the Spenglerian term "fellaheen," shapes a cosmopolitan unity among the white and non-white Americans. Moreover, obscuring the distinctions between Catholicism and Buddhism, the writer truly intends in his writing, despite the risk of being targeted by the equally political McCarthyism at home, a Deleuzian multiplicity that entails a postwar cosmopolitanism.

Becoming Fellaheen

[171] See *Selected Letters, 1957-1969*, pp.301-2.
[172] See *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, pp.447.
[173] See her essay "The White Man in Love."

Unaware of Kerouac's French-Canadian background and his beat poetics, James Baldwin misreads Sal Paradise's sentimentality in Denver's black neighborhood as a naïve fuss, which reveals the narrator's ignorance of the heavy history of the black people. This reading, which Mark Richardson concurs, is, if not completely incorrect, inaccurate in terms of its apparent contradiction to Kerouac's literary spontaneity and his beat becoming. I argue that Kerouac, growing up as a lower-class ethnic himself, is obviously conscious of the racial inequality in the United States and, in *On the Road*, a narrative which tells stories of his own life as a poor hitchhiker, he leans sincerely toward his fellow lower-class Americans, regardless of their races. A key evidence for Kerouac's racial attitude can be verified by the writer's use of the word "fellaheen,"[174] a term redefined by the German philosopher Oswald Spengler.

Spengler, in his *The Decline of the West*, considers that societies from different geographical locations are all involved in historical cycles, in which they rise from a culture stage to a civilization stage before declining and repeat in the same fashion over again. The East and the West, therefore, are different as they are found in different stages in their cycles, and, according to Spengler, the Western societies lag behind their Eastern counterparts. Objecting the so-called scientific way to categorize human beings in different locations, he defines a race as a blood-determined and a land-connected population, an idealistic concept innately contrary to the Darwinian ethnic taxonomy (separating humans according to their skin and hair colors).[175] In his magnum opus, writes Kerouac's revered thinker,

> But science has completely failed to note that race is not the same for rooted plants as it is for

[174] Kerouac always spells this word "fellaheen" rather than the way we read it in the 1957 Viking version as "Fellahin," which proves that his terminology is consistent with Spengler's. Returning to the original scroll, one readily finds evidence for such spelling.

[175] See *The Decline of the West*, Volume II, pp.124-31.

> mobile animals, that with the microcosmic side of life a fresh group of characters appears, and that for the animal world it is decisive. Nor again has it perceived that a completely different significance must be attached to "races" when the word denotes subdivisions within the integral race "Man." With its talk of adaptation and of inheritance it sets up a soulless causal concatenation of superficial characters, and blots out the fact that here the blood and there the power of the land over the blood are expressing themselves secrets that cannot be inspected and measured, but only livingly experienced and felt from eye to eye (125).

Intrinsically negating the power-oriented and science-disguised racism, this radical comprehension of human universality leads the German philosopher to describe the essence of all civilizations as the "Fellah type." Reinventing the word "fellah," which etymologically refers to an Arabic peasant, Spengler argues,

> At this level (on which a highly developed society finds no reason to repopulate) all Civilizations enter upon a stage, which lasts for centuries, of appalling depopulation. The whole pyramid of cultural man vanishes. It crumbles from the summit, first the world-cities, then the provincial forms, and finally the land itself, whose best blood has incontinently poured into the towns, merely to bolster them up awhile. At the last, only the primitive blood remains, alive, but robbed of its strongest and most promising elements. This residue is the Fellah type (105).[176]

Here, describing the final stage in a historical cycle, the term "fellah" no longer refers to a peasant but to the fundamental essence of all civilizations. The plural form "fellaheen," moreover, is used in the same book as an adjective to depict the essential quality of a culture. In Spengler's theory, therefore, both "fellah" and its variant "fellaheen" carry a multicultural and cosmopolitan sense despite their literal and etymological meaning. And this cosmopolitan gesture, I argue, is one of the most significant arguments within Spengler's philosophical framework.

Kerouac, as a keen reader of Spengler, resonated with the philosopher's racial pluralism. From his correspondence, we read that, after Sebastian Sampas recommended *The Decline of the West* to him in 1943 (to argue a sameness between Dostoyevsky and the American writers), the beat writer began echoing with the book's contentions on culture and civilization and clearly decided to use its idea of a cross-

[176] The parenthesized explanation is mine.

race love in his writing of *On the Road*.[177] Since the early stages of drafting, Kerouac's intention is to apply the Spenglerian "fellaheen" to depict the races who were once dominant groups on the American continent and contemporarily reaches a primitive and genuine state. Though poor and worn-out in their appearances, these races are in effect the essence of the American civilization and are historically advanced compared to their white counterpart.[178]

The term first appears in the novel when Sal and Terry run out of money and decide to seek shelter from Terry's Mexican family—"The old man was yelling. But the sad, fat brown mother prevailed, as she always does among the great fellahin peoples of the world, and Terry was allowed to come back home (98)."[179] Charters points out that Kerouac adopts the Spenglerian term to "describe the indigenous peoples of the Americas."[180] This interpretation, if not wrong, is inadequate, because Kerouac apparently has no intention to make fun of the Mexican people. In Part 4 of the novel, Dean rejects the foolish racial stereotype of the Mexicans,

> "…There's no suspicion here, nothing like that. Everybody's cool, everybody looks at you with such straight brown eyes and they don't say anything, just look, and in that look all of the human qualities are soft and subdued and still there. Dig all the foolish stories you read about Mexico and the sleeping gringo and all that crap—and crap about greasers and so on—and all it is, people here are straight and kind and don't put down any bull. I'm so amazed by this (278)."

Moreover, when Sal takes over the wheel of Dean's jalopy in Mexico, the narrator slips into reverie as he drives through the local Indians,

> …These people were unmistakably Indians and were not at all like the Pedros and Panchos of silly civilized American lore—they had high cheekbones, and slanted eyes, and soft ways; they were not fools, they were not clowns; they were great, grave Indians and they were the source

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[177] See, *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, pp.65-70; see *Windblown World*, pp.273-4; In *On the Road*, Kerouac also mentions Burroughs had read Spengler in England (143).

[178] Some Kerouac critics fail to notice this: for instance, Mark Richardson still insists that Kerouac uses the word for its etymological meaning. See Richardson, pp.212.

[179] I quote from the published version of the novel, as the spelling "Fellahin" indicates, for consistence purpose.

[180] Although Charters, quoting from Carolyn Cassady's biography *Off the Road* in her *Selected Letters*, expresses her confusion about Kerouac's such use, this paraphrasing explanation nevertheless hints Kerouac's snobbishness and superiority in his encounter with the Mexicans, which I disagree. See *Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, pp.347.

> of mankind and the fathers of it. The waves are Chinese, but the earth is an Indian thing. As essential as rocks in the desert are they in the desert of "history." And they knew this when we passed, ostensibly self-important moneybag Americans on a lark in their land; they knew who was the father and who was the son of antique life on earth, and made no comment. For when destruction comes to the world of "history" and the Apocalypse of the Fellahin returns once more as so many times before, people will still stare with the same eyes from the caves of Mexico as well as from the caves of Bali, where it all began and where Adam was suckled and taught to know (280).

According to Spengler, leaving its Mayan prosperity in the past, the ancient Mexico has presently reached a fellaheen stage.[181] This is to say that people living on this land, be they Indians or Mexicans, are at an advanced timepoint in their history, a position that far precedes the white Western civilization, which is still on its way of a decline. Sal's travel attests to this Spenglerian theory as the Indians he observes, unlike the self-important moneybag Americans, possess the intrinsic sincerity and kindness and, therefore, should not be seen as an uncultured group but rather those from an essential race. Sal's final departure from Terry, in this sense, owes not to his white supremacy, which Richardson condemns Kerouac for, but to his Western clumsiness and inability, especially when he finds out that he cannot even support himself let alone his girlfriend in Terry's hometown (98).

The Spenglerian cycle looms more obviously further down the Mexican road. After Dean lovingly trades his wristwatch for a small rock crystal from an Indian girl, Sal meditates as they drive on,

> …Strange crossroad towns on top of the world rolled by, with shawled Indians watching us from under hatbrims and rebozos. Life was dense, dark, ancient. They watched Dean, serious and insane at his raving wheel, with eyes of hawks. All had their hands outstretched. They had come down from the back mountains and higher places to hold forth their hands for something they thought civilization could offer, and they never dreamed the sadness and the poor broken delusion of it. They didn't know that a bomb had come that could crack all our bridges and roads and reduce them to jumbles, and we would be as poor as they someday, and stretching out our hands in the same, same way (298).[182]

[181] See *The Decline of the West*, Volume II, pp.47-8.
[182] The emphasis is mine.

Referring to the destructive atomic bomb here, the Kerouacian narrator alludes to a disastrous future of Western Civilization—a nuclear world war that will collapse all Western economic achievement and the whites will inevitably move toward the state of the fellaheen, which the Indians are now in. In other words, Kerouac reminds again his readers that the West trails belatedly after other cultures, or the East as Spengler argues. More importantly through this Spenglerian meditation, we read in *On the Road* an egalitarian attitude that reverberates with a Deleuzian racial becoming toward the Other. To look by way of Deleuze's concept of multiplicity in this case, the Beat King, or the entire Western world for that matter, is inevitably moving toward and becoming the fellaheen Other. A cosmopolitan revelation on the part of readers, in this sense, has been encouraged by Kerouac throughout the whole novel.

Let me return to the scene which incited Baldwin's infuriation. In Part 3 chapter 1, writes Kerouac,

> At lilac evening I walked with every muscle aching among the lights of 27th and Welton in the Denver colored section, wishing I were a Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night. I stopped at a little shack where a man sold hot red chili in paper containers; I bought some and ate it, strolling in the dark mysterious streets. I wished I were a Denver Mexican, or even a poor overworked Jap, anything but what I was so drearily, a "white man" disillusioned. All my life I'd had white ambitions; that was why I'd abandoned a good woman like Terry in the San Joaquin Valley. … I was only myself, Sal Paradise, sad, strolling in this violet dark, this unbearably sweet night, wishing I could exchange worlds with the happy, true-hearted, ecstatic Negroes of America (179-80).

Coming from the perspective of a Spenglerian and Deleuzian cosmopolitanism, we read a completely different layer of meaning in Sal's wish to become a Negro as he marvels at the blacks' talented music, their truthful kicks, and their spontaneous life. But he also wants to become a Mexican and a Japanese at the same time. In Sal's opinion, these happy, true-hearted, and ecstatic peoples of color all represent their fellaheen civilizations, the highest state of human existence. Sympathetic of their way of life, Sal Paradise wishes sincerely to switch positions with these people. In other

words, Kerouac's racial hope originates from appreciation rather than discrimination. Similarly, when mentioning his "white ambitions" within this cosmopolitan context, Sal depicts the black folks as sad, tragic, and unbearable, and links them to the deepest and dreariest disillusions of his life. If Baldwin were familiar with Kerouac's cosmopolitanism in this sense, he would realize that this beat scene is by no means a naïve and ignorant fuss, but a sublime moment of the Beat King's beatitude.

As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, Kerouac's perspective of race is certainly complicated. From the ambivalent relationship with his mother tongue French to the embarrassing behavior in the *Firing Line* show, Kerouac's attitude toward the Other goes through its ups and downs in the 1950s and 60s. However, as I argued above, by incorporating Spengler's cycle of history into his poetics, Kerouac manages to create an egalitarian and ethical space in *On the Road*. And more importantly, this book is only a beginning of the writer's racial expression. In later works such as *The Subterraneans*, *The Dharma Bums*, *Doctor Sax*, *Maggie Cassady*, and *Tristessa*, we read a persistent and persevering sympathy that overflows his pages. After the *On the Road*'s long-waited publication in 1957, the virulent attacks of his ethics and the burgeoning political hippie movement both make the Beat King worry in terms of people's misreading of his works. Alluding to his brother Gerard's ethical tuition, Kerouac writes in his essay "Lamb, No Lion" to remind his readers of St. Francis's words—"trying to love all life, trying to be utterly sincere with everyone, practicing endurance, kindness, cultivating joy of heart (51)." Considering the writer's deep engagement with religion, the lifestyle of Kerouac and his Beat Generation in *On the Road* in fact represents a Spenglerian Second Religiousness,[183] a fellaheen religion that absorbs the fraternal and the cosmopolitan essentials from both Catholicism and

[183] See *Selected Letters, 1957-1969*, pp.58.

Buddhism. The novel, in this sense, is a manifesto for Kerouac's religion of cosmopolitanism.

CONCLUSION

At this point of my research journey, I want to return to the ways in which my ideas become the current work. As a student of literature and a critical reader, I confess that the encounter with the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and his concept of becoming kindles my decision to take on *Typee* and *On the Road*, two compelling representatives of this philosophical tendency. Even though some scholars consider the two narratives of travel as less significant works of Melville and Kerouac,[184] I intend to prove in this dissertation that the two works are the germinating seeds of their writers' literary talent, and they signal respectively two take-offs of American literature in the last two centuries. Moreover, by looking at these two works, it is also my ambition to reveal their writers' ability to cross linguistic as well as cultural boundaries and in turn their lines of flight in American literature.

To achieve these purposes, I have arranged my investigations from the perspectives of poetics, space, and race, three facets that best represent the becomingness of the two writers. In the case of *Typee*, I have analyzed Melville's penchant for digression and his anthropological writing, arguing that there is an anti-utilitarian poetics behind the writer's idiosyncratic style. Based on my investigation of a Melvillean poetics, I have further discussed that Melville's various literary designs in *Typee*, such as thematic and structural arrangements, embody expansions of cultural and ideological space from a Lefebvrian perspective. The imaginative and futuristic spatial production contributes to Melville's Pacific becoming. The writer's racial

[184] For instance, Tim Hunt argues that, compared to *Typee* and *On the Road*, *Moby-Dick* and *Visions of Cody* are apparently more adept works and therefore need more critical attention. See his *Kerouac's Crooked Road,* pp.lix.

attitude, I have concluded in chapter three, originates from this literary becoming and manifests a cosmopolitan decolonization of the non-white.

In the case of *On the Road*, moreover, I have suggested that, influenced both by various works of classical literature and his beat friends, Kerouac's best-known work also adopts a loose syntax and a digressive structure. Imitating a Bebop prosody, the writer consciously weaves together his narrative according to a truthful poetics of the subterranean. I have further argued that, by delineating his pursuit of kicks on his pendulumlike trips across America, Kerouac creates in his novel a space for the de Certeauean delinquent. To interpret this road space, I have reviewed Kerouac's French-Canadian ethnicity and antisemitic tendency and have argued that, despite his failure to break completely free from the conservatism of his time, the beat writer nonetheless promotes a cosmopolitan consciousness in his work.

I also need to emphasize that, although have been independently discussed in two parts of this dissertation, *Typee* and *On the Road* coincide with each other in terms of their poetic pursuit, spatial production, and racial attitude. From the perspective of poetics, they both reveal a quest in the direction of a minor literary style. Regarding literary as well as ideological spatiality, they similarly advocate an enlargement of the space for social minorities. And, more importantly, they share a cosmopolitan attitude when discussing the racial Other. Even though there is a lapse of one hundred years between them, the two idiosyncratic narratives of travel congruously display a Deleuzian ontology of becoming-plural. Like literary rhizomes and bodies without organs, they keep reshaping the experience of beauty, imagination of cultures, and engagement of ethics in American literature.

Moreover, reflecting on my three perspectives as this dissertation is drawing to a close, I begin to see my own work more as a search for ethics than merely an

interpretation of literature. This is so because the question of poetics is deeply entangled with the question of ethics. If the training of artistic appreciation teaches us to distinguish between the similar and the different, our critical focus, I contend, should no doubt be tilted to the side of the latter. Thinking this way, I realize that it is extremely important for us to read and travel through an ethical eye. One example from philosophy should better support my contention. After finished his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, a landmark signaling the linguistic turn in the history of philosophy, Ludwig Wittgenstein writes to his friend Ludwig Ficker explaining that the point of his book is "an ethical one."[185] Although, ostensibly speaking, this philosophical gobbledygook pertains entirely to semiotics and reality, Wittgenstein argues that it is the unwritten part of poetics and ethics that matters more to him. In this regard, therefore, I emphasize that my purpose of looking at travel narratives and at literature in general is to seek a futuristic and cosmopolitan ethics. To appropriate a comment from George Dardess on Kerouac, I look at *On the Road*, not as a call to revolution, not as a travelogue, but as a love story.[186] For love, I know, this dissertation is only a beginning of my literary road.

[185] See Paul Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein, with a Memoir*, pp.143.
[186] See George Dardess, "A Reconsideration of Kerouac's *On the Road,*" pp.201.

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