

Floating Stages:
Racial Performance in Herman Melville's 1850s Texts

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I hereby declare that all of the work presented in this thesis is my own.

James Gerard Noel. October 2015

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Noel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "J" and a distinct "Noel" following.

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ABSTRACT

Before the 1960s, there was very little literary criticism on the presence of race and culture in Herman Melville's texts. However, racial events, such as the Civil Rights Movement, have been influential in causing intellectuals, such as Samuel Otter, Eric J. Sundquist, and Carolyn Karcher, to revisit Melville's texts through the lens of race. This thesis is aligned with such critics, and it takes their ideas a step further - by contending that the racial performance found in Melville's work develops increasingly during the 1850s, becoming more complex by Melville's last published work prior to the Civil War. Moreover, I argue that these textual representations of racial performance are often ambiguous echoing the national and ethical dilemmas of the decade prior to the Civil War.

Chapter One establishes the beginning of my argument by contending that whiteness is implicitly performed in the staged theatrical production that Melville includes in *White-Jacket*. Chapter Two moves my argument forward as I examine the ways that race is performed in *Moby-Dick*. I suggest that the book is a development from Melville's *White-Jacket* because the racial performance that takes place is more explicitly about race and is also extempore. Whereas Chapter One and Two focus on staged and extempore performances of race, Chapter Three moves my analysis of racial performance to social enactments of race. Specifically, I analyse the ways that the Senegalese slaves and Spanish crew perform race on board the *San Dominick*. I contend that *Benito Cereno* develops the racial performance found in Melville's 1850s texts by offering a critique of slavery while the earlier writing did not. The last Chapter of the thesis concentrates on the racial performance in Melville's last publication of the 1850s, *The Confidence-Man*. I propose that this text marks the height of racial performance found in Melville's work as a result of the Black guinea's ambiguity. Collectively, the chapters in this dissertation will provide a new reading of Melville through the lens of racial performance, by demonstrating how that racial performance develops in Melville's work throughout the 1850s.

WARNING

**This thesis contains language and images that
some people might find offensive.**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BB	Billy Budd
BC	<i>Benito Cereno</i>
BP	<i>Battle-Pieces</i>
BT	'The Bell-Tower'
C	<i>Clarel</i>
CM	<i>The Confidence-Man</i>
E	'The Encantadas'
G	'The 'Gees'
HHM	'Hawthorne and His Mosses'
IP	<i>Israel Potter</i>
L	<i>Melville's Letters</i>
M	<i>Mardi</i>
MD	<i>Moby-Dick</i>
O	<i>Omoo</i>
P	<i>Pierre</i>
PBTM	'The Paradise of Bachelors and The Tartarus of Maids'
R	<i>Redburn</i>
T	<i>Typee</i>
TI	'Timoleon'
WJ	<i>White-Jacket</i>

There is no more powerful position than that of being 'just' human. The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity. Raced people can't do that—they can only speak for their race.

- Richard Dyer, *White*

INTRODUCTION

RAISING THE CURTAIN

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,

- William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

Many studies of racial performance in Herman Melville's texts have been undertaken; however, critics such as Eric Lott, Jason Richards, and Dana Nelson have yet to examine the ways in which these episodes of racial performance might be related to one another. Interestingly, most of the episodes of racial performance that have consistently been examined by Melville critics have been appeared in his 1850s texts. This is noteworthy because this decade was one of the most important eras in American history, particularly in terms of race, as race was one of the central issues that lead to the American Civil War. What is more, Melville's life was inextricably linked with American politics concerning race. Most significantly, his father-in-law was Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw, the first judge to implement the Fugitive Slave Law. By examining Melville's episodes of racial performance as connected theatrical moments rather than as individual enactments, playing out in front of the backdrop of a decisive moment in America's racial past, this thesis intends to advance studies on the racial performance found in Melville's work. In this study, I consider racial performance to function as a critique of essentialist nineteenth-century ideas concerning race. Perceived

in this way, racial performance demonstrates that racial categorizations are unstable and can be manipulated.

Racial performance is traced through Melville's texts, notable examples of which can be seen in Melville's novella *Benito Cereno*, which was written in 1855 and published as a three-part instalment series in Putnam's monthly magazine. The narrative is set off the coast of southern Chile and opens with Captain Delano, an American sealer. From his ship, *Bachelor's Delight*, Delano observes what he considers to be a ship in danger. Eventually, Delano and several members of his crew decide to make their way over to the *San Dominick* in an attempt to provide their assistance. Once on the ship, Delano meets the *San Dominick's* captain, Benito Cereno, a Spanish captain, and also notices, what he considers to be, Senegalese slaves. Cereno is closely followed and tended to by his African slave, Babo, and Delano perceives Babo as a devoted servant. Nonetheless, there are several things that Delano is suspicious about on the *San Dominick*, but he never thoroughly explores his uncertainties. The slaves' behaviour seems peculiar. They openly polish the artillery aboard the ship and abruptly respond to Cereno. Moreover, Delano considers Cereno's manner to be questionable because he does not exude the confidence that he expects to be displayed by a sea captain. There are instances in the novella where Delano suspects that the slaves are in power and that Cereno is an imposter. However, Delano's prejudices chiefly prevent him from believing that the slaves would be capable of such a high level of deception. By the end of the narrative, Delano learns that his inklings were indeed warranted. He learns that the *San Dominick* had been the scene of an insurrection in which the Senegalese slaves were holding Cereno and members of his crew captive. Moreover, he learns that Babo the devoted servant that refuses to leave Cereno's side, was the orchestrator of the uprising. Towards the end of the novella, a battle ensues between

Delano's men and the Senegalese slaves. After the conflict, Delano regains control of the ship and Babo is tried and executed.

One of the central aspects that is unique to *Benito Cereno* and contributes to the narrative's powerful exploration of race is the issue of performance inherent in the text. To deceive Delano, the slaves and Cereno play their roles. This sense of performance is augmented not only by the behaviour of both the Senegalese slaves but also by the Spanish captain, Cereno. Both the slaves and Cereno perform for Delano, and Delano is willing to accept what he sees aboard the *San Dominick* because his bigotry shapes his perception of reality. Racism is the very thing that prevents Delano from trusting his suspicions. To Delano, the possibility of a slave uprising seems more improbable because they are black, and overthrowing the Spanish Captain seems less likely because he is white. Delano's unforgettable question 'who ever heard of a white so far as to apostatize from his very species almost, by leaguin in against it with Negroes?' powerfully captures Delano's racism (BC 75). Delano consistently questions his suspicions because he believes that the slaves are inferior. However, Cereno's and the Senegalese Slaves' performance reassure that his presuppositions about race are correct. *Benito Cereno*, then, exhibits a kind of racial theatre that takes place without a stage.

Critics such as Sundquist and Karcher have noticed the significance of performance in *Benito Cereno* and have specifically focused on the ways that race is performed in the text. One of the most recurrent ways that scholars have analysed the performance of race in *Benito Cereno* is by considering it as a form of minstrelsy, a term developed from the blackface minstrel show. Blackface was an American popular form of entertainment that formally began in the nineteenth century. In 1832, a white actor by the name of Thomas D. Rice painted his face and took to a Louisville stage,

mimicking black people. Rice's performance became an instant success, and blackface became a phenomenon that would firstly spread across America, and then eventually to various parts of the world. In the 1840s, black actors were included in minstrel performances, acting out stereotypical and degrading images that were formerly created by white actors. Since then, minstrelsy has evolved into a term used to describe not only performances that reinforce black stereotypes on stage, but also those that take place offstage as well. The implementation of minstrelsy will figure significantly in the analysis of this current research.

In *Love and Theft* (1993), Eric Lott refers to Melville's *Benito Cereno* as 'Melville's version of the minstrel show, in which he ingeniously brings together the narrative paradigm of slave insurrection with the ironies and conundrums of minstrel acts' (242). Likewise, of Delano, Eric Sundquist writes, 'Minstrelsy—in effect, the complete show of the tale's action staged for Delano—is a product as it were, of his mind, of his willingness to accept Babo's [the slave leader] Sambo-like performance' (153). Similarly, in *Representing African Americans in Transatlantic Abolitionism and Blackface Minstrelsy* (2010) Robert Nowatski examines, in his words, 'Melville's use of blackface tropes', in *Benito Cereno* (142). Interpreting Melville's *Benito Cereno* in the context of minstrelsy is not unfamiliar amongst critics. Several notable critics have made the link, providing impressive and extensive studies on Melville's novella and blackface. This current research will further explore minstrelsy by illustrating that the racial performance found in *Benito Cereno* is connected to other forms of racial performance evident in Melville's work. Additionally, my analysis of white performance will move discussions of racial enactments in *Benito Cereno* further.

Moreover, *Benito Cereno* is not the only text that critics have paid attention to in terms of racial theatre. Another text that has received a significant amount of

attention is Melville's *The Confidence-Man* (1857). *The Confidence-Man*, a narrative about identity and masquerade, features 'a grotesque negro cripple' who performs and begs for money aboard the *Fidèle*. Many onlookers question his identity and one member of his audiences goes as far as to accuse him of being 'some white operator, betwisted and painted up for a decoy' (CM 14). The scene sketched by Melville evokes minstrelsy in a very clear way because, in this scene, the Black Guinea is being accused of blacking up. Critics, such as Carolyn Karcher, have been drawn to the Black Guinea, and like Lott does with *Benito Cereno*, Karcher also makes a link with blackface by pointing out that the 'Black Guinea [...] may after all be only a white masquerading as a black' (206).

Although not perhaps as extensive as the racial theatre found in *Benito Cereno* or as explicit as the Black Guinea's blacking up, *Moby-Dick's* Pip has also been linked to the minstrel tradition. In 'Midnight, Forecastle', Pip, Herman Melville's young African American crew member in *Moby-Dick* (1851), provides entertainment for the whalers aboard the *Pequod*. The French sailor calls out 'Hist, boys! let's have a jig or two before we ride to anchor in Blanket Bay. What say ye? There comes the other watch. Stand by all legs! Pip! little Pip! hurrah with your tambourine!' (MD 174). This particular chapter is written as a script, written in dialogue format. After the French sailor shouts out to Pip, Pip cannot find his tambourine and the stage directions for him are 'Sulky and Sleepy' (MD 174). The French sailor replies, 'Beat thy belly, then, and wag thy ears. Jig it, men, I say; merry's the word; hurrah! Damn me, won't you dance? Form, now, Indian-file, and gallop into the double-shuffle? Throw yourselves! Legs! legs!' (MD 174). Remarkably, despite Pip's age, despite his fatigue, despite his inability to retrieve the tambourine, the French sailor still orders Pip to entertain the crew, ordering him to 'beat thy belly' as if his body is an instrument. Later, the Azore sailor

hands Pip the tambourine, and as the ‘bell boy’ bangs his tambourine, the crew ‘dance on’ aboard the whaling ship.

This scene is perceived by critics such as Sterling Stuckey as an episode of minstrelsy in *Moby-Dick*; the singing and dancing orchestrated by the sounds of a small black child’s musical instrument creates a very minstrel-like atmosphere, especially in light of the way children were used in minstrel stage shows, often abandoned and unkempt. In *African Culture and Melville’s Art* (2009), Stuckey also refers to this scene as minstrelsy. He writes, ‘as sailors dance, comical antics are expected of Pip, raising the spectre of minstrelsy’, and goes on to reconcile the urging of Pip with ‘wag thy ears’ and ‘rattle thy teeth’ to the ‘strange faces’ of, famous blackface performer, William Henry Lane (32). There is a definite sense of minstrelsy from this scene.

From the *Black Guinea*, *Pip*, and *Benito Cereno*, it is clear that racial performance is evident in Melville’s work. More recently, critics have even started to investigate episodes of white performances. If Senegalese slaves aboard the *San Dominick* are performing a form of blackness by pretending to be enslaved, then how should we read *Cereno*? Intellectuals have attempted to address this question in various ways. For example, Jason Richards argues ‘that besides staging a surface spectacle of blackface, Babo also and simultaneously performs a version of “whiteface”’ (73). Richards continues, ‘He enacts his masquerade by deploying Cereno’s body as a white mask, which allows him to figuratively and temporarily whiten as he enjoys the power and dominance that go hand in hand with white skin’ (73). Richards considers Babo’s forcing Cereno to perform as if he is still in control when Delano boards the ship as a form of whiteface. Cereno’s white body becomes a surrogate for Babo’s control.

Race studies has illuminated the significance of performance in Melville’s work. It has provided critics with a new way to approach and consider Melville’s work.

With the popularity of the minstrel show running parallel with Melville's major works, critics such as those above have linked the racial performance found in Melville's work to minstrelsy. The method of connecting blackface minstrelsy with Melville's work has expanded critical readings of Melville's texts as there is a vast amount of academic scholarship dealing with racial performance in Melville's texts. This approach is central to the ways that I read racial performance in Melville's work. However, as well as using blackface to strengthen my examination of enactments of race, I also consider the ways that masquerade and mimicry contribute to the ways that I define racial performance. Nonetheless, what differentiates my work from studies past is my focus on the development of racial performance across the spectrum of the 1850s, while also tracing Melville's attitude towards racial issues during the decade.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Defining racial performance has been difficult, as the term 'performance' alone has been used in various disciplines and has also been applied differently. Performance is, to borrow from Mary Hopkins, Beverly Long, and Mary Shrine, a term that is frequently challenged (Hopkins 183). However, by defining performance in this thesis, I do not wish to enter a debate over what the term truly means. Rather, this thesis shall demonstrate the term's elasticity as I shall refer to performance in this study in two different ways. Crucially, when I use the term performance, I will not be referring to the action of completing a task or test. By using performance along with the adjective racial before it, I will firstly be referring to literal theatrical performances of race, like those explicitly enacted in the minstrel show. As a term to delineate racial enactments, racial performance shall be used in this thesis as a term to define an individual or group who makes artistic decisions based on a textual script that has been created beforehand. For example, Thomas D. Rice's 'Jump Jim Crow' performance was based on a pre-

existing text. This definition will be one of the ways that I shall use racial performance in this thesis.

Secondly, I will be using racial performance in reference to cultural enactments of race that are coded. Identifying forms of performance as social enactments rather than theatrical marks a recent shift in using the term. This definition of performance primarily derives from cultural studies. As well as using racial performance in the artistic sense, I shall use racial performance to refer sociologically and psychologically to performances of race that take place offstage. More clearly, by this secondary use, I mean coded behaviour that an individual carries out. This definition can be traced to sociolinguist Dell Hymes's definition, as he defines performance as 'cultural behaviour for which a person assumes responsibility to an audience' (18). As Lott points out, racial performances that take place in a social context serve to 'create a socially accepted definition of race' (101). In this sense, racial performance is not restricted to the stage but, as I will examine in this thesis, can also take place beyond the theatre walls, helping people reinforce racial identities.

Although works such as Lott's *Love and Theft* (1993), Dana D. Nelson's *The Word in Black and White* (1992), and Stuckey's *African Culture and Melville's Art* (2008) have addressed racial performance in Melville's publications, there has not been a specific volume that provides an extensive study that broadly considers racial performance in Melville's work. This current research is intended to fill this gap by examining what has previously been written about racial performance in Melville's narratives and expanding upon this work by considering the connections between the narratives over time. More specifically, this thesis is concerned with the ways in which the instances of racial performance function in relation to one another over a sustained period. Thus, at the heart of this thesis, I inquire: How does racial performance function

in the narratives of Herman Melville between 1850 and 1861? Ultimately, this diachronic and comparative approach seeks to investigate the relationships between the racial enactments found in Melville's work during the decade leading to America's Civil War, and this is the reason why this decade is significant.

From the humorous account found in the *Albany Microscope* in 1838 to the unpublished *Billy Budd*, Melville created a considerable body of work over the span of his lifetime. However, I have chosen to focus on Melville's publications written between 1850 and 1861, the years leading up to the Civil War. These years were Melville's most productive in terms of his publications as he wrote ten novels, nine of which were published. He also produced fifteen short stories, including several that comprised *The Piazza Tales* (1856). Nonetheless, I have chosen to include only four texts for analysis in this thesis: *White-Jacket* (1850), *Moby-Dick* (1851), *Benito Cereno* (1855), and *The Confidence-Man* (1857). Ultimately, these texts illustrate a clear progression of racial enactments that shift from the theatrical or fantastical to performances that blend fantasy with verisimilitude.

White-Jacket tells the story of a marginalized sailor of the same name who encounters oppression aboard the USS Frigate *Neversink*. Made to wear a jacket consisting of tattered cloth poorly stitched together, White-Jacket is marginalized primarily as a result of his distinctive garment. From Tawney to Jack-Chase, Melville sketches a diverse crew whose members in many ways foreshadow those aboard the *Pequod*. Nonetheless, more than its animated seamen, *White-Jacket's* most powerful aspect is its portrayal of sailor flogging. This narrative's extensive treatment of sailor flogging places it alongside works such as Richard Henry Dana Jr.'s *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840) and William McNally's *Evils and Abuses in the Naval and Merchant Service* (1839). There are several flogging incidents in *White-Jacket* that are so graphic

and powerful that they were used to support a national campaign during the 1850s to end flogging. *White-Jacket* then attempts to provide a window into life at sea that was far different from the romantic sea narratives that came before, such as James Fenimore Cooper's *The Red Rover* (1827).

Published only a year after *White-Jacket*, *Moby-Dick* (1851) details Captain Ahab's reckless quest for Moby-Dick, the great white whale. The narrative is told from the perspective of one of Melville's most memorable characters: Ishmael, a young American whaler who boards the *Pequod* in Nantucket. Joined by an array of sailors from different parts of the world, Ishmael becomes a part of Ahab's mission, a mission that ends tragically. Although *Moby-Dick* was not very popular at the time that it was published, after the Melville Revival in the 1920s, *Moby-Dick* became arguably Melville's most notable work.

Marking the end of Melville's publications during the 1850s, *The Confidence-Man* is perhaps his most satirical and thought-provoking work. Both published and set on April Fool's Day, the novel's irony extends past its pages, making the reader as important to the narrative as the characters are. Set on the Mississippi River, *The Confidence-Man* charts numerous cases where the trust of the *Fidèle's* passengers is tested by the novel's central character, a relentless and provocative swindler. Moreover, *The Confidence-Man* received notoriety after the Melville Revival, especially after Richard Chase's declaration that *The Confidence-Man* was Melville's 'second best book'.

White-Jacket, *Moby-Dick*, *The Confidence-Man*, and the previously discussed *Benito Cereno* are the primary texts that I have chosen for this study for several reasons. Firstly, two of these texts, *Benito Cereno* and *The Confidence-Man*, are the most frequently discussed in relation to racial performance. In particular, as mentioned

previously, *Benito Cereno* is central to critical readings of the performative nature of race in Melville's work. Additionally, the presence of the Black Guinea in *The Confidence-Man* and the explicit connection that Melville makes between blackface and the Black Guinea in the narrative has also made *The Confidence-Man* a significant point of reference in studies of racial performance in Melville's work. Therefore, it is imperative to include those texts in this investigation.

Secondly, I have included these four texts in this thesis because they interact with each other to provide an arc that spans across the 1850s. *White-Jacket* and *Moby-Dick* provide earlier coordinates for my argument, and these two texts, along with *Benito Cereno* and *The Confidence-Man*, provide a larger picture of Melville's work during the 1850s. As *The Confidence-Man* is Melville's last work published before 1861, it is important to include it because racial performance is being investigated during the years that lead up to the Civil War, and it engages in social processes integral to the war.

Thirdly, as well as assisting in creating a complete picture of Melville's work during the 1850s, *White-Jacket*, *Moby-Dick*, *Benito Cereno*, and *The Confidence-Man* provide a diverse selection of Melville's work. With *White-Jacket*'s political significance in mind, there are substantial differences between *White-Jacket* and the works that followed. In many ways, *White-Jacket* provides a medium for Melville to address his explicit disapproval of cruel practices in the US Navy. This work differs comparably in style and content to the texts that follow. *Moby-Dick*'s epic and symbolic nature places its narrative into a genre of its own. Contrastingly, *Benito Cereno* is a shorter work based on an historical event. Also extending the scope, *The Confidence-Man* is undoubtedly Melville's most satirical work. Thus, using these four texts not only generates an impression of Melville's work over the 1850s, but it also showcases

a variety of different forms. These texts are not similar in the way that Melville's first two travel narratives were, as *Omoo* was a sequel to *Typee*.

Fourthly, I have chosen *White-Jacket*, *Moby-Dick*, *Benito Cereno*, and *The Confidence-Man* because they were written during the period of Melville's most significant examination of race in American society. He addresses racial issues in his earlier narratives, especially those dealing with his stay in the Marquesas. Likewise, he engages with race after my chosen epoch. It is difficult to ignore prevalent figures such as the 'native African of the unadulterated blood of Ham' who appears at the beginning of *Billy Budd*. However, *Billy Budd* deals with race in the context of Europe rather than in the context of America. Moreover, although most of Melville's narratives play out at sea, his 1850s texts make more of an explicit connection between race and America, and he intensely examines race relations in his 1850s work more than in any other period. Both during and after the Civil War, Melville's tone changed. He became more empathetic and sympathetic towards the South, and his work after the war seemed to reflect a period that historians frequently refer to as the 'Romance of the Reunion'. There was an inherent sense of reconciliation in Melville's publications. Especially evident in 'Battle Pieces' (1866), in many ways, as Karcher's 'White Fratricide, Black Liberation: Melville, Douglass, and Civil War Memory' points out, his work reflected his innovative thinking, as his writing foretold the Reconstruction that eventually came. As a result of this change in Melville's work, issues of race were not as explicit as they were in his work leading up to the years of the Civil War.

Lastly, these texts all consist of examples of how I define racial performance in this thesis. I examine racial performance in *White-Jacket* and *Moby-Dick* within the context of a conventional definition of theatrical performance. However, both *Benito Cereno* and *The Confidence-Man* mark the second way that I explore and define racial

performance in this thesis: as a product of culture. The characters in these latter texts do not make clear distinctions between theatre and real life. Rather, the two forms are similar, as they are integrated into their social experiences.

This study moves understandings of racial performance in Melville's work forward by contending that the racial performance illustrates a trajectory that finds its origins in *White-Jacket* and can be traced as far as *The Confidence-Man*. Although there have been previous studies that have investigated racial performance in Melville's work, there has not been one that examines the episodes of racial performance evident in Melville's publications in a collective way. I argue that racial performance develops in a very clear and detectable way through *White-Jacket*, *Moby-Dick*, *Benito Cereno*, and *The Confidence-Man*.

Another aspect of this study that makes it significant is that it will help to theorize racial performance in Melville's work. I integrate cultural studies, performance theory, postcolonial theory, and research on the blackface minstrel show to theorize my close reading of racial performance evident in Melville's work. As well as recognizing the socio-historical relevance of the racial theatre found in Melville's work, theorizing the ways that race is performed is equally as important. Artistically and socially, I theorize the racial episodes found in Melville's work during the years that led up to the Civil War. Ultimately, this bid to merge cultural studies, performance theory, and postcolonial theory is innovative, primarily because it resituates the current understanding of research on minstrelsy.

PROSPECTUS

My principal aim in this introduction has been to position my thesis within the larger body of academic scholarship on Melville and race. The critical studies examined,

especially more recent works that investigate racial performance in Melville's texts, demonstrate the importance of reading Melville's publications in the context of race and also the significance of examining racial performance in Melville's work.

In Chapter One, I will establish the foundation of my argument by contending that Herman Melville's *White-Jacket*, his first publication of the 1850s, marks one of the earliest places that racial performance can be found in Melville's work. Moreover, I consider *White-Jacket* as foundational because it marks the beginning of extensive representations of one of America's greatest ethical dilemmas: the failed promise of human liberty. In the novel, readers witness several problematic episodes of sailor flogging that directly violate the American Declaration of Independence's definition of human freedom. Moreover, I consider these representations as being linked to the theatrical production that takes place in the play, 'The Old Wagon Paid Off'. I argue that this play works to challenge the tyranny that the sailors face aboard the *Neversink* because the play consists of implicit performances of white liberty, a white liberty that has been sullied by sailor flogging. As well as my central argument, I examine the marginal performances of blackness that take place in the text. Specifically, I survey the black cook's St. Domingo Melodies and the Negro Song Book. I consider these instances as foundational for the racial performances that follow *White-Jacket*, especially *Benito Cereno*. Although an uprising does not take place aboard the *Neversink* as it does aboard the *San Dominick*, the St. Domingo Melodies tie the black cooks to the Haitian revolt. In the first two chapters, I point out that the performances of blackness play a minor role. However, I suggest that these performances develop and take centre stage by *Benito Cereno*.

Whereas Chapter One contends that *White-Jacket* provides the groundwork for the racial performance found in Melville's texts, the purpose of Chapter Two is to move

the argument forward by contending that there are more complex forms of racial performance that build on the racial enactments in *White-Jacket*. To reinforce the overall contention, I examine the ambiguity of America's founding documents. In particular, I explore how race is allegorized in the text, and I also point out that the ambiguous Declaration of Independence's definition of equality was used to support both abolitionist and apologist movements. This examination of America's founding documents works to provide the framework for the chapter because in the next section, I explore the similarities between the ambiguity of the founding documents and the ambiguity of *Moby-Dick*'s whiteness. Then, I discuss the inherent political racial allegory in *Moby-Dick*. Additionally, I consider this form as foundational to the ways in which both *Benito Cereno* and *The Confidence Man* thwart the lines of verisimilitude. More clearly, I suggest that the ways in which race is allegorized in *Moby Dick* work to move racial performance in Melville's work manipulating racial lines rather than reinforcing them. To theorize this reading, I use Abdul JanMohamed *Economy of Manichean Allegory* (1985) and Paul De Man's 'The Rhetoric of Temporality' (1983). Crucially, during the second half of the chapter I discuss the ways that race is performed in *Moby-Dick*. I analyse the ways that Fleece, the black cook, is a derivative of the black cooks in *White-Jacket*, and I explore the ways that his theatrical sermon in 'Stubb's Supper' works to challenge Stubb's authority. Additionally, I highlight the importance of Queequeg's and Pip's performances aboard the *Pequod*. In the last section, I argue that the narrative marks an important stage in the growing ambiguity of textual representations of race in Melville's work, representations that reflected the ethical issues of the 1850s. Despite the racial significance of *Moby-Dick*, there is no clear position on race, or, more particularly, slavery.

The purpose of Chapter Three is to move my analysis of racial performance from staged theatrics to social performance by exploring the ways that race is performed culturally aboard the *San Dominick*. More clearly, there is not a literal play in *Benito Cereno*. The performances that take place in novella occur without a literal script or physical stage. This chapter also moves my argument forward by pointing out that, unlike the racial performance found in Melville's earlier works of the 1850s, *Benito Cereno* deals with the performative nature of race in a more explicit way. Building on some of my observations in Chapter Two relating to Melville's use of racial political allegory, I point out that Melville blends fantasy with verisimilitude through the intense racial performances found in *Benito Cereno* in a way that reflects Hawthorne's idea of the romance. In Chapter Two, I suggest that *Moby Dick* marks a transition. Nonetheless, in Chapter Three, I argue that this transition develops into explicit forms of racial performance that disrupts the notion of verisimilitude. Moreover, whereas racial performance is evident in Melville's earlier work but is not necessarily central, racial performance is undoubtedly the dominant theme of this text. As I contend in Chapter Four, the *San Dominick* stages cultural performances of both whiteness and blackness, and perhaps more importantly, these racial performances play out in an extensive way, unlike the episodes found in *White-Jacket* and *Moby-Dick*.

Additionally, I consider the ways that Melville's texts shift from the injustices that white sailors experienced at sea to the injustices that blacks faced as a result of slavery. Although *White-Jacket* is a text that challenges flogging, when the black cooks are flogged aboard the *Neversink*, very little attention is given to the flogging of these black sailors. However, in *Benito Cereno*, the Senegalese slaves occupy a significant part of the narrative. I go on to suggest that this shift mirrors the rise in national attention given to the ways that violations of human liberty impacted black people as well. This

is a development from Melville's earlier works because the representations of black people in his earlier work do not represent slavery as an ethical dilemma.

Additionally, Chapter Three functions to draw attention to the ways that the racial performance in the text mirrors the prevalence of racial performance in American society, more accurately racial passing. As well as working to mirror racial performances in society, I suggest that *Benito Cereno* works to challenge sentimental depictions of race and enactments of race in antebellum America. More clearly, I contend that Melville offers a deeper portrayal of chattel slaves in this provocative novella than Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and a significant amount of texts from the passing narrative genre had managed to. Though I make this point, I stress that this does not mean that *Benito Cereno* poses an explicit stand against slavery, as the narrative is in many ways still ambiguous, and it must to be read in a certain way to be understood as a critique of slavery.

Chapter Four marks the height of racial performance in Melville's work by suggesting that the racial performance found in *The Confidence-Man* not only impacts the characters in the narrative but also provokingly impacts the reader as well. Firstly, as this thesis is argued in the context of blackface minstrelsy, I suggest that the Black Guinea, in the chapter titled 'In which a variety of characters appear', marks the location where the blackface minstrel show and Melville's text intersect in the most unequivocal way. As the Black Guinea is accused of blacking up to receive money, Melville makes a connection with blackface in a literal way. The scene is made more provocative because the reader is never informed whether the Black Guinea is indeed white or black. Moreover, the Black Guinea is also the highest point in Melville's work where the two definitions of racial performance in this thesis merge, as the Black Guinea offers a theatrical performance in a literal way but also in a social way, and the onlookers and

the reader can never really decipher what form of racial performance is being enacted. The Black Guinea represents both, ultimately and intensely blurring the line between theatre and real life.

Secondly, my analysis will illustrate the impact that the Black Guinea has upon the passengers. I argue that the passengers' reaction to the Black Guinea reflects how slaves were treated by abolitionists during slavery. Moreover, I also contend that the audience's reaction to the Black Guinea allegorizes the ways that the black body was commodified in both society and publishing. Next, I suggest that the passengers' reaction is a comment on racial ambiguity and also relates to the ambiguity of nineteenth century literature. Ultimately, in Melville's final publication of the 1850s, the audience is as significant as the characters in the narrative. Set on the Mississippi River and on April Fool's Day, the confidence man's audience is subjected to the swindles of Melville's narrator, crucially those of the Black Guinea.

The primary intention of the conclusion will be to summarize the thesis by outlining the ways in which matters of authority, disruption, politics, and minstrelsy work to highlight a relationship that is inherent in the racial performances that manifest in Melville's work. In the concluding chapter, I will also draw attention back to the ways that this study contributes to the scholarship on Melville and race. I reiterate the ways that an extensive study of racial performance in Melville's work, within the context of the years before the Civil War, serve to move the dialogue of Melville and race forward.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The central research question of this thesis situates my argument primarily within the context of racial studies. From this location, I examine racial performance both

theatrically and socially. However, as the thesis chiefly focuses on Melville's publications between 1850 and 1861, I am also concerned with the relationship between Melville's politics and his narratives during the decade prior to the American Civil War. In this first part of this review, I spend time discussing texts that have been most relevant to my theoretical approach. As I will look at both staged and social forms of racial performance in Melville's work, I start with a review of texts that relate to the blackface minstrel show. I spend time examining the intricate relationship between minstrelsy and racial performances offstage. Moreover, I also discuss the recent concept of whiteface minstrelsy. Chiefly, I focus on Marvin McAllister's *Whiting Up* (2011) to point out how racial performance relates to this thesis. Next, I will discuss the ways that double consciousness has also informed the ways that I consider racial performance. Before concluding, I discuss the ways that mimicry and racial masquerade have also aided me.

BLACKFACE AND BLACKFACE PERFORMATIVITY

Beginning in the late 1830s, the minstrel show quickly became a popular form of American entertainment. As enthralling as the show's popularity was its impact on society. In particular, the relationship between blackface and social performances of blackness has been a significant issue in studies of blackface, and some critics (Lott 1993, Gubar 1997, Toll 1974) have linked African American behavioural trends with the stereotypical behaviour performed onstage. Critics often observe this relationship as beginning during the period that black actors were included in the minstrel shows in the 1850s. Below, I critically trace the theoretical development of minstrelsy from the stage to society.

When black actors were included in blackface acts, they brought another dynamic to the minstrel stage. As Robert Toll explains it, 'black minstrels in effect

added credibility to these images by making it seem that Negroes actually behaved like minstrelsy's black caricatures' (Toll 196). Many black troupes played on this dangerous fiction, billing their performances as real and legitimate 'Coon Shows'. Clayton's Georgia Minstrels billed themselves as 'The Only Simon Pure Negro Troupe in the World', and Charles Hicks used the plantation to buttress his troupe's bona fide appeal by billing his first companies 'Slave Troupe', the 'Georgia Slave Brothers', and the 'Georgia Slave Troupe Minstrels' (201). As studies on blackface note, audiences were also convinced that the performances of black minstrels exhibited 'natural impulses', and black minstrel performers often discredited the legitimacy of whites who performed blackface (201). The inclusion of blacks in the minstrel show perilously verified its racist ideology about African Americans.

Along with the inclusion of blacks in the minstrel show and what that connoted, critics are also aware of the imprint that blackface left on American society. In numerous ways, minstrelsy was not only subjected to the stage; black people had become acculturated to it. Although masking was evident before blackface began, particularly in slavery, when it became evident that many black people adopted minstrel-like antics to ensure their survival in society, minstrelsy developed into a term used by critics to describe black social performance. Acts of minstrelsy were prevalent amongst slaves, as they were under the constant watch of their masters. Some cultural historians have noticed this trend, even using names of characters from the minstrel show to articulate these types of behaviour.

John W. Blassingame's *The Slave Community: Life in the Antebellum South* (1972) points out that the 'Sambo', a prevalent minstrel character, was used to articulate 'a submissive half-man, half child' on the plantation (Blassingame xi). His primary purpose in the text is to demonstrate how terms such as Sambo limited views of slave

life. However, he acknowledges the enduring influence of the term. Likewise, Deborah Gray White illustrates the constricting influence that terms such as ‘Mammy’ and ‘Jezebel’ had on black women; again, two characters that were well-known in the minstrel show. Many slaves had to act as buffoons to appease their masters, and as Toll points out, minstrelsy provided “‘living” proof that whites need not feel guilty about racial caste’ (272).

Providing another connection between black racial performances onstage and beyond the theatre walls, critics have linked the minstrel mask with the figurative mask that is consistently referred to symbolize the social performance of blackness. Paul Laurence Dunbar declared, ‘We wear the mask!’ in a poem attempting to capture the African American experience in the South. Moreover, as James Colaiaco points out, ‘In order to survive under slavery, many blacks had adopted a deferential persona to protect themselves from their master, a passivity that reinforced the white southerners’ belief in the inferiority of blacks’ (Colaiaco 30). However, ‘the mask’ was familiar to blacks in the North as well. The mask or veil was, amongst black people, an agreed motif that signified their need to conceal portions of themselves from a society that subjugated them. From behind the mask, black people could resist, construct, and negotiate their identities. African Americans, both young and old, used this cover differently; some discarded the mask, some never removed it, and others manipulated its use, wearing the mask on occasion.

On the ‘hills of New England’, a young W.E.B Du Bois discovered the veil’s existence when a girl refuses his ‘gorgeous’ visiting card. He writes, ‘Then it dawned on me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil’ (Du Bois 119). Du Bois explains that he continued to don the veil throughout his childhood, deciding

never to remove it. Then there is, as Colaiaco points out, Frederick Douglass, who put on and took off the mask during the progression of a single address. Colaiaco draws our attention to the mask's presence in Douglass's memorable Independence Day speech. At the beginning of his speech, Douglass apologizes for his lack of experience and explains, 'I have been able to throw my thoughts hastily and imperfectly together' (Douglass cited in Colaiaco 30). His opening only serves to camouflage the true content of the speech, content in which he asks one of the most troubling questions in American history: 'What, to the American Slave, is your 4th of July?' (Douglass 1). Indeed, the mask was loathed by some and offered refuge for others, but it also, as we witness in Douglass's oration, afforded black people the opportunity to challenge white supremacy while certifying their humanity. Secreting self, then, was a significant part of the African American experience during the nineteenth century. Whether castoff, preserved, or manipulated, though to others it may have gone unnoticed, blacks acknowledged the mask's existence.

Moreover, blackface's impact is also exemplified in the South's decision to name a set of laws that subjugated blacks after an antebellum minstrel song – 'Jim Crow' (Boles 336). The Jim Crow laws came during the Reconstruction era and were 'an imposing and extensive system of legal mechanisms designed to institutionalize the already familiar and customary subordination of black men and women' (Knopf 230). They were designed to put out the flame of 'uppity' freed blacks and keep them in their place, restricting every facet of black life, instructing them where to 'legally walk, sit, rest, eat, drink, and entertain themselves' (238, 230). Consequently, any blacks that refused to comply with the Jim Crow laws were often subjected to 'savage beatings' and expulsions from public transport (236). To name a set of laws – laws that subjugate, laws that discriminate, laws that restrict — after a minstrel song signified not only the

racist ideology prevalent in minstrel shows, but also the sway it held on American society.

Houston A. Baker's work on minstrelsy has come closest in theorizing the journey of blackface from a term that describes a performance featured in a stage show to the performance of black people in a society that subjugated them. Specifically, Baker perceives Booker T. Washington's opening address at the Negro exhibit of the Atlanta States and International Exposition on September 18, 1895 as the moment when minstrelsy formally became a mode of black survival in American society. During this period, racial prejudice was still ubiquitous, and the post-Civil-War amendments that abolished slavery, promised equality, and gave blacks the vote had not changed much. Nonetheless, rather than fervently opposing these conditions, Washington urged blacks to 'cast down your bucket where you are', encouraging African Americans to rid themselves of enmity towards whites. He wrote, 'it is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top. Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow opportunities' (Washington 220). Washington prompted blacks to trounce racism and subjugation by simply getting on with their lives.

Baker perceives Washington's willingness to accept the contemporary condition of society as a move that exemplifies the minstrel trope. According to Baker, Washington's words are not coarse enough to offend whites in America, but are not refined enough to disclose their plea. The minstrel show also had a similar dynamic, burying social commentary beneath its comedic sketches – making it a hit with black and white audiences. Baker points out that Washington's speech, similarly, incorporates that tone, as Washington's speech was an 'overwhelming success with black and white alike' (Baker 33). Washington's words manage to, as Baker's analysis suggests, certify his humanity, while cementing racist ideology. In various parts of

Washington's speech, his words, Baker notes, consisted of 'a chicken-thieving tonality' that would have pleased whites in an 'age of Jim crow' (32).

Baker also theorizes minstrelsy and Washington's speech through his discussion of the 'mastery of form'. According to Baker, the 'mastery of form' is 'a family of concepts or a momentary and changing same array of images, figures, assumptions, and presuppositions that a group of people (even one as extensive and populous as a nation) holds to be a valued repository of spirit' (Baker 17). The 'Changing same' is a term that Baker borrows from Amiri Baraka and is the 'designation for the interplay between tradition and the individual talent in Afro-American music' (15). 'Form', to Baker, is essentially 'fluidity', like an 'ellipsis, or trope, or poetic image;' "'Form' has the force of a designated space—presumably, that between traditionally formulated dichotomies such as self and other' (16). Ultimately, Baker considers minstrelsy as form as he later points out that the 'minstrel mask' captures the 'mastery of form' (17). Moreover, Baker perceives Washington's speech as an example of how this form is mastered, and Baker's examination of Washington's speech illustrates the ways that blackface was linked to the ways that black people performed race in society, and also how minstrelsy is used as a term to describe black societal performances.

Whereas Baker's argument focuses on minstrelsy in terms of modernism at the turn of the twentieth century, this study is concerned with minstrelsy during the nineteenth. This does not make Baker's analysis irrelevant to mine. His observations on minstrelsy are important, as his work theorizes minstrelsy in terms of racial performances of blackness. Baker makes a point of using Washington's speech, a speech that falls outside of the chosen period for this study. However, the concept of the 'mastery of form' is still applicable during earlier portions of the nineteenth century.

Undoubtedly, William Craft's escape to the North in 1848 demonstrates the ways that this form of blackness can be mastered. William and his wife, Ellen, managed to escape by pretending to be a slave master and a slave. Ellen was a slave of mixed race and could pass as white, so she posed as William's owner, manipulating both colour and gender lines. However, William pretended to play a slave, similar to Babo's performance aboard the *San Dominick*. Although their racial performances took place long before Washington's speech, they still display what Baker would refer to as minstrelsy.

The minstrel trope has been closely linked with social performances of race, and I use Baker's analysis to examine the black characters in Melville's work. Critic's decisions to explore the cultural resonance of blackface demonstrate the close relationship between blackface and society. However, in addition to using this distinctive approach to examining the minstrel show, critics have also explored the close link between black performativity and blackface minstrelsy. While black people lived in a society that subjugated them, many adopted social performance as a way to survive. Therefore, in a very literal way, blackface explicitly demonstrates the ways that race can be performed both on stage and in society. Additionally, this link also illustrates that racial identity, to an extent, is performed.

BLACKFACE AND W.E.B DU BOIS' DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS

Whereas Baker theorizes minstrelsy as an act of social performance by examining Washington's speech, other critics have theorized minstrelsy by primarily focussing their analysis on what takes place in the performer's mind. To do so, some critics have turned to W.E. Du Bois' concept of double consciousness as a means of articulating what takes place in a blackface performer's mind as they carry out a performance. I

develop this theory by using double consciousness to assist in identifying acts of minstrelsy both on stage and offstage in Melville's work. I do not contend that all acts of racial performance are reliant on double consciousness, neither do I apply the concept of double consciousness to Melville's characters who are not black. Rather, I use the theory help locate and pronounce forms of minstrelsy enacted by Melville's black characters.

Du Bois' double consciousness originally appeared in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), a text renowned for its articulation of the African American condition. As mentioned previously, Du Bois recognises a state of double consciousness after a small white girl refuses his card at school. After the incident, Du Bois explains, 'Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through' (Du Bois 12). This 'veil' Du Bois describes has become a marker in the African American experience, and Du Bois develops the theory of double consciousness from this experience. He defines double consciousness as 'this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity' (12). Ultimately, this 'peculiar sensation' is what Du Bois describes as double consciousness.

Critics have alternated between the minstrel stage and articulations of African American social experiences to theorize both minstrelsy and black American life. Not only has the minstrel mask been used to describe enactments of blackness by individuals such as Douglass and Washington, ideas associated with African Americans offstage have been used to designate blackface performances. In *The Last Darky* (2005) – a study of one of minstrelsy's most prominent actors, Bert Williams – Louis Chude-

Sokei arrives at a similar conclusion. Within Chude-Sokei's analysis of Bert Williams, there is a reconciliation of minstrelsy and Du Bois' double consciousness. Chude-Sokei recognises Du Bois' 'aversion' to the minstrel tradition but points out double consciousness' reliance on the term. He perceives double consciousness as dependent on minstrelsy as a 'metaphor for the nascent "soul"' (Chude-Sokei 66). For Chude-Sokei, the 'fiction' of the onlooker's gaze, that being the falsehood in Du Bois' 'other', creates a mask. More clearly, what and who the onlooker believes the subject to be is not who the subject really is. This is a central issue to the minstrel show because the stereotypical imagery does not capture a reliable depiction of who black people in America were and are. The 'two-ness' in Du Bois' theory is created by who the 'Negro' is supposed to be and who he is expected to be. Chude-Sokei is positing that the latter creates a minstrel mask, splitting the reality and the fantasy. He, also, points out that both 'Negro' and 'minstrel' share the same experience of looking at the subject, because the 'Negro' in Du Bois' theory of double consciousness understands that the impression of the subject whom the audience thinks is real is not really who he is. Therefore, the mask works to not only satisfy the audience or meet the expectations of 'the other world's' tape, but it also conceals the true identity of the 'Negro'.

This concealment is perceived by Chude-Sokei as 'the gift/curse of double-consciousness and the core of both Du Bois's African American exceptionalism and his pan-Africanism' (66-67). Du Bois' theory of double consciousness is exceptionalist because it asserts that only the African American encounters the experience of double consciousness, and yet Bert Williams still managed to experience a form of double consciousness although he was from the Caribbean. To Chude-Sokei, it is perhaps an advantage for the 'Negro' to know that what is captured by the 'white gaze' is untrue,

but it is a curse to understand that the ‘Negro’s’ reality may never be seen. This is exemplified in Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* (1956).

After being subject to the gaze of a young white child and his mother, Fanon realises that he has been ‘depersonalized’ and has no autonomous self; he has only been imitating whiteness. Bert Williams managed to explore and operate within the context of this duality: the true and untrue. Chude-Sokei notes that Williams’ ability of seeing himself as another person cultivated his comedic aptitude (Chude-Sokei 67). He perceives this as a playing out of Du Bois’ double consciousness and places a great deal of his argument on the basis that Williams is black. Williams’ position as a black man allows him to share and, in a sense, become Du Bois’ ‘Negro’. The ‘two-ness’ and ‘warring souls’ are created by the black performer’s understanding – in this case Williams’ understanding – that the subject of the white gaze is not who the minstrel really is. Therefore, both white spectator and black performer ‘share the psychovisual experience of looking at “the Negro”’ (67). In pointing this out, Chude-Sokei also suggests that it is only black performers that can experience Du Bois’ ‘peculiar sensation’ because a white performer would not be ‘pitied or laughed at or mocked’ in quite the same way as ‘the Negro’ would.

The audience, then, are very important, as they are the ones that fashion what is seen on stage or in society. There is a strong aspect of performance here that reverses the specularly, creating, as Chude-Sokei points out, a prismatic one (67). The performer creates an act that satisfies the audience’s fantastical expectations because they understand what the audience wants. However, the performer knows that and presumes that the audience does not know that their performance does not line up with who they are. Hence, their specularly is prismatic because as they watch the onlookers watching them, they know that their performance is a mere fiction. This example,

though perhaps confusing, is one of the important points that bridges double consciousness with the minstrel. The 'American world' works as a metaphor for the minstrel audience. Now, this audience differs significantly to a conventional theatrical audience because many believed that the black buffoonery that played out on stage was true. The fictitious images portrayed on stage were perceived as real though they were originally created by whites. Nonetheless, when black performers began to play 'themselves', the extent of specularly expanded and became more layered – perception upon perception. The years of racist ideology heaped upon African Americans formulated a minstrel mask that they had to figuratively put on, but by wearing it, they understood that it was untrue.

Roger Abrams explicitly addresses this deep-seeded connection by asserting that blacks on stage 'operated out of a kind of double consciousness, knowing that they are called upon to present an image which will be interpreted as exotic to the outside world and not to the blacks in the audience' (Abrams 155). There is a parallel between Du Bois' world that 'looks on in amused contempt' and blackface audiences (Du Bois Petit, 137). The thoughts of both groups control what they see. As Morrison argues, if 'Africanism' is the 'fishbowl' of American literature, both Euro-American onlookers and white minstrel audiences can be considered as fishbowls too. Audiences can fashion performances and yet, at times, this goes unnoticed (Morrison 17). Du Bois' concept of double consciousness, articulates the level of control the viewers have, as his 'Negro' must constantly be looking at himself through the eyes of a spectator to measure up. Robert Toll describes a similar form of control in his study of blackface, discussing the pit's control of what was seen on stage (Toll 11). Therefore, a minstrel, like Du Bois' 'Negro', must play for, satisfy, and entertain his onlookers, and Du Bois' theory of double consciousness illustrates this reflective procedure.

Chude-Sokei's observations of Williams offer a convincing example of how Du Bois' double consciousness can be considered in terms of minstrelsy. Chude-Sokei's proposition rests on the point that the minstrel must be black in order to experience the 'peculiar sensation'. When blacks became a part of the minstrel show, they could interrogate and wrestle with the roles that society had handed to them as the alternate other. Williams' career as a black minstrel exemplifies this experience because by becoming a 'real coon' he entered the liminal space between fantasy and reality, granting him a self-awareness of the mask and who he really was. This point is echoed in Williams' view that he could see himself, a sight that he perceived to develop in his comedy. Du Bois remarkably captures Williams' experience through his theory of double consciousness. Although Du Bois strongly detested minstrelsy, his theory does not escape the minstrel tradition. The extensive and prismatic specularities present in minstrelsy can be considered as the 'peculiar sensation' that Du Bois notes. If Washington can be considered as the black leader who provided blacks with a mode of survival that was shrouded in minstrelsy, then Du Bois can be regarded as moving minstrelsy from mere performance to a discussion of the psyche. Chude-Sokei's examination of Williams buttresses this point, as Chude-Sokei regards Williams' experience as being based on double consciousness.

For this current study, Du Bois' double consciousness will play an important role in locating forms of racial performance amongst Melville's black characters. Although Du Bois' concept of double consciousness has its shortcomings, for example it could be perceived as narrow in its scope, I use the concept to strengthen my analysis of racial performance enacted by Melville's literary characters. The sense of doubleness is evident in black characters who have been subjected to some of the notably tyrannical captains in Melville's writing. Perhaps none more so than Babo, a character that

manipulates the colour line, basing his enactment of a helpless Senegalese slave on the reactions of a visiting white captain.

THE CASE FOR WHITEFACE MINSTRELSY

More recently, whiteface minstrelsy has been used as a term to describe the performance of whiteness. Marvin McAllister's *Whiting Up: Whiteface Minstrels and Stage Europeans in African American performance* (2011) is the first extensive work that deals with whiteface minstrelsy. McAllister defines whiteface minstrelsy as the 'extra-theatrical, social performance in which people of African descent appropriate white-identified gestures, vocabulary, dialects, dress, or social entitlements' (McAllister 1). He continues, 'Attuned to class as much as race, whiteface minstrels often satirize, parody, and interrogate privileged or authoritative representations of whiteness' (1). Although I agree with McAllister's definition, I consider his definition as being incomplete. As I will demonstrate in this thesis, whiteface minstrelsy is something that white people can also perform, an idea that critics have addressed previously (Cockrell 1997, Roach 1998, Muñoz 1999, Krasner 1997, George-Graves 2000, Foster 2003, Brewer 2005, Brown 2008, Carbado and Gulati 2013). Although McAllister defines whiteness being performed by blacks, the consideration of whites performing whiteness is absent from McAllister's definition. Thus, this study will build on McAllister's definition of whiteface minstrelsy by exploring the ways that whiteness is performed by whites themselves.

Moreover, McAllister also explores the idea of what he terms as Stage Europeans, a term that he defines as 'black actors appropriating white dramatic characters crafted initially by white dramatists and, later, by black playwrights [...] this component emphasizes physical and vocal manifestations of whiteness, often relying on visual effects such as white face paint and blonde wigs' (1). Again, though there is

validity in his definition, I argue that it does not completely capture whiteface minstrelsy because there is no acknowledgement of the ways that white people perform as themselves. I understand that McAllister's study, as implied by the title, primarily deals with the performance of whiteness by African Americans, but from the outset, his definition of whiteface minstrelsy and this idea of Stage Europeans could certainly be more extensive. In Chapter Two, I explore the Astor Place Riots, and it is clearly evident how this notion of Stage European gets played out on multiple levels. The riots exhibit the ways that white Americans performed Shakespeare to certify their acting abilities, and in *White-Jacket*, we even witness the ways that Stage Americans are played with when an Irish sailor must play the part of True Yankee. McAllister's definition of Stage Europeans falls short because it does not include white people that use markers of whiteness to appropriate their whiteness.

Although I think that McAllister succeeds in drawing our attention to a sustained form of performance tradition that has never been completely analysed, I would argue that this performance tradition exceeds the confines of his definition and begins much earlier than he proposes. McAllister argues that this tradition can be traced to the turn of the twentieth century when Bob Cole, a black actor, performed as white, and McAllister includes a picture of Bob Cole whitening up on the front cover of his book. However, as this study will show. Whiteface minstrelsy evidenced itself much earlier than McAllister insists. By pointing this out, I do not suggest that whiteface minstrelsy started with Melville, neither do I want to get into a direct debate with McAllister; however, I seek to develop the sustained form of performance tradition that McAllister seeks to analyse. This is perhaps one of the most important aspects of this study because whereas there is a substantial amount of scholarship of blackface minstrelsy, there is

very little on whiteface, and by using aspects of whiteface minstrelsy to develop ideas of white performance in Melville's work, I help to build this area of academic inquiry.

Crucially, McAllister hopes to historicize whiteface minstrelsy so that he can influence future episodes of cross-racial live performances. However, my intention lies in bringing our attention to the important role that literature plays in historicizing forms of minstrelsy, and it is my hope that critics will use literature more alongside live performances to identify and consider minstrelsy. As it stands, most of the work that deals with minstrelsy primarily deals with live performance and film, and this makes sense, given that blackface is a theatrical form. However, as I show by exploring Melville, minstrelsy in terms of literature should also be taken more seriously. Specifically, whiteface minstrelsy should be explored in literature in more depth. Like McAllister, I also hope that this study helps to push the ways that we consider race by building upon a recent history of or examples of whiteface minstrelsy in white canonical texts.

MIMICRY

What follows is a critical discussion of Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry. Fundamentally, Bhabha's colonial theory on mimicry details the process by which the colonized performs aspects of the colonizer's culture to stabilize colonial hierarchy. His conception of mimicry has deepened my understanding of racial performance in Melville's work as it provides a colonial context, a context that Melville experienced first-hand. Furthermore, colonialism was not a subject that Melville avoided. Since Melville's first major publication, aspects of colonialism are upheld, opposed, and contemplated. For example, *Typee's* Tom, the protagonist in Melville's first travel narrative, explicitly wrestles with aspects of colonialism such as the work of missionaries and colonizers. Equally, his later works also dealt with aspects of

colonialism. In *Benito Cereno*, Melville addresses issues slavery, another substantial matter associated with colonialism.

By including such significant colonial affairs in his writing, many of Melville's characters must navigate the colonial worlds that Melville creates. This is by no means a stable world, and in the process of being exposed to different cultures, people, languages, and land, some of Melville's characters, especially those associated with the colonizer, reveal anxiety or a need to make sense of people or culture that are different from their own. In Melville's fiction, sometimes his characters never make sense of new worlds that they encounter or never really mitigate their anxiety. Returning to Tom, he never manages to clearly define the Marquesan people that he encounters in *Typee*. Captain Vangs warns him of the ferocious Typee tribe, but when he encounters them, he grapples with defining them in the ways that have been prescribed to him. In fact, his experience on the Polynesian islands leads him to question the civility of American society, and at points in the book, he wonders whether the Typee are more civil than Americans.

The need to define those who Tom encounters is not solely Tom's problem, but it represents a dilemma that many colonizers faced in the nineteenth century. Many missionaries and traders experienced existential crises as they came into contact with people from differing worlds. Thus, finding, or at the very least trying to find, definitions of the different people and places that they encountered was a way that people from colonial groups attempted to mitigate the anxiety that they experienced. This need to establish meaning was foundational to the development of racial ideology because it allowed the colonizer to place the colonized into categories that would in turn help the colonizer to make sense of different worlds.

Defining 'other' groups, within a colonial context, took place not only globally but also within the context of the United States. Moreover, one of the most significant issues that arose in America during the nineteenth century was the shift in the way that 'colonial' was being defined. In relation to American society, the term became a word that described a form of democratic governance appointed by the king (Lederer 54). By the eighteenth century, the term had lost its meaning as a word that addressed or referred to conquest, dispossession, and violence. This change in meaning correlates with occurrences in America during the eighteenth and nineteenth century because genocide, slavery, and dispossession were prevalent during these periods. Thus, the change in how and what colonialism meant appropriately concealed aspects of colonialism's prior definition as Latin word (*colonia*) that referred to Roman inhabitants in a conquered region. The idea that early European settlers in America were innocent victims of British tyranny was a myth in the context of a country practicing Manifest Destiny and slavery (Scott Morgensen 2011; Jodi A. Byrd 2011; Alyosha Goldstein 2012). As well as redefining the word 'colonialism' itself, European settlers also sought to redefine those around them that were different in order to formulate a hierarchy that placed them at its pinnacle. The Native Americans, like those in the Marquesas, were often presented as savage and uncivilised so settlers could justify genocide.

This colonial need to define people, places, or things that are foreign informs my argument because racial performance is an act that attempts to maintain these racial delineations that derive in part from this colonial requisite. For example, African slaves who acted as if they were lazy and docile on a plantation reinforced how and what blackness meant in a colonial society. Thus, it is imperative that I consider racial performance within this context, a context that was prevalent during the 1850s.

To inform my reading of racial performance in Melville's texts this way, I consider Homi Bhabha's examination of mimicry and stereotype that derives and was developed in both 'Of Mimicry and Men' (1994) and 'The Other Question' (1983), both eventually collected in the Bhabha's *Location of Culture* (1994). Bhabha uses the term mimicry to describe the colonial scheme of establishing hierarchy. According to Bhabha, mimicking the colonizer asserted the colonizer's authority because it established that the colonized could not fully occupy colonizer's position. Bhabha writes "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 85) Thus, this, in turn, reinforced colonial superiority because it illustrated that the colonized was never capable to assimilate into the colonizer's society. However, Bhabha also points out that mimicry can be destabilized because as a result of its ambivalence. He writes:

In order to be effective mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. (Bhabha 85)

Put another way, when the colonized mimics the colonizer it produces a 'double vision' that discloses the ambivalence of colonial discourse. I chiefly draw on mimicry to inform my analysis of racial performance in a colonial setting. This has assisted me in defining and understanding racial performance in the 1850s.

CRITICAL STUDIES OF MELVILLE AND RACE: AN OVERVIEW

It was not until the Herman Melville Revival in the 1920s that Melville received approbation for the sizeable amount of work he produced over the course of his lifetime. Starting with American professor and writer Raymond Weaver's *Herman Melville: Mariner and Mystic* (1921), the 1920s marked the beginning of academic scholarship on the life and work of Melville. Interestingly, Weaver considered Melville's publications after *Moby-Dick* (1851) irrelevant; however, studies that followed worked to broaden Weaver's view and works were produced that stretched across Melville's lifetime. Developments in fields of research such as American studies, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies have significantly influenced the ways that critics have read and reread Melville in the twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. Moreover, Melville's irony and recluse-like nature continues to provoke critics, motivating them to continue to search for Melville, interpreting Melville in different ways. From those who attempted to define Melville in relation to the American canon such as English literary critic D. H. Lawrence in *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923) and American intellectual F.O. Matthiessen in *American Renaissance* (1941) to those who have offered Americanist and New Americanist readings of Melville, Melville's work has been preserved by those who incessantly study him.

As America's landscape changes, as the world's landscape changes, as intellectual traditions develop and new ones are created, scholars will surely continue, like American professor Donald Pease has, to read their historical moments into the context of Melville's publications. This is especially apropos in an age where Americans have elected their first black president, Barrack Obama - a president who retained his position for a second term. Interestingly, Obama has not been timid about

disclosing his fondness for Melville's work, in particular *Moby-Dick*, stating that the epic occupies a place on his preferred reading list (*Telegraph* 15). Undoubtedly, New Americanist arguments concerning Melville shall continue to be constructed now and in years to come. These New Americanist readings, though, will almost certainly be accompanied by arguments in relation to Melville from various other schools of thought. Particularly, those intellectual traditions or academic inquiries that have contributed very little to the existing body of research on Melville, as well as those academic inquiries that have made considerable strides of late.

Precisely, my argument is built upon the research on Melville that has derived from ethnic and racial studies, an academic field that has managed to expand in recent years whilst simultaneously producing fascinating arguments on Melville's work. Despite earlier scholars taking an interest in Melville's association with the Civil War, critics did not read Melville in the context of racial matters until several decades after the Melville Revival began. It was Trinidadian intellectual, C.L.R James who formally brought both race and Melville to critics' attention in *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaway* (1953). Although there were some works that came before it, James' text is considered to be the first major work that read Melville in racial terms. James's analysis, ranging from *Moby-Dick* to *Benito Cereno*, is very personal, as he was a detainee on Ellis Island at the time he wrote the book and at points in the text he explores his life as a prisoner in relation to Melville. His analysis on *Moby-Dick* is particularly noteworthy because he points out the dictatorial role that Ahab plays over his diverse crew members. Additionally, James praises Melville for his ability to explore differing cultures and perceives it as a mark of being able to encompass 'the whole history of the past, the most significant experiences of the world around him, and a clear vision of the future' (138). This observation is foundational to studies that focus primarily on

Melville's handling of race because it points to Melville's ability to illustrate the world, a world that was culturally diverse.

Despite James' observations on Melville and race, critics did not substantially examine Melville's writings and life in the context of race until nearly thirty years had passed. American author Carolyn Karcher's *Shadow Over the Promised Land* (1979) continued the discussion that James had started, by making slavery foundational to her analysis of Melville's work. Karcher also took on the long-standing question of Melville's loyalty to his country, by arguing that Melville was critical of America's endorsement of chattel slavery during the nineteenth century. Specifically, in *Shadow*, Karcher asserts that Melville's critique of slavery was very strategic and calculated. According to Karcher, Melville knew how to balance his disdain for slavery in such a way that it would not encourage the slave revolt that Melville, as Karcher puts it, so desperately tried to avoid. Central to Karcher's argument was her reading of *Benito Cereno*. Unlike James, Karcher perceives the novella as Melville's way of 'entrapping readers in the toils of their own racism and for compelling them to experience the consequences of blinding themselves to the humanity of nonwhite victims' (Karcher XII). Karcher's treatment of Melville was the first substantial and extensive academic inquiry that firmly placed Melville's publications within the debate over slavery, and her approach in due course became extremely influential upon studies that followed dealing with Melville and race.

Whereas Karcher's reading of Melville marked the beginning of a trend that would make slavery and *Benito Cereno* focal points in discussions about Melville and race, American intellectual T. Walter Herbert's *Marquesan Encounters* (1980) formally made Melville's experience on the Polynesian islands a crucial part of academic inquiries into Melville and race. Herbert read Melville's early travel narratives as

anthropological texts and perceived Melville's approach to detailing his experience in the Marquesas as pioneering because it was not shaped by American ideology in the same ways that accounts written by missionaries and explorers were. Herbert considered Melville's experience amongst the Marquesan people as crucial to his understanding of them. Melville was marginalised, temporarily, when he lived in the Marquesas, and Herbert argues that this experience equipped Melville with a unique understanding of the Marquesan people. Herbert, like Karcher, read Melville as an author with postcolonial sensibilities, an author who courageously stood in opposition to imperialism.

Although both Karcher's and Herbert's academic scholarship became principal approaches in analysing Melville's work about race, several important works followed. Robert S. Levine's *Conspiracy and Romance* (1989) took Karcher's argument further by exploring the ways that *Benito Cereno* reflected an American society that had become anxious about its ideology. Levine points out that during the publication of *Benito Cereno*, many Americans were trapped in their own 'web of anxiety, desire, and power' (Levine 168). This anxiety along with America's disturbing contradiction of freedom, Levine suggests, is mirrored in *Benito Cereno*. Also taking Karcher's lead in exploring Melville's attitude to race by chiefly focusing on slavery, Sundquist's *To Wake the Nations* (1993) developed Karcher's approach by exclusively focusing on *Benito Cereno*. Although *Benito Cereno* was an important component in Karcher's overall argument, there were other works and parts of Melville's life that she decided to explore. However, in *To Wake the Nations*, Sundquist solely focuses on *Benito Cereno*, using the novella to disclose Melville's racial views, particularly on slavery. Drawing on Melville's decision to include a Spanish captain and name Cereno's ship *Santo Domingo*, Sundquist suggests that *Benito Cereno* is a text that addresses slavery

and oppression on a global scale. He argues the Haitian Revolution and race relations in Europe, South America, and the Caribbean are very much a part of Melville's novella. More importantly, Sundquist argues for an anti-racist Melville, a Melville that gives us an extensive critique of slavery in *Benito Cereno*.

Karcher's work formally introduced the centrality of race in Melville's work via slavery, and Sundquist cemented this perspective. Both Karcher's and Sundquist's academic inquiries into race and Melville were ground-breaking and made race a significant feature in literary criticism of Melville's works. Their work would become very influential on future critics such as Emily Miller Budick who also argued that *Benito Cereno* be understood as a serious critique of New World slavery. Nonetheless, those that argued for a Melville who opposed racism were not without their critics. In American Studies Professor Wai-Chee Dimock's *Empire for Liberty: Melville and the Poetics of Individualism* (1989), Dimock saw limits to Melville's dissent, convincingly arguing for a Melville who was unable to escape American notions of imperialism. Rather than reading Melville's early narratives as evidence of Melville's tolerance for cultures dissimilar to his own, like Herbert previously had, Dimock read Melville's texts as examples of an imperialist and expansionist mind-set that mirrored dominant American culture. Dimock does recognize the dissent inherent in works such as *White-Jacket* and *Redburn*, but she considers it as the result of a dialectic between individualism and imperialism in Melville's work. Dimock goes on to equate Melville's critique of American society as the product of living in an expansionist culture, referring to it as 'Manifest Subjectivity' (79). Ultimately, she argues that even Melville's opposition to society is a marker that firmly places him at the centre of it.

Dimock's criticism worked in tandem with American Professor John Samson's *White Lies: Narratives of Facts* (1989), a text that also explored imperialism and

expansionism in Melville's texts. However, Samson's argument differed from Dimock because although he argues that Melville was unable to completely abandon American imperialism through his writing, at times through the mode of dramatic irony, Samson suggests that Melville managed to challenge the paradoxical nature of American ideology. Samson astutely points out that Melville's inability to escape American culture and ideology manifested itself in his writing. As a focal point, Samson formulates the basis of his argument in a letter that Melville had written to his British publisher, John Murray, explaining why his writing in *Mardi* had shifted from a 'narrative of facts' in the same vein as a Romance (Letters 70). Samson perceives Melville's 'narrative of facts' as Melville's earlier narratives that bear imperialist overtones but also manage to disclose, through Melville's use of dramatic irony, an American society that had been built upon 'white' fabrications. Although Samson's central argument differs significantly from Dimock's, Samson, like Dimock and many New Americanists, saw limits to an American author critiquing American culture. Samson makes it clear that Melville was unable to rid himself of American expansionism or imperialism, and his argument, along with Dimock's, would soon encourage postcolonial and cross-cultural theorists to analyse Melville's publications extensively.

Like earlier critics such as James and Karcher, scholars who have offered postcolonial or cross-cultural readings of Melville's life and publications have also made the question of whether Melville was a critic or an advocate of American society and ideology a central issue in their work. Furthermore, the postcolonial and cross-cultural approach has offered critics a chance to include discussions of Melville's treatment of other races from different parts of the world. Many critics have used this opportunity to resume Herbert's study on Melville, making Melville's travel narratives

an important part of their studies. Approaching Melville from a postcolonial or cross-cultural perspective may have been encouraged by Dimock and Samson, but it was literary theorist Edward Said's pioneering *Orientalism* (1978) that made cross-culturalism and postcolonialism permanent approaches to Melville's work. Said returned to the view of Melville that had also previously been held in some regards by James. In *Orientalism*, Said resurrects the notion of Melville as an influential critic, unafraid to challenge America's status quo. This observation of Melville, however, is somewhat anchored by Said's overall argument that nineteenth-century travel literature produced by European authors complimented expansionist ideals and efforts.

MELVILLE AND THEATRE

As I am interested in the ways that race is performed theatrically in Melville's work, this section of the literature review shall closely examine the most pertinent texts to date that deals with Melville and theatre. Surprisingly, there has not been a vast amount written on theatre and Melville. Nonetheless, in this section, I will examine Alan Ackerman's *The Portable Theatre* (1999) and Mary Isbell's 'P(I)aying off Old Ironsides and the Old Wagon: Melville's Depiction of Shipboard Theatricals in *White-Jacket*' (2013). The two works complement one another as Isbell's text builds upon Ackerman's. Together, the texts work as a catalyst that encourage critical discussions of theatre in Melville's work. What follows, then, is a discussion of how the texts relate to my thesis.

Ackerman's *The Portable Theatre* attempts to bridge the gap between performance theory and literary criticism. Ackerman reads several canonical authors, such as Louisa May Alcott, Henry James, Walt Whitman, and Herman Melville, in the context of the theatre. The greatest strength of the work lies in the way that Ackerman's analysis recovers the stage in literary works written by authors who openly criticized

and abandoned the theatre. Chiefly, he does this by pointing out that the nineteenth century was a period in which the theatre was displaced. Ackerman explains that the literary Renaissance, the introduction of Realism, and the development of Melodrama were all aspects of American popular culture that led to the theatre's displacement.

Moreover, Ackerman considers Melville's work in theatrical terms, although Melville was not a dramatist. In 'Another Version of the Whale Ship *Glove*', Ackerman argues that Ahab ought to be considered as a theatrical protagonist in *Moby-Dick* because Ahab dramatically enters and exits the scenes that take place on the *Pequod*. Although Ackerman presents a convincing argument, I would argue that race ought to play a more significant role in his argument because of race's importance during the nineteenth century. Moreover, race significantly impacted theatre during this period. Although Ackerman suggests that American theatre was displaced, and in many ways it was, the phenomenon of blackface helped to sustain theatre in American popular culture, and more importantly, the blackface minstrel show was explicitly about race. The absence of this consideration in Ackerman's argument weakens his analysis.

Nonetheless, despite the absence of race in Ackerman's argument, Ackerman is one of the few critics who have attempted to chart a relationship of theatrics in Melville's work. He does this by using another Melville novel, *White-Jacket* (1850), as a backdrop for his examination of Ahab's performative nature in *Moby-Dick*. Ackerman uses the play, 'The Old Wagon Paid Off', recounted in *White-Jacket*, to link the disruption caused in the narrative to that of the disruption caused in the Astor Place Riot. This account would not be the first time that a critic has made the connection between Melville and the riots. In 'Class Acts: The Astor Place Riots and Melville's "The Two Temples"', Dennis Berthold also makes the link. However, Ackerman is the first to considerably explore the riots and the theatrics in *White-Jacket*. Furthermore,

Ackerman reads White-Jacket's indifference to the play in the narrative as identical to Melville's feelings about theatre and literature, as Melville openly expressed that the 'best literature ought to be read in private' (Melville 542). Although, in Chapter One, I read White-Jacket's reaction to the performance differently, what stands out about Ackerman's reading is that he connects the theatrics found in *White-Jacket* to Ahab's theatricality. He considers the disruption that the play causes in *White-Jacket* to be linked to the disruption caused by Ahab's performance in *Moby-Dick*.

Ackerman's scholarship has helped to establish a starting-point for this study, as his analysis deals with theatre in Melville's *White-Jacket* in terms of literal stage theatrics. Surprisingly, there are not many critics who have looked at *White-Jacket* in this way. The only other critic to offer a substantial examination of the theatrics in *White-Jacket* is Mary Isbell. In 'P(l)aying Off Old Ironsides and the Old Wagon: Melville's Depiction of Shipboard Theatricals in *White-Jacket*' (2013), Isbell develops Ackerman's argument by suggesting that Melville's inclusion of 'The Old Wagon Paid Off' was an attempt not only to mimic life at sea, but it was also Melville's way of using theatre to challenge authority. Like Ackerman, Isbell reads 'The Old Wagon Paid Off' in the context of the Astor Place Riots.

The Astor Place Riots stemmed from a feud between William Charles Macready and Edwin Forrest. Forrest was an American actor who became one of the first to perform in London to gain notoriety (Foulkes 20). However, after several of his performances, Forrest started to receive some very poor reviews, especially from John Forster who had said that his *Othello* performance revealed that 'Mr Forrest had no intellectual comprehension of what he was about' (Archer 21). Forster's unflattering reviews were endless and Forrest was convinced that Macready, a famous British Shakespearian actor, had been encouraging Forster to critically scold Forrest. As an act

of revenge Forrest decided to hiss at one of Macready's Edinburgh performance of *Hamlet* in 1846. The tension reached its peak while Macready toured America in 1849. On May 7, 1849 a group of Forrest's supporters, also known as the 'Bowery b'hoys [...] had driven Macready from stage with catcalls, rotten eggs, and the vile-smelling drug asafoetida' (Berthold 429). Put off by the vicious attack, Macready declared that he would be cancelling his tour and would be returning to Europe instantly. However several notable figures attempted to persuade Macready to continue his performance, and Melville was amongst the forty-nine petitioners that attempted to make Macready stay. After receiving substantial encouragement to remain on tour, Macready continued and on May 10, 1849, many Forrest supporters surrounded the Opera House and an enormous riot broke out. Toll notes that 'When the bloody fighting finally ended, thirty-one rioters and spectators had been killed and 150 people had been injured – civilians, policemen, and soldiers' (17). Thus this was culturally and socially significant because it illustrated the conflict that ensued between American and European theatre.

Although I recognize and appreciate the connection that both Ackerman and Isbell make between the Astor Place Riots and *White-Jacket*, I suggest that the Astor Place Riots and the play that takes place on the *Neversink* are racialized. I argue that when examining both, we must consider the ethnic context that both take place in. The riots that took place stemmed from Nativist ideals as some America's were angered by the success of an actor who was not American. Likewise, the play aboard the *Neversink* takes place in an ethnic context as the ship represents a navigator between different contact zones that goes beyond the diversity of the crew. In other words, the *Neversink* represents the possibility to travel between worlds, exceeding ethnic borders and racial divides. These are points that I shall expound upon in Chapter One, a chapter where I also contend that these forms work to challenge Captain Claret's tyranny.

Unlike Ackerman, Isbell does not offer a central analysis of *Moby-Dick* in the same way that Ackerman does, she does connect the disruption found in *White-Jacket* to the disruption in *Moby-Dick*, arguing that the disruption is a result of class in *White-Jacket* and a result of race in *Moby-Dick*. While I do not perceive Isbell's contention as erroneous, I do consider race to be as important to *White-Jacket* as it is to *Moby-Dick*. When the play is read in the context of everyone aboard the *Neversink* – including Rose-Water, May-Day, and Tawney - then the play becomes as much about race as anything else. More clearly, the diversity aboard the *Neversink* prevents readers from ignoring race's significance. For example, Claret treats the black members of the crew much differently to the white members of the crew.

While Ackerman and Isbell trace the theatrical aspects of *White-Jacket* and *Moby-Dick*, I would argue that theatre, in particular racial performance, plays out in more of his works during the 1850s. I contend that there is a performative arc of Melville's texts that spans the decade before America went to war. Additionally, I build on Ackerman's argument by considering performance in terms of social performance as well. In the time since Ackerman's analysis of the theatricals in *White-Jacket* was published, Isbell has been the only critic who has substantially developed his argument. I intend to build on their arguments by extending the study and contending that race is one of the common threads connecting the performative nature of Melville's work.

BLACKNESS AND WHITENESS

Although critics have not explored the performative nature of blackness and whiteness in the way that it will be explored in this thesis, there have been several notable studies on blackness and whiteness in Melville's texts. Some focus on the aesthetics of blackness and whiteness, whilst others focus on blackness and whiteness racially. Most recently published, Christopher Freeburg's *Melville and the Idea of Blackness* (2012)

is a ground-breaking and exceptional work on the aesthetics of blackness in Melville's texts. Freeburg posits Melville's 'Hawthorne and His Mosses' (1850) as a precursor for the aesthetic of blackness found in Melville's publications because in this text Melville expresses his adoration for Hawthorne's 'great power of blackness' (qtd. in Hutner 95). Now, Melville explains that his admiration of Hawthorne's darkness is in fact an admiration for his 'Calvinistic sense of depravity' (qtd. in Hutner 95). However, Freeburg discloses the deep connection between race and religion, highlighting the connection between racial blackness and spiritual darkness. Overall, Freeburg contends that 'interracial encounters such as that between Tommo and Karky reveal indices of blackness in various sites of social conflict in the 1850s' (Freeburg 15). He analyses 'a specific dynamic that Melville expresses in different guises across his fiction', and Freeburg suggests that Melville 'relentlessly correlates dark imagery, interracial encounters, and his protagonists' feeling of existential vulnerability' (Freeburg 16). Although Freeburg chiefly focuses on black aesthetics in Melville, I develop several of his observations in my argument.

Whereas Freeburg attempts to develop black aesthetics in Melville studies, critics have also wrestled with the aesthetics of whiteness in Melville's texts. Monika Gehlawat's argument in 'The Aesthetics of Whiteness' (2005) suggests that 'the great white whale [...] functions as both the natural and the symbolic' (Gehlawat 371). She compares Melville's whale to Robert Ryman's paintings and contends that both their existence as aesthetic images 'is predicated on this very dialectic of abstraction and corporeality' (Gehlawat 371). Her argument encapsulates the varying critical responses that surround whiteness in *Moby-Dick*. Like Gehlawat, many critics focus on 'The Whiteness of the Whale' chapter in *Moby-Dick* when discussing whiteness in Melville's texts. Some critics view Ishmael being appalled by the whale's whiteness as purely

‘dumb blackness’, as Mary Arensberg points out, the ‘nothingness of the American self’ (Arensberg 10).

Contrastingly, critics such as Toni Morrison, D.H Lawrence, James, Khalil Husni, Mary Blish, Marsha Vick, and Fred Bernard read Ishmael’s reaction to whiteness in *Moby-Dick* in racial terms. Besides Ishmael’s reference to whiteness ‘giving the white man ideal mastership over every dusky tribe’, many have explored other ways that the whiteness of the whale works metaphorically to address racial matters (MD 189). James takes this position by pointing out the relevance of whiteness in 1850s political debate. Likewise, ‘The Unspeakable Things Unspoken’ (1989), Morrison perceives Melville’s whale as symbol for ‘the moment in America when whiteness became ideology’ (Morrison 16). Additionally, in *Playing in the Dark*, Morrison draws our attention to the ‘curiously intimate and unhingingly separate existence within the dominant one’, causing us to constantly think about the relationship between blackness and whiteness (12). Contrastingly, Blish radically changes Morrison’s claim by suggesting that the white whale actually represents blacks in America, thus making Ahab’s mission analogous to slavery (Blish 56). Whereas Bernard alters Blish’s contention by perceiving Ahab as the victim, a black victim at that, who falls prey to a great white adversary (Bernard 388).

Nonetheless, discussions of whiteness and blackness have not been limited to Melville’s ‘Hawthorne and his Mosses’ and *Moby-Dick*. On the contrary, there are other critical responses that deal with Melville and race. Many critics have turned their attention to *Benito Cereno*. I have mentioned Karcher and James in relation to Melville’s 1850s novella. However, in ‘Suspense and Tautology’, Sundquist explores the middle ground that both reader and Delano must tread, and within this examination, he addresses ‘The subtle distance between [...] master and slave or between white and

black' (98). Contrastingly, Paul Downes' 'Melville's *Benito Cereno* and the Politics of Humanitarian Intervention' (2004) compares Delano to a UN intervening figure and contends that 'human rights ideology in the West have remained consistent from the end of the eighteenth century' (465). However, Kevin Michael Scott's "'Likewise Masked': Blackface and Whitewash in Melville's 'Benito Cereno'" (2006) deals more explicitly with race and its performative nature as he suggests that Babo whitewashes his performance aboard the *San Dominick* by making the performance more about whiteness than blackness (126). I explore Scott's argument further in the fourth chapter of this thesis. Moreover, there are larger bodies of work that deal with whiteness and blackness in relation to Melville such as Samuel Otter's *Melville's Anatomies* and Sterling Stuckey's *African Culture and Melville's Art* (2009). Both of these texts will be explored in more detail throughout this thesis. Ultimately, the observations of critics who deal with blackness and whiteness in Melville are fundamental to this thesis, as I realize that I am not the first to have read race into Melville's 1850s publications.

Although this thesis primarily deals with the 1850s, I start by framing my argument with Melville's *Typee* to demonstrate how Melville's critique of whiteness laid the foundation for his 1850s texts that evidence racial performance. My reading of Melville unfolds chronologically, as I suggest that as the 1850s progresses racial performance becomes more evident in Melville's texts. This thesis will focus on four main texts during the 1850s – *White-Jacket*, *Moby-Dick*, *Benito Cereno*, and *The Confidence-Man*. I suggest racial performance develops in Melville's narratives up to *The Confidence-Man* where it intersects with blackface via Melville's *Black Guinea*. Racial performance develops throughout Melville's publications in the 1850s from mere illustration to the point of interrogation of audience and reader. This development in Melville's work, I suggest, is a result of both his diminishing literary career and a

realization of America's failed promises. As the Civil War draws near, his work takes on a new dynamic that involves the reader.

ONE

MELVILLE'S OPENING ACTS: RACIAL THEATRICS ABOARD THE *NEVERSINK*

In the theatrical world, as in the aesthetic world more generally, ideology is always in essence the site of a competition and a struggle in which the sound and fury of humanity's political and social struggles are faintly or sharply echoed.
-Louis Althusser, *The 'Piccolo Teatro'*

This chapter focuses on the racial performance in Melville's first publication of the 1850s, *White-Jacket*. Drawing on his experience aboard the frigate *United States* in 1843, Melville penned *White-Jacket* during the summer months of 1849. Chiefly, I put forward the theatrical production included in the narrative, 'The Old Wagon Paid Off', as an implicit performance of white liberty that works to challenge and stabilize the tyranny that takes place aboard the *Neversink*. Melville dedicates several chapters to sailor flogging, and I suggest that this act of violence worked to sully the sailors' whiteness. Thus, I claim that the performed whiteness that takes place is the crew's attempt to restore their whiteness. I will also point out how this narrative marks one of the earliest forms of racial performance in Melville's 1850s works as it is literally a theatrical performance, and I argue that the later forms of performance become more complex and are social enactments of race, without a stage. Although not central to this chapter, I examine the performative nature of the black cooks. This is another way that I contend that racial performance develops, because I argue that while performances of

blackness play smaller roles in his early 1850s work, I suggest that by the late 1850s these performances are more significant. The relationship between blackness and whiteness runs throughout my thesis, and it starts with my close reading of *White-Jacket*. As the 1850s moves closer to the start of the Civil War, I claim that more room is given in Melville's work to broader violations of liberty rather than white ones. For example, more room is given to breaches of black liberty in *Benito Cereno* than in *White-Jacket*. Ultimately, in this chapter, I inquire: Are the theatrics in *White-Jacket* racialized? Do these theatrics mark the beginning of racial performance found in Herman Melville's writing? Furthermore, does Melville use these theatrics to challenge violations of the Declaration of Independence's definition of human liberty?

Separated into four sections, this chapter specifically focuses on *White-Jacket*. In the first section, to provide a backdrop for the chapter, I offer an overview of the theatrical performances that took place on naval vessels. The second section specifically turns to *White-Jacket* and explores the black cooks' theatrical performances aboard the *Neversink*. In this section, I also explore the ways their performances are racialized, but more importantly how their performances serve as a basis for the larger and more intricate versions of racial theatrics that are witnessed in *Benito Cereno* and *The Confidence-Man*. Whereas section two concentrates on the black cooks, section three explores the ways that sailor flogging marred the sailors' whiteness. The last section deals with the melodrama that takes place aboard the *Neversink*. Essentially, I argue that this melodrama demonstrates the sailors' efforts to re-establish their whiteness. Moreover, I point out the first form is the music that the black cooks perform aboard the *Neversink*, and the second is the enactment of the melodramatic play 'The Old Wagon Paid Off' that Captain Claret allows his seamen to perform. These

examples are foundational to the racial performance that we find in Melville's writing through to *The Confidence-Man*.

Theatrical Performance in *White-Jacket*

In *White-Jacket*, Melville includes a melodrama entitled 'The Old Wagon Paid Off'. However, Melville's inclusion of a theatrical performance aboard the ship was not original. Although there is no evidence from his journals to suggest that Melville encountered nautical melodramas during the time he spent on the USS *United States*, there were several texts published during the nineteenth century that included sailors performing dramas at sea. Keith Huntress draws our attention to possibly the most important example in the context of Melville's *White-Jacket*. Huntress notes that the anonymously published *Life in a Man-of-War or Scenes in 'Old Ironsides'* (1846) included theatrical performances that Melville doubtlessly used as a source for *White-Jacket* (Huntress 73). Critics speculate that Melville would have been attracted to referencing this book for several reasons. Firstly, the author of *Life in a Man-of-War* maintained anonymity by referring to himself as 'a Fore-top-man'. Secondly, the text was published privately, so there were very few who were aware of its existence. Therefore, Melville's use of the narrative would not be as easily recognized as it would have been if he gathered sources from a text that was well-known. In any case, chapters such as 'Aquatic Theatricals' include several instances where sailors engage in theatrics, theatrics that resemble those found aboard the *Neversink*.

Despite the similarities that can be found in Melville's *White-Jacket* and 'a Fore-top-man' in *Life in a Man-of-War*, there are several apparent differences that demonstrate that Melville's decision to include theatrics in *White-Jacket* surpass his intentions to make *White-Jacket* realistic. Chiefly, the performance aboard Melville's *Neversink* is cut short by a black squall that the seamen must attend to. Melville does

not let the performance play out like the ones that are found in *Life in a Man-of-War*. Additionally, Captain Claret seems more reluctant to allow his crew to perform than the captains aboard the USS *Constitution*. The permission that the crew eventually receive is dependent on several things. More than anything else, Claret grants his crew permission to perform out of pity. As the *Neversink* approaches Cape Horn, the performance works to distract the crew from the possible harmful weather conditions ahead. Claret also reviewed the play to ensure that the performance would not ‘breed disaffection’ towards those in leadership aboard the *Neversink* (WJ 93). Therefore, while Melville undoubtedly used *Life in a Man-of-War* as a source, he also deviated from it to create the portions that are centred on Claret, as the authority figures in *Life in a Man-of-War* seem more open to the seamen’s performances. I will explore these differences in more detail later in this chapter in order to analyse the ways that racial performance manifests itself in *White-Jacket*.

ST. DOMINGO MELODIES

Melville introduces the Ship’s Cooks in the fifteenth chapter of *White-Jacket*, ‘A Salt-Junk Club in a Man-of-War’. Comprised of ‘coloured men’, the Ship’s Cooks were led by a ‘dignified coloured gentleman, whom the men dubbed Old Coffee’ (WJ 58). Nonetheless, from the outset, White-Jacket makes little of their work. He explains to the reader that the ‘ship’s cooking required very little science’; according to the character White-Jacket, all the Ship’s Cooks had to do was ‘keep bright and clean the three huge coppers, or caldrons, in which many hundred pounds of beef were daily boiled’ (WJ 58). Their work is menial, and their presence aboard the *Neversink* is not a necessity. Additionally, White-Jacket explains that different divisions in the frigate

took turns cooking, a detail demonstrating that everyone aboard the ship was capable of fulfilling the role assigned to the Ship's Cooks.

Nonetheless, White-Jacket also mentions that Old Coffee would always remind the seamen aboard the *Neversink* that he 'graduated at the New York Astor House, under the immediate eye of celebrated Coleman and Stetson' who were proprietors of Astor House (WJ 58). Here, Old Coffee makes a conscious effort to include this detail in an attempt to be taken seriously. Originally called the Park Hotel, the New York Astor House, located on Broadway and built by John Jacob Astor, was perhaps the most prestigious hotel during the 1850s. Old Coffee's decision to explain that he graduated from Astor House is an attempt to elevate his image and convince the rest of the crew of his worth and skill.

Despite Old Coffee's efforts, his presence seems to go unnoticed, and his being dubbed Old Coffee by the rest of the crew does not help increase his esteem. Not only is he named Old Coffee but his assistants are also labelled with 'poetical appellations' – Old Coffee, Sunshine, Rose-Water, and May-Day (WJ 58). Although it was common for sailors to be dubbed with playful nicknames, the cooks' names only serve to lower their stature, making them seem like a comedic or a theatrical act rather than the Ship's Cooks. As White-Jacket points out, their role aboard the *Neversink* is insignificant. Moreover, naming black people in this way, during this period, echoes the blackface minstrel show. Old Coffee, May-Day, and Rose-Water carry a similar tone as staple characters in blackface, such as Zip Coon and Jim Crow. Furthermore, the connection made between the cooks and a theatrical act is fortified by their musical performances aboard the *Neversink*.

Soon after White-Jacket introduces the cooks, he also encourages the reader to understand that the ship's cooks are musical. White Jacket says:

Sunshine was the bard of the trio; and while all three would be busily employed clattering their soap-stones against the metal, he would exhilarate them with some remarkable St. Domingo melodies; one of which was the following:

‘Oh! I los' my shoe in an old canoe,
 Johnio! come Winum so!
 Oh! I los' my boot in a pilot-boat,
 Johnio! come Winum so!
 Den rub-a-dub de copper, oh!
 Oh! copper rub-a-dub-a-oh!’(WJ 58)

White-Jacket's reference to Rose-Water, May-Day, and Sunshine as a trio creates a theatrical image. Moreover, Melville's protagonist also refers to Sunshine as a bard, a term also linking Old Coffee's assistants to a musical performance.

As well as White-Jacket's musical references to Sunshine, May-Day, and Rose-Water, White-Jacket's illustration of the cooks suggests that even their work seemed musical and theatrical. He refers to the sound of the soap-stones hitting the metal, and this description subtly evokes that the sound of their labour created an instrumental for Sunshine's voice. White-Jacket also notes that the group 'every morning sprang into their respective apartments, stripped to the waist, and well provided with bits of soap-stone and sand. By exercising these in a very vigorous manner, they threw themselves into a violent perspiration, and put a fine polish upon the interior of the coppers' (WJ 58). Their work seems performative because they are violently perspiring doing what White-Jacket considers to be a tedious job. Yet, Sunshine, Rose-Water, and May-Day

awake every morning working and singing. In many ways, it is difficult to determine where their work ends and performance begins.

The verse that Melville chose for the cooks in *White-Jacket* can be traced in at least one instance to Scottish sailor John Nicol's travel account that was published in 1822 (Parker 653). As well as spending time in the British Navy, Nicol also spent time in the Caribbean and witnessed slavery first-hand. In *The Life and Adventures of John Nicol, Mariner*, he mentions spending time on the West Indian island of Grenada and having slaves. Nicol's view of the black people whom he encounters in the Caribbean is very similar to Captain Delano's in *Benito Cereno*. Although Delano detects that something is going on aboard the *San Dominick*, his racist views prevent him from trusting his suspicions. He views black people as simple, hapless individuals who 'possess the great gift of good humour [...] as though God had set the whole Negro to some pleasant tune' (WJ 83). Delano considers their pleasant spirit as 'peculiar' because the slaves still manage to 'grin and laugh' despite being subjected to a life of servitude. Similarly, Nicol is puzzled by the slaves' good mood. He refers to the slaves in Grenada as a 'thoughtless, merry, race', adding 'in vain their cruel situation and sufferings act upon their buoyant minds' (248). Nicol's reaction to the slaves is remarkably similar to Delano's.

Moreover, Nicol perceives their humour as the basis for a performative nature that he believes elevates the slaves above their masters. Nicol explains that the slaves 'have snatches of joy that their pale and sickly oppressors never know' (248). He goes on to describe the ways that slaves danced and sang on the Sabbath and Saturday despite having sore backs from being beaten (249). According to the Scottish sailor, slavery seems to be having more of a negative impact on the enslavers rather than the enslaved, especially in the Caribbean's warm conditions. After a day's toil the slaves would be

‘bounded in all the spirit of health and happiness while their oppressors could hardly drag their effeminate bodies along, from dissipation or the enervating effects of the climate’ (252). Nicol considers their humour and ability to remain in high spirits despite oppression to be the sole factor for their superiority. In *Benito Cereno*, we witness this performance play out in a very dramatic and different way, but in his account Nicol moves on to describe the performances that he witnessed.

Moreover, Nicol explains that the slaves performed their humour and joy in a very literal way. He mentions that there was a ‘master of ceremonies who wore ‘an old cocked hat’ and many of the female cast [wore] silk gowns which had belonged to their mistresses’ (253). Furthermore, many of their performances took place aboard the *Cotton Planter* and tended to be impromptu, or in Nicol’s words ‘extempore’. According to Nicol, they sang and danced, and all of their performances were accompanied by the Benji, a wooden instrument covered in shark skin. During these performances Nicol heard them sing ‘I lost my shoe in an old canoe’ (253).

The cooks’ performance, in particular Sunshine’s singing, is what I contend is the beginning of racial performances in Melville’s texts, and that performance grows and becomes more complex in his work up until the Civil War. By choosing the particular verse that Sunshine sings, Melville connects the cooks to the black slaves that Nicol encounters in both Grenada and aboard the *Cotton Planter*, and Melville was very aware of Nicol’s *Life and Adventures*. He directly references John Nicol in a much later chapter of *White-Jacket*, entitled ‘The Manning of Navies’. Melville knew both of the Scottish mariner and the narrative that he published in 1822. Furthermore, this link not only ties the cooks to the performative groups of slaves in the Caribbean, but it also is foundational to the black theatrical characters that follow – Pip, Babo, and the Black Guinea.

Sunshine's verse marks the beginning of a chain of black characters who are elite performers of race, using their performances to elevate themselves above their masters psychologically. Nicol sees this in the Grenadian slaves and Melville subtly develops this before the Civil War begins. Interestingly, Melville refers to this verse as a St. Domingo melody. This also seems very significant, as St. Domingo was one of the primary sites in the Haitian revolution, the only successful slave revolt recognized in the late eighteenth century. What is more, St. Domingo was the birthplace of Toussant L'Ouverture, a former slave who is considered a leader in the Haitian Revolution. After several unsuccessful attempts to take over several French colonies in Haiti, in 1801 L'Ouverture's army managed to capture St. Domingo, now in the Dominican Republic, moving the uprising past the confines of Haiti. L' Ouverture also named himself the governor of St. Domingo. Therefore, when Melville makes reference to the songs that the cooks sing as St. Domingo melodies, it is very significant.

Critics, such as Eric Sundquist have connected *Benito Cereno* with the Haitian revolution. As mentioned, in *To Wake the Nations*, Sunquist provides an extensive argument suggesting that Melville's novella was very in tune with the issues that arose from New World Slavery. In 'Melville, Delany, and New World Slavery', Sundquist convincingly links *Benito Cereno* to the Haitian Revolution, primarily by pointing out that Melville's decision to change the ships name from the *Tryal* to the *San Dominick* was Melville's way of giving Babo's revolt a 'specific character' (Sundquist 140). However, this 'character', to borrow from Sundquist, does not start with *Benito Cereno*, it starts with Sunshine's Saint Domingo melodies. In Kevin J. Hayes' *Melville's Folk Roots* (1999) and Andrew Delbanco's *Melville: His World and Work* (2005), both authors reference the memorable verse that Sunshine recites during the early hours aboard the *Neversink*. However, they do not connect this verse with Nicol or point out

the connection that is created when White-Jacket explains that Sunshine was singing St. Domingo melodies. This detail should not be overlooked as it represents Melville's consciousness of slave performance in relation to the Haitian Revolution several years before *Benito Cereno* was written.

By connecting Sunshine with Saint. Domingo melodies and a verse found in John Nicol's travel narrative, Melville attempts to create a performative nature in Sunshine that is complex; it is a nature that White-Jacket wishes that he could appropriate but never manages to. If White-Jacket could perform like Sunshine then perhaps he would be able to cope with the oppression that he faces aboard the *Neversink*. After he describes the performances of the cooks, he states:

When I listened to these jolly Africans, thus making gleeful their toil by their cheering songs, I could not help murmuring against that immemorial rule of men-of-war, which forbids the sailors to sing out, as in merchant-vessels, when pulling ropes, or occupied at any other ship's duty. Your only music, at such times, is the shrill pipe of the boatswain's mate, which is almost worse than no music at all. And if the boatswain's mate is not by, you must pull the ropes, like convicts, in profound silence; or else endeavour to impart unity to the exertions of all hands, by singing out mechanically, *one, two, three*, and then pulling all together (WJ 68).

Despite wanting to, White-Jacket cannot use music and performance as a narcotic for his harsh reality in the same way that the cooks do. His St. Domingo verse is perhaps a murmur. He is subjected to work without music, making him in some ways less privileged than the cooks on the vessel.

White-Jacket's inability to access performance in the same way that the African Americans can is reinforced much later when he borrows a Negro Song book from Broadbit. Once Rose-Water notices that White-Jacket has been reading the *Negro Songbook*, he immediately denounces the text and offers White-Jacket a copy of Thomas Moore's *Loves of the Angels* instead. This move is considerable, especially given that White-Jacket presents Rose-Water as part of a musical trio earlier in the narrative. Rose-Water is considered musical yet rejects the *Negro Songbook*. This rejection reflects Rose-Water's depth and complexity. Hayes perceives this rejection as a mark of 'the established culture's recognition of Negro folksongs as a vital form of expression' (18). However, it also demonstrates White-Jacket's inability to truly understand African American performative culture. Although Rose-Water might be a part of a musical trio, he would much rather be reading a text from the 'established culture' (18). Thus, he disregards his culture. Black performance intrigues White-Jacket, but it is something that he can neither access nor completely understand.

The cooks play a significant role in *White-Jacket*, although they seem relegated to menial jobs on the *Neversink*. They represent survival, and their songs and performances exhibit ways that they cope with the oppression they face on the *Neversink*. Melville underpins this by connecting their performances with St. Domingo and the song that Nicol hears the slaves sing in his narrative. There is an inherent strength in their performances. Their theatrics not only seem to be the basis for their survival but are also foundational for their revolutions as well. By appearing happy and constantly in good spirits, the slaves were able to deceive their masters. *White-Jacket* seems to be the beginning of Melville's exploration of this power in his narratives, and this fully evolves in *Benito Cereno*, as the slaves use their humour and polite manner

to conceal an uprising. Unfortunately, White-Jacket cannot access their performances and theatrics, and this reinforces his helplessness.

Nonetheless, the cooks represent something that goes beyond the context of *White-Jacket*. They exemplify the commencement of a development in Melville's writing that can be seen in later black characters whose performances are powerful and intricate, characters who start uprise and who not only impact each other within the narrative but also the readers as well. Furthermore, Melville uses his black characters' racial performance to subvert authority. In *White-Jacket*, Melville does this in a very subtle way. The cooks' performance creates a barrier between who they are and how they appear. Rose-Water's rejection of the *Negro Songbook* comes as a surprise after White-Jacket has described him as being a part of the musical trio. However, like many black people in the nineteenth century who had to navigate in oppressive environments, Rose-Water's theatrics work to conceal his identity from the authorities around him. Melville racializes the cooks' performance by placing the verse of Grenadian slaves and Saint Domingo melodies into Sunshine's mouth. Melville uses racial theatrics in his black characters to challenge and destabilize systems of authority. This is something that gradually builds in his work during the 1850s. It starts with the small performance that we witness aboard the *Neversink* and is developed into larger and more racialized performances aboard the *Pequod*, *San Dominick*, and *Fidèle*. The cooks' musical performance is not the only form of racial performance that Melville uses to challenge authority aboard the *Neversink*.

SULLYING A SAILOR'S WHITENESS

One of the most enthralling aspects of *White-Jacket* is Melville's inclusion of horrific flogging scenes. Such episodes could not be timelier as an intense debate concerning violent practices at sea was taking place towards the end of the 1840s and the beginning

of the 1850s. Romanticized accounts of seafaring such as *The Red Rover* (1827), written by James Fennimore Cooper, were being challenged by texts that attempted to create truer depictions of life at sea. Texts such as *The Narrative of Robert Adams* (1816), Richard Henry Dana Jr.'s *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840), and William McNally's *Evils and Abuses in the Naval and Merchant Service* (1839) disclosed accounts that were unfamiliar to the general public. These works included accounts of the verbal and physical abuse that sailors were subjected to, which were later used as evidence to support changes put forward by groups who were seeking to improve the conditions that sailors were facing at sea.

The flogging episodes in *White-Jacket* work in the narrative to mar the victims' whiteness. The act of being flogged showed sailors that their sense of white liberty was meaningless at sea. I use the term white liberty because American liberty was not granted to all in the nineteenth century, and this paradox finds its way into Melville's work. He gives his readers an extensive account of the flogging of white sailors but only four words when the black sailors are flogged: 'the negroes were flogged' (WJ 276). This indifference, I argue, changes by the end of the 1850s. However, in *White-Jacket*, the black cooks are shown a lack of condolence when they are flogged. Ultimately, flogging was one of the few places where slave and sailor life intersected, and this intersection was what many people who opposed flogging were disturbed by. Both figuratively and literally flogging signified the loss or scarring of whiteness.

Arguably the most extensive flogging scene in American literature takes place in *White-Jacket*. Four sailors get flogged after being caught fighting on deck. Melville explains, 'They were charged with violating a well-known law of the ship—having been engaged in one of those tangled, general fights sometimes occurring among sailors. They had nothing to anticipate but a flogging, at the captain's pleasure' (WJ

134). Here, although Melville informs the reader that the sailors have committed a crime, his choice of words also connote that the flogging seems unfair. He points out that the flogging is for the 'Captain's pleasure' instead of the result of an unlawful act. His words also offer the impression that 'general fights' are common and so should be overlooked. This is very similar to Naval Seaman Samuel Leech's sailor in *Thirty Years* who is caught drinking and is eventually flogged for it. Like Leech's sailor, Melville's sailors are presented as if they have not done anything that warrant flogging. When the black cooks are flogged, their punishment also seems unjust because Claret asked them to engage in the violent game that eventually led to their altercation. Thus, Melville dramatizes the scene but firstly points out that the flogging is unnecessary.

More crucially though, it is unclear who is to blame for the fight, and it seems possible that some of the sailors retaliated to protect themselves. Claret acts as if he is prepared to listen to their accounts. The Captain remarks, 'You John, you Peter, you Mark, you Antone [...] were yesterday found fighting on the gun-deck. Have you anything to say?' (WJ 136). But Claret fails to approach the situation in a democratic way, caring little to discipline the 'real author of the disturbance' (WJ 136). Melville writes that John is the 'brutal bully', but despite declaring that they never struck first, the Captain declares that Mark, Antone, and Peter must also be flogged because they 'struck at last, instead of reporting the case to an officer' (WJ 136). The Captain continues, 'I allow no man to fight on board here but myself. I do the fighting' (WJ 136). The Captain makes it clear who is in charge and shows little regard for who was to blame.

Although White-Jacket presents John negatively, he describes the other sailors in a positive way. Both Mark and Antone are 'two steady, middle-aged men' who the narrator admires for their 'sobriety' (WJ 136). Peter is only nineteen years old and

described as 'handsome' and a 'great favourite in his part of the ship' (WJ 136). Like Leech and Dana, Melville presents the other sailors positively, and all three of them declare that they did not strike first. The only one that is to blame, according to Melville's narrator, is John. Therefore, although only one sailor ought to be punished, the entire group will be, demonstrating how misplaced flogging can be. Additionally, the other sailors are presented innocently, thus reinforcing the unlawfulness of flogging.

The order of the flogging also intensifies its unfairness and theatrics. John, the one who is perhaps most to blame, is flogged and does not move. After he receives 'one dozen lashes', he smiles, saying 'D-n me! It's nothing when you're used to it! Who wants to fight?' (WJ 137). Next is Antone, who blasphemes and curses the Captain. Mark's reaction is more fatal, as, like Dana's Sam, he becomes 'silent and sullen for the rest of the cruise' (WJ 138). Nonetheless, the worst episode is Peter's, who 'howled, leaped, and raged in unendurable torture' (WJ 138). His reaction is so severe that the officer that is carrying out the flogging stops before he reaches a dozen lashings, but the Captain tells him to carry on. Afterwards, as he weeps with 'blood-shot eyes', Peter says 'I don't care what happens to me now [...] I have been flogged once, and they may do it again, if they will. Let them look for me now' (WJ 138). Peter's innocence is completely marred and there is nothing that he can return to. With each flogging, the tension increases, underlining the cruelty of flogging. Melville gives his readers a catalogue of different reactions towards flogging, echoing earlier examples of flogging written by some of his contemporaries.

Immediately after *White-Jacket's* flogging episodes, Melville gives his readers a long and extensive argument that challenges violent practices at sea. 'Some of the evil Effects of Flogging', 'Flogging not lawful', and 'Flogging not necessary' are subsequent chapters that serve to create a compelling argument against flogging.

Nonetheless, more than Melville's protest against flogging, Melville unveils a disturbing paradox about the constitutional rights of white America. Both the performance of violence and the subsequent argument advocate that even America's white citizens were not granted American liberty. Moreover, Melville, like some of his contemporaries, primarily uses the analogy between a sailor and a slave to accentuate a Naval issue that serves to destabilize the constitutional promises afforded to whites.

Undoubtedly, sailor flogging demonstrated the supremacy of whiteness. In *White*, Richard Dyer discusses whiteness and death and in the process of doing so, he presents whiteness as a not only a representative of death but also a bringer of death (Dyer 209). To support his contention, he uses the Ku Klux Klan and the Holocaust as examples. In both cases, he suggests that they bring death to non-white groups. Dyer points out that the Jews represent the intersection where the borders of white and non-white meet. According to Dyer, when whites brought death to the Jews, it was an attempt to demarcate the borders of racial whiteness and to prevent those borders from being sullied. Although the captains who practiced flogging were not necessarily bringers of death, they were bringers of violence that was intense and unjust. What is more, flogging was not restricted to non-whites. It did not establish the borders of whiteness as white sailors were being flogged too. This is what makes flogging a marker of white superiority. Like the question Lorraine Hansberry asks of the Holocaust, who else but whites could bring such violence to white seamen?

Nonetheless, as well as exhibiting whiteness' superiority, flogging represents a paradox and a failed American promise. How could citizens from a country founded on liberty and Justice for all treat its white crew members in this way? Moreover, ironically, the very things that Americans prided themselves upon were used to provide the rationale for oppressive captains to flog their crew. In the name of civility and

justice, Claret flogs his seamen. But the floggings in *White-Jacket* still seem unwarranted; they represent an obsession with power rather than a desire to maintain order. The narrator explains that Claret flogs the sailors for his pleasure, and on several occasions in *White-Jacket*, Claret refuses to listen to his sailors' accounts before he flogs them. Flogging, to Claret, becomes an uncontrollable obsession that he cannot tame. By dramatizing the flogging scene, Melville subverts an American Naval practice whilst also revealing some of the conceptual flaws of whiteness. Particularly, flogging demonstrated that white sailors were not created and treated equally.

To stress the injustice that flogging white sailors represents, over the course of the three chapters that follow *White-Jacket's* major flogging scenes, Melville primarily uses the analogy between sailor and slave. After the flogging takes place, the narrator says 'You see a human being, stripped like a slave; scourged worse than a hound. And for what? For things not essentially criminal, but only made so by arbitrary laws' (Melville 116). Here, Melville endorses the analogy between sailor and slave, as he compares a sailor being stripped to the way that slaves were. Later his narrator mentions the 'Chivalric Virginian, John Randolph of Roanoke', who declared that 'on board the American man-of-war that carried him out [as] Ambassador to Russia he had witnessed more flogging than had taken place on his own plantation of five hundred African slaves in ten years' (WJ 141). Once again the comparison is drawn upon to demonstrate the injustice of American sailors being treated like or worse than African slaves.

Melville's narrator makes it quite clear that being treated like a Chattel slave was something that an 'American' should never be subject to. He compares America to Rome and asks 'Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman? Asks the intrepid Apostle, well knowing, as a Roman citizen, that it was not. And now, eighteen hundred years after, is it lawful for you, my countrymen, to scourge a man that is an American?'

To scourge him round the world in your frigates?’ (WJ 142). He asks his ‘countrymen’ to contemplate whether American sailors ought to be scourged. Later he points out that the American ‘institutions claim to be based upon broad principles of political liberty and equality’ and yet an American sailor ‘shares none of civil immunities; the law of our soil in no respect accompanies the national floating timbers grown thereon, and to which he clings as his home. For him our revolution was in vain; to him our declaration of Independence is a lie’ (WJ 144).

Making the analogy between sailor and slave in order to oppose flogging at sea became customary. During the nineteenth century, the comparison between slave and sailor was often made, as slavery was a prevalent issue during the nineteenth century. With the growth in popularity of slave narratives, issues of enslavement abounded in American society. Matters of suffrage, religion, and America’s economy could not be interrogated without ideas of slavery or liberation being discussed. Therefore, the protesters’ decision to reference slavery during their campaign to end sailor flogging is not unexpected. The analogy was not used to present slaves as lower ranking sailors, but the comparison was used the other way around. Those who opposed flogging frequently compared sailors to slaves. For example, in 1850, an article appeared in the *New York Daily* that endorsed the relationship that had been created between sailor and slave. Legislators had managed to prohibit naval flogging on September 28, and this article was written soon after.

Henceforth, the backs of American freemen will no more be gashed and gored by the horrible ‘cat’ and ‘colt’ while they are exposing their lives and courting hardships in defence of the Starry Flag which would fain be held the symbol and stay of free and Equal Manhood. The stripes of that flag may henceforth be

imaged on the writhing backs of black slaves, but no longer on those of White Freeman.

The words of the article mitigate the severity of African American slavery in the United States by permitting the ‘stripes of the flag’ to remain on the backs of ‘black slaves’. The focus of the excerpt is the equality of ‘American freemen’ – meaning white men. The text suggests that the injustice of Naval flogging lies in the fact that ‘American freemen’ are risking their lives for the greater good of the United States and yet are subject to the ‘horrible ‘cat’ and ‘colt.’ More crucially, the text reveals a racial anxiety about being blackened.

This anxiety, if only temporary, was visible in a practical way. The nineteenth century was a time when so much was placed on external experience; the school of ethnography placed so many answers on the way people appeared. White skin during that period was placed at the top of a racial hierarchy. Therefore, the marring of white skin evokes a sense of tragedy and trauma. Leech remarks that the sailor loses all of his dignity, after he is whipped, adding to the fatality of white skin being flogged. Comparably, the lacerating of black skin was considered as less tragic because black skin is naturally dark. Therefore, the transformation from light to dark was not there.

The woodcut below appeared in an article detailing the savage treatment of slaves in Brazil. It was not uncommon for ailing slaves aboard slave ships to be thrown overboard, so that their capturers would avoid paying taxes on slaves that they could not make a profit on. The woodcut was initially published on 7 January 1832 in the *Liberator*, William Lloyd Garrison’s weekly abolitionist newspaper, and later found its way into other abolitionist publications. One of the most striking things about the image is the casual nature of the sailors sending the slaves to their death. Their faces are remorseless; the process appears very routine – find the sick, then throw them into the

sea. The sight of two Africans in the sea does not deter them from throwing the others overboard.

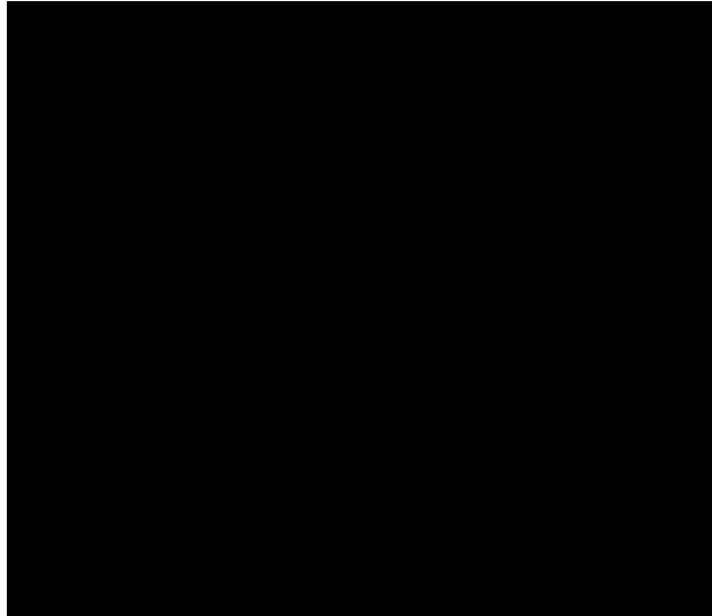


Figure 1. *Africans Thrown Overboard*

(*Liberator*, 1832 – *Shadows of the Slave Past*, p.78)

In comparison, William H. Meyers' *Punishment* illustrates flogging taking place on an American vessel (see figure 2). A white sailor is whipped, as fellow sailors and officers watch. One of the most significant differences between figure 1 and 2 is how much more of a spectacle the violence appears to be in figure 2. The crowd of onlookers in Meyer's *Punishment* is one of the most obvious differences, as no one appears to be watching at all. Although there were some slave narratives that referred to sizable crowds watching a flogging, the difference in these images is still significant. The sailor in the background of the previous image seems to be examining another slave, trying to determine whether he should remain on board. There are no crowds gathered to watch. The same, as Otter brings to our attention, could be said of George

Bourne's *Flogging American Women (1834)* and *Torturing American Citizens (1834)*, in both of his images depicting slave brutality, there are no onlookers. Additionally, in figure 1, a minimum of three slaves are being sent to their death, whereas in figure 2 the sailor is being whipped, and yet such a large audience gathers to watch. This disparity connotes how differently the lives of Africans and Europeans were viewed. The lives of African slaves were valued a lot less than European lives were. The flogging of Europeans was considered as more of an infringement, as Samuel Otter points out 'Meyer's image makes clear that the lash violates the integrity of the body' (Otter 69). When Europeans were victims of acts of violence, in many cases it was a spectacle, something to be seen – especially at sea, and this is evident in various images from the nineteenth century.

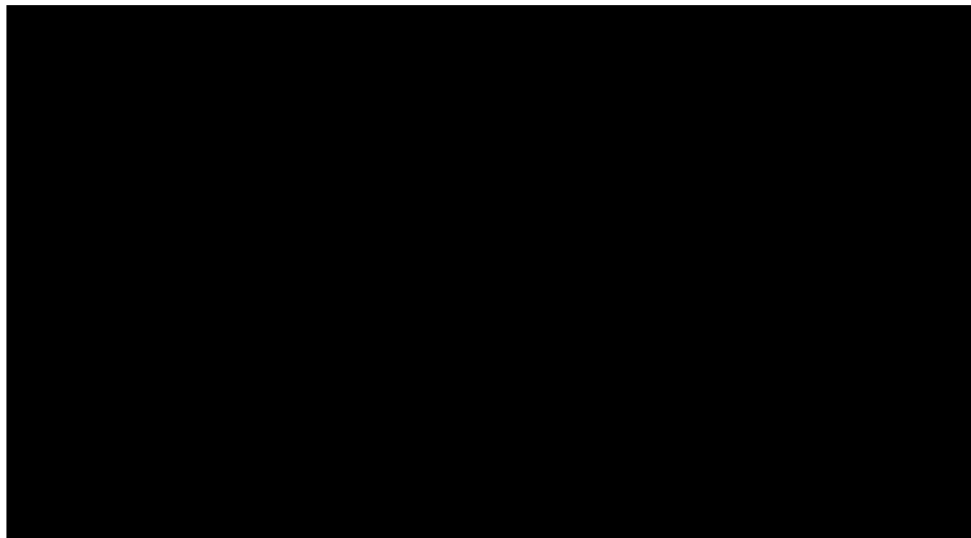


Figure 2. *Punishment* by William Myers (Courtesy of Bancroft Library)

The dramatic nature of beating white skin was at times captured in paintings. By returning to Figure 2 it is quite visible as to where the sailor has been beaten. The brutality has left its mark, creating visible lines on the sailor's back. Whereas, in

Bourne's illustrations of blacks being flogged the lines cannot be seen as visibly. The same can be said of an illustration that appeared in Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853). In the Derby and Miller publication there is an illustration entitled 'Scene in the Slave Pen at Washington', as the slave is crouched over, two men stand over him, one with a cat – the type of whip also used on sailors. However, unlike McNally's *Punishment*, the marks are not visible on the victim's back. This difference reifies how those opposed to naval flogging reacted to the procedure of white skin being beaten. To some, it was more outrageous, more of a violation because of the visible impact of white skin being lacerated.

Perhaps the best witnesses who viewed sailors' whiteness being marred were not white sailors. Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789) perfectly illustrates the perversity of witnessing a white body being flogged. What is so interesting about Equiano is that he lived as both a slave and a sailor, but more crucially he saw a sailor being beaten aboard a ship. He writes:

I then was a little revived, and thought, if it were no worse than working, my situation was not so desperate: but still I feared I should be put to death, the white people looked and acted, as I thought, in so savage a manner; for I had never seen among any people such instances of brutal cruelty; and this not only shewn towards us blacks, but also to some of the whites themselves. One white man in particular I saw, when we were permitted to be on deck, flogged so unmercifully with a large rope near the foremast that he died in consequence of it; and they tossed him over the side as they would have done a brute. This made me fear these people the more; and I expected nothing less than to be treated in the same manner.

Here, he witnesses a sailor being treated in a similar way that slaves were treated, and even sees the sailor being thrown to his death. Equiano is haunted by the fact that white people would do this to one another. He sees the promise of whiteness being broken before his very eyes. His observations are so provocative because he sees a white sailor, at that moment, being treated worse than he is. It is this intense violation of white liberty that is shown in *White-Jacket's* 'The Old Wagon Paid Off'.

'THE OLD WAGON PAID OFF': PERFORMING WHITE LIBERTY

Very little has been written on the literal enactment of melodrama that takes place in *White-Jacket*. Nonetheless, the two critics that have made the most substantial contributions, providing compelling arguments about how the scene ought to be read, are Mary Isbell and Alan Ackerman. Ackerman uses his reading of the theatrical production in *White-Jacket* to provide the context for his rereading of *Moby-Dick*. He suggests that the play works to lampoon life aboard the *Neversink*, and he argues that the performance reflects the Astor Place Riots. However, more importantly, Ackerman reads *White-Jacket's* indifference to the performance as a reflection of Melville's attitude towards the riots. On the other hand, Isbell uses Ackerman's argument as the foundation for her own, contending that the seaman's unbridled enthusiasm mirrored that of the rioters involved in the Astor Place disturbance.

Although both Ackerman and Isbell's arguments are convincing, I consider the absence of a discussion of the racial implications of the play aboard the *Neversink* and the Astor Place Riots as a weakness in both arguments. I go one step further than Ackerman by arguing that the brief theatre that takes place in *White-Jacket* is used by Melville to protest violations of sailor's rights, and I suggest that his protest is essentially a racial one because the content of the play deals with a liberty that is

racialized. Moreover, I disagree with Isbell; I do not perceive the crew's disturbance as Melville's way of critiquing the chaos that occurred as a result of the Astor Place Riots. I consider the crew's upheaval as Melville's inability to sophisticatedly use racial performance to subvert authority. I add that his handling of racial performance improves in later works without such an abrupt end. Moreover, finally, I consider White-Jacket's emotional detachment to be a representation of Melville's sense of helplessness after experiencing America's failed promises and a consequence of his being tied to two sides of the slave debate.

The theatrical performance is undoubtedly used in *White-Jacket* to protest the structure of power, and Melville demonstrates this in numerous ways. Firstly, Melville portrays Captain Claret as reluctant to allow his seamen to have a theatrical performance aboard the ship. Melville crafted Claret's reluctant reaction because in some of the sources that Melville referenced to create *White-Jacket* the authorities aboard the ships were not reluctant to allow crew members to hold performances. In 'Aquatic Theatricals', in *Life-in-a-Man-of-War*, the play performed is received differently by the authorities. The play takes place on the quarter-deck of the *Constitution* in Callao, Peru and it seems to be something that the entire crew has planned. Before the *Constitution* embarks upon its journey, the narrator explains that the sailors are already planning their performance of 'Damon and Pythias and the afterpiece of Lying Valet' (Mercier 119). It does not seem apparent that the governing officers aboard the *Constitution* are reluctant or have any control over the performance. In fact, the narrator notes that there were many officers in attendance who wanted to watch the performance. Ultimately, the performance seems to be something that the crew independently decide to do, and once the ship is harboured, they put on a performance for the entire crew, officers included.

This is significantly different to the way that Claret reacts to the performance that takes place in *White-Jacket*. The performance of ‘The Old Wagon is Paid Off’ is met with Claret’s unwillingness. Melville deliberately illustrates the crew asking Claret to perform in the same location on the ship as the crew do in ‘Aquatic Theatricals’. However, when the *Neversink* is harboured in Peru and the crew ask for Claret’s permission to perform, Claret refuses. The crew ask for permission to present a play entitled ‘Ruffian Boy’, a play that the seamen were permitted to play in the *Life-in-a-Man-of-War*. However, Claret had refused, stating that ‘there were enough ruffian boys on board’ (WJ 91). Moreover, Melville’s narrator explains that members of the crew had been asking Claret to perform a theatrical production for three years and ‘had clubbed together, and made up a considerable purse, for the purpose of purchasing a theatrical outfit’ (WJ 90). Again, Melville’s decision to portray Claret this way, through the details involving ‘The Old Wagon Paid Off’, serves to intensify Claret’s control. Rather than wait three years to perform, Henry James Mercier comments that the crew perform ‘to gratify their three years’ associates’ (Mercier 118). Aboard the *Constitution*, the theatrics dispel ‘the dull monotony by which’ they are surrounded (118). Contrastingly, Claret seems overtly authoritarian, forbidding his crew to do things that other captains would let their crew do. It is clear how Melville uses Mercier’s text to exemplify control aboard the *Neversink*.

Nonetheless, Claret eventually allows his crew to perform. However, the eventual performance is dependent upon several qualifying circumstances rather than Claret’s permission. As the *Neversink* approaches the ‘frigid latitudes’ of Cape Horn it is almost the fourth of July, a day that carries a Carnavalesque type of atmosphere. On this American holiday, the men aboard the *Neversink* are permitted to engage in ‘the same muddy trough of drunkenness’ and ‘scenes ensue which would not for a single

instant be tolerated by the officers upon any other occasion' (WJ 89). Nonetheless, as a result of a 'grog' shortage and the severe weather conditions that were a result of coming into close proximity with Cape Horn, Claret announces, three days before Independence Day, that 'free permission was given to the sailors to get up any sort of theatricals they desired, wherewith to honour the Fourth' (WJ 90). Thus, the crew are only allowed to perform 'The Old Wagon is Paid Off' after extenuating circumstances were recognised by Claret.

Moreover, Claret censors the play before it is performed. This detail is not included in *Life-in-A-Man of War*, but Claret requests to read the script for the play before the play is performed. After Lemsford, the gun-deck poet, has drafted the play, Claret demands to see it. The narrator explains:

Nor must it be omitted that, before the bill was placarded, Captain Claret, enacting the part of censor and grand chamberlain, ran over a manuscript copy of *The Old Wagon Paid Off*, to see whether it contained anything calculated to breed disaffection against lawful authority among the crew. He objected to some parts, but in the end let them all pass. (93)

Again, Melville emphasises that this play takes place within the confines of Claret's control. As well as being reluctant, Claret must control the play when it is performed, by monitoring the play's content. In subsequent chapters of this thesis, I show how this aspect of the theatrical performance in *White-Jacket* is foundational because the performance that we witness in texts such as *Benito Cereno* and *The Confidence-Man* are not as controlled as the performances in *White-Jacket* are.

Claret, then, becomes a symbol of authority that rejects, resists, and controls performance. This tension works to heighten the importance of performance in the play;

the crew can only perform because they are out of 'grog', near Cape Horn, and it is almost Independence Day. When the theatrical performance is read in the context of the circumstances that eventually lead to it, the performance becomes a privilege for the seamen aboard the *Neversink*. When *Life-in-a-Man-of-War* is juxtaposed with *White-Jacket*, the circumstances that allow the performance to take place seem deliberate and strategic. Moreover, Claret's reluctance makes the theatrical performance even more significant. I consider the play to work in opposition to Claret's control. It is both censored and put off for several years by him, but this only serves to make the play more important. The content of the play also serves to oppose the authority aboard the ship, not just any authority but a white authority.

Specifically, I read the play as Melville's way of directly protesting violations experienced at sea. These violations surpass Claret's reluctance to allow the crew to perform or a shortage of 'grog' aboard the *Neversink*. Claret is clearly a tyrannical captain who is abusive towards his crew. Perhaps the cruellest thing that takes place in *White-Jacket* is sailor flogging, an inhuman practice that was prevalent during the nineteenth century. Melville spends four chapters in *White-Jacket* describing what is considered to be one of the most extensive literary treatments of flogging in the American canon. Remarkably, Melville's *White-Jacket* had even been used to publicly challenge flogging, as an intense debate on flogging was taking place during *White-Jacket's* publication. However, very few discussions have taken place about the ways that Melville's treatment of flogging is clearly racialized. He spends four chapters detailing and protesting the flogging of several white sailors. However, when the black cooks are flogged, Melville describes their flogging in four words 'the negroes were flogged' (WJ 276). Though never made explicit, race clearly impacts one of the most significant aspects of Melville's first book of the 1850s.

The racial significance of flogging is also demonstrated in the ways that individuals who opposed flogging tried to use race as a way to explain why it was wrong. To some, flogging was a way of turning white sailors into slaves or removing their civil liberties. Thus, many who opposed it were reliant on analogies that compared sailor flogging to chattel slavery. We witness this in the work of Melville's contemporaries but also in *White-Jacket*, as one of the victims therein falls into a deep depression after being flogged, and the thing that haunts him the most is this sense of being made to feel like a slave. Therefore, race is a significant aspect of the way that liberty is considered aboard the *Neversink*. This definition is not only fixed to the ship. The way that liberty was defined in America was also very racial, as all of the country's citizens were not granted freedom and equality.

I consider the play in relation to this racial definition of liberty. The play is Melville's way of protesting violations of the sailor's rights not only because the play is controlled, and Claret is reluctant to let the seamen have a play, but also because the content of the actual play concerns liberty. Melville does not describe the content of the play in great detail, but he does give his readers two things. Firstly, we are given a playbill.

CAPE HORN THEATRE

* * * * *

Grand Celebration of the Fourth of July.

DAY PERFORMANCE.

UNCOMMON ATTRACTION.

THE OLD WAGON PAID OFF!

JACK CHASE. . . . PERCY ROYAL-MAST.

STARS OF THE FIRST MAGNITUDE.

For this time only.

THE TRUE YANKEE SAILOR.

The managers of the Cape Horn Theatre beg leave to inform

the inhabitants of the Pacific and Southern Oceans that, on the afternoon of the Fourth of July, 184-- , they will have the honour to present the admired drama of

THE OLD WAGON PAID OFF!

Commodore Bougee _Tom Brown, of the Fore-top_
 Captain Spy-glass _Ned Brace, of the After-Guard_
 Commodore's Cockswain. . . _Joe Bunk, of the Launch_
 Old Luff _Quarter-master Coffin_
 Mayor _Seafull, of the Forecastle_
 PERCY ROYAL-MAST JACK CHASE.
 Mrs. Lovelorn _Long-locks, of the After-Guard_
 Toddy Moll _Frank Jones_
 Gin and Sugar Sall. . . . _Dick Dash_.

Sailors, Mariners, Bar-keepers, Crimps, Aldermen,
 Police-officer's, Soldiers, Landsmen generally.

* * * * *

Long live the Commodore! :: Admission Free.

* * * * *

To conclude with the much-admired song by Dibdin,
 altered to suit all American Tars, entitled

THE TRUE YANKEE SAILOR.

True Yankee Sailor (in costume), Patrick Flinegan,
 Captain of the Head.

Performance to commence with 'Hail Columbia', by the Brass Band. Ensign rises at three bells, P.M. No sailor permitted to enter in his shirt-sleeves. Good order is expected to be maintained. The Master-at-arms and Ship's Corporals to be in attendance to keep the peace

Of the playbill, Melville's narrator says, 'Accordingly, on the very next morning after the indulgence had been granted by the Captain, the following written placard, presenting a broadside of staring capitals, was found tacked against the main-mast on the gun-deck. It was as if a Drury-Lane bill had been posted upon the London Monument' (WJ 91). The second item of content is when Melville's narrator describes a scene in the play. White-Jacket explains, 'At length, when that heart-thrilling scene came on, where Percy Royal-Mast rescues fifteen oppressed sailors from the watch-house, in the teeth of a posse of constables' (WJ 94). This is significant because it describes Percy Royal- Mast rescuing the rest of the crew from authority. However,

this is all that we are told about the play. Despite the limited description of the play's content, I consider it to be racialized. Although there is no mention of race in the small description about the play, race is a factor because race is significant on the ship. The definition of liberty that the sailors enact is clearly a white definition of liberty which had been in effect for centuries. In *The Invention of the White Race* (2012), Theodore W. Allen articulates how whiteness became so closely linked to the concept of liberty. Allen writes, 'The solution was to establish a new birthright not only for Anglos but for every Euro-American, the "white" identity that "set them at a distance"' (Allen 248). He goes on to suggest that Anglos achieved this distance by primarily differentiating themselves from 'African Americans, and enlisted them [white people] as active, or at least passive, supporters of lifetime bondage of African Americans' (248). This characteristic of whiteness meant that the idea of freedom was closely linked to whiteness and it was what made even 'the agricultural European American bond-servants, whose condition in some respects was not much removed from that of actual slavery' (248). In the context of the *Neversink*, what distinguishes black sailor from white sailor is liberty. However, as the rights of both black and white sailors are being abused, there is nothing that the white sailors have to distinguish themselves from the black sailors.

This is why the play in *White-Jacket* is so important. The crew wait for years before they can perform it, and White-Jacket cannot understand why the sailors are so eager to perform it. However, when we consider liberty's close relationship to the way that whiteness is defined, the sailors' motive to perform a play that includes a group being rescued from the 'teeth of a posse of constables' seems clear. Thus, what takes place is a white version of freedom that Melville tactfully includes in *White-Jacket*. Interestingly, despite the black cooks' earlier performances, they are not selected to be

in the play. Only the white members of the crew participate in the play. Crucially, the white sailors perform this whiteness and are desperate to perform liberty because they cannot acquire it in reality. The closest they come to liberty is a play that they enact several days before Independence Day, and as the play is considered a privilege and has no black actors included, the theatrical performance represents a diluted form of freedom.

What is more, I consider the performance to represent what Gwendolyn A. Foster refers to as ‘performing the “good” white’. Foster describes this process of enacting the good white as a way of stabilizing whiteness. Because whiteness is normative, performances of whiteness work to represent normativity rather than being confined to fixed characteristics in the same way that theatrical representations of the ‘other’ are. For example, as Foster points out, performances that represent blackness are often considered as ‘the problem’. In the case of the minstrel show, many black characters were confined to fixed representations – buffoons, hapless fools, oversexed beings. On the *Neversink*, whiteness is not normative because the white sailors are consistently being subjected to cruelty. Thus, by enacting a play about white liberty, the white sailors are also attempting to deracialize whiteness.

What makes this performance even more powerful is Jack Chase’s part in the show. He is an admired member of the crew and plays the protagonist in the theatrical performance. It is fitting that Chase is made to play the main character in a play about liberty because he represents liberty aboard the ship. He is a sailor but has privileges that the others do not have. He is described as an advocate for the ‘Rights of man’ and White-Jacket explicitly links Chase to liberty, referring to Chase as a ‘stickler for [...] the liberties of the world’ (WJ 17). In the narrative, Chase deserts the ship and is never reprimanded for it. Thus, the crew view him as a hero, and this heroism relates to the

liberties that he is granted with. His role in the play is significant, and he represents the possibility of being free aboard the *Neversink*.

Aside from liberty contributing to the racialization of the play, the audience's reaction to an Irish sailor playing the part of True Yankee also racializes the performance. The play is eventually interrupted by a black squall, forcing the performance to end. However, rather than direct their anger towards the elements many crew members are frustrated that Irish sailor Patrick Flinegan plays the part of 'True Yankee Sailor'. Once the play ends, White-Jacket explains that 'the sailors never recovered from the disappointment of not having the "True Yankee Sailor" sung by the Irish Captain of the Head' (WJ 95). I read this in racial terms. As Noel Ignatiev points out in *How the Irish Became White*, Irish immigrants had to go through a process of becoming white, and they experienced racism at the hands of other European groups who had already settled in America. I read the crew's disappointment as an instance that demonstrates Melville's irony, but this moment in *White-Jacket* also has racial significance.

Immediately after this short scene, White-Jacket explains 'the audience leaped to their feet, overturned the capstan bars, and to a man hurled their hats on the stage in a delirium of delight. Ah Jack, that was a ten-stroke indeed!' (WJ 94). Isbell reads the short performance as Melville's way of expressing his displeasure with the ineffective ways that Americans protested. I say Americans and not only white sailors because both Isbell and Ackerman use this scene to make a connection with the Astor Place Riots. They read the audience's reaction as a reflection of the angry crowds that participated in the Astor Place Riots. I do not read the audience's reaction in this way; I think their reaction represents their inability to enact a form of white liberty. Soon after the commotion caused by Chase's performance, Claret and the lieutenants aboard the ship

put an end to the 'delirium of delight'. However, again, I do not perceive this performance as pointless; it works rather as a short protest.

Isbell also interprets *White-Jacket's* detachment from the play as a reflection of Melville's attitude to the Astor Place Riots. Although this argument is interesting, I perceive this detachment as a reflection of Melville's helplessness rather than his displeasure, and when considered in the context of race, this sense of helplessness has come as the result of his experience of America's failed promises to the white sailors aboard the *Neversink*. This was something that Melville witnessed first-hand, as he went to sea and experienced tyrannical captains personally. In *Typee*, a narrative based on Melville's experience, his protagonist flees from the tyrannical Vangs, and some critics suggest that Melville left his crew for the Marquesas because he was also a victim of tyranny.

In examining, the play in *White-Jacket*, critics should not abandon the importance of race. Even in the Astor Place Riots, race is still important. Although referring to film, Michael Rogin points out, 'When American film takes its leaps forward, it returns to its buried origins. Then it exposes the cinematic foundations of American freedom in American Slavery' (16). This is also demonstrative in the Astor Place Riots, race and the tension that is caused by transatlantic culture worked to fuel the conflict. Thus, these comparisons can be developed by considering race, and Isbell and Ackerman do not consider race in when they are treating the relevance of this riot in relation to *White-Jacket*.

CONCLUSION

The performances in *White-Jacket* are very important and mark the beginning of a relationship of racial performance over several Melville texts. The treatment of racial

performance in Melville's black characters only floats over the text, and Melville spends more time developing performances of blackness in his later work. Nonetheless, Melville's inclusion of the St. Domingo melodies, and the ways that White-Jacket marvels at them, should not be overlooked. Even at this formative stage, the black characters are considered as superior performers. White-Jacket both marvels at them and is crucially bewildered by the ways that they perform, the ways that they use music to outlast their masters.

Melville shows very little sympathy for the black characters at this stage. They are flogged, and there is very little consideration given to them as compared to the attention he gives to the white sailors who also suffer this fate. However, by *Benito Cereno*, although the narrative is not as sentimental as Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the narrative and the Senegalese' slave's performances work to, at the very least, demonstrate the importance of social justice for all. This sense is also evident in the Black Guinea from *The Confidence-Man*; his racial performance powerfully creates questions concerning race, and they are questions that provocatively interrogate the characters as well as the reader.

The racial performances carried out by the black characters in Melville's work clearly reflect minstrelsy. Minstrelsy is evident in the ways that the cooks use song to deal with their harsh reality. Minstrelsy is also evident in Rose-Water's rejection of the negro songbook. It is difficult to ignore the significance of this trope, and it heightens suspicions of racial performance in the text because it offers insight into the double consciousness of Rose-Water. On the surface, he performs with the rest of the crew, but reveals to Melville's protagonist that he might not be as fond of his performative nature as the seaman might think.

Nonetheless, whereas Melville's treatment of racial performance in *White-Jacket* is slight in relation to the black characters, the performance of whiteness in the narrative is very important, as it represents a protest against the sailor's civil liberties being taken away. Melville makes it clear to his readers that the sailors aboard the *Neversink* are being mistreated. He gives us a thorough treatment on sailor flogging that lasts for four chapters, and as Parker notes, these four chapters were used to condemn sailor flogging publicly. Melville perceived flogging as a direct violation of the American Declaration of Independence, which is why he spends a substantial amount of time in the narrative making a case that demonstrates why flogging at sea is unjust.

'The Old Wagon Paid Off' does have racial significance because the play is about liberty, and liberty is defined aboard the *Neversink* in racial terms. Melville extensively handles the flogging of white sailors but offers four words when the black cooks are flogged. Thus, if the definition of white liberty is clearly evident in the text, and melodrama deals with liberty, race ought to be a part of the analysis. Nonetheless, there are aspects of the play that clearly delineate racial significance. For example, this disappointment of the Irish man playing the 'True Yankee Sailor'. This reaction certainly has racial connotations.

This play is foundational because it marks the beginning of forms of performances of whiteness that we find in Melville's work. This performance is described in a few lines in *White-Jacket* and is abruptly made short by Claret and the black squall, but in Melville's later works, we witness performances of whiteness play out over a longer period of time. For example, in *Benito Cereno*, Cereno's performance plays out until the end of the novella. Moreover, whereas the production of the play is controlled by Claret, the later performances are violently uncontrollable. The later

performances are not censored. Clearly, *White-Jacket* is foundational and works as a precursor to the racial performances of whiteness that can be found in Melville's work.

TWO

THE PURSUIT OF WHITENESS: PERFORMING RACE ABOARD THE *PEQUOD*

We need studies that analyse the strategic use of black characters to define the goals and enhance the qualities of white characters. Such studies will reveal the process of establishing others in order to know them, to display knowledge of the other so as to ease and to order external and internal chaos

-Toni Morrison, *Playing In The Dark*

This chapter concentrates on Melville's second publication of the 1850s, *Moby-Dick* (1851). I will interrogate the racial connotations of the narrative as well as the way that race is performed. Providing a backdrop for my argument, the chapter begins with an examination of the ambiguity of America's founding documents. I place a particular emphasis on the Declaration of Independence, surveying the ways that the document's definition of equality was interpreted differently between abolitionists and apologists during the 1850s. This examination informs my exploration of race in *Moby-Dick*. Primarily, I consider the racial allegory inherent in *Moby-Dick*. Next, I move my analysis further by exploring the ways that America's Constitutional crisis is allegorized. Thereafter, I examine some of the most important episodes of racial performance in *Moby-Dick*. To end the chapter, I point out that the narrative reflects an important stage in America's history that occurred as a result of the mounting tensions around race and slavery. Precisely, in this chapter, I inquire: In what ways was the definition of human equality ambiguous in the American Declaration of Independence? How does *Moby-Dick*'s ambiguity reflect that ambiguous definition of human liberty found in America's founding documents? What are the racial implications of Ahab's

mission aboard the *Pequod*? How does this performance of race relate to other texts? Lastly, how does this reading of *Moby-Dick* relate to the developing national and ethical dilemmas in the 1850s?

Separated into five sections, this chapter is a close reading of racial performance in *Moby-Dick*. First, I investigate how ambiguous the founding document's definition of slavery was in a society that practiced slavery. Moreover, I examine the ways that the Declaration of Independence was used by both abolitionists and apologists to support their positions around slavery. Second, I explore the ways that the whale's whiteness creates a level of ambiguity that is similar to the obscurity created by America's founding documents. To do so, I examine the chapter 'The Whiteness of the Whale'. As well as analysing Ishmael's discussions of *Moby-Dick*'s colour, I also point out the ways that race is also a part of Ishmael's consideration. Third, I begin my discussion of racial performance by discussing some of the ways that Queequeg reflects the minstrel tradition. However, in the fourth section, I move my attention towards one of the most explicit episodes of racial performance in *Moby-Dick*: Fleece's sermon to the sharks. Fifth, my analysis moves to Pippin, or Pip as he is more frequently referred to. I shall point out the ways that Pip's performance of race functions in the face of *Moby-Dick*'s mystery. I will also point out the ways that this provocative portrayal shows how Melville develops his ideas around race. Finally, I look at the ways that *Moby-Dick* demonstrates Melville's development of race.

RACIAL POLITICAL ALLEGORY ABOARD THE *PEQUOD*

Undoubtedly, *Moby-Dick* allegorizes America's political landscape. Both Ahab and his crew are more than literary characters. In many ways, they signify American democracy. Moreover, the political allegory evident in *Moby-Dick* does not avoid or circumvent race or slavery. Within the hierarchical structure that operates on the

Pequod, race is significant. Melville's inclusion of racial political allegory compliments and strengthens the racial significance of Ahab's desire to capture the white whale. Below, I examine the racial political allegory of *Moby-Dick* to highlight that race is an important theme in the narrative.

Melville had not been inclined towards politics, especially racial politics, in his earlier works. However, as race was becoming more and more significant in the 1850s, it was difficult for Melville to ignore the subject when he was working on *Moby-Dick*, and there are several aspects of the narrative that capture the tension that was taking place at the time. Firstly, the American whaling ship, the *Pequod* works to symbolize the Union. In 'Knights and Squires', we are given a description of the crew aboard the *Pequod*. The narrator explains, 'They were nearly all Islanders in the *Pequod*, Isolatoes too, I call such, not acknowledging the common continent of men, but each Isolato living on a separate continent of his own. Yet now, federated along one keel, what a set these Isolatoes were! An Anacharsis Cloutz deputation from all the isles of the sea, and all the ends of the earth' (MD 121). Here, we are given a description of the vast array of cultures on the whaling ship. The obvious diversity reflects that of American society.

However, more than the crew's diversity, Melville also subtly makes the crew reflect the Union. Examining *Moby-Dick* as a political allegory has occupied a significant portion of Melville criticism. Earlier works written by critics such as Henry Nash Smith, Charles Foster, and Alan Heimart have drawn our attention to the narrative's political symbolism. Melville described Isolatoes as 'federated along one keel' (MD 121). This is an allusion to the Union because the States were adamant that they maintain a level of freedom despite being a part of the Union. This caused tension when America's founding documents were being ratified. States such as New York and Virginia were hesitant to approve the Constitution because they were unsure of whether

a federal government would infringe upon individual and State liberties. Thus, despite the eventual approval of the Constitution, states were unified and also separate. This fundamental principle was evident during the Compromise of 1850 when Calhoun made a firm stand against abolition by fighting for the individual right of the state at the cost of the Union. In an effort to defend slave states, he declared “‘Union, Union, the glorious Union” can no more prevent disunion than the cry of “Health, health, glorious health!” on the part of the physician can save a patient lying dangerously ill’ (qtd. In Nigel 248). Here, Calhoun elevates the individuality of the State over the harmony of the Union. For that reason, Melville’s decision to describe the crew as Isolatoes is another way that Melville connects the *Pequod* with American society.

Nonetheless, Melville explicitly links the *Pequod* to the Union by explaining that there was a thirty-man crew aboard the *Pequod*. Towards the end of the novel, in ‘The Chase – Second Day’, we are informed:

They were one man, not thirty. For as the one ship that held them all; though it was put together of all contrasting things—oak, and maple, and pine wood; iron, and pitch, and hemp—yet all these ran into each other in the one concrete hull, which shot on its way, both balanced and directed by the long central keel; even so, all the individualities of the crew, this man’s valour, that man’s fear; guilt and guiltiness, all varieties were welded into oneness, and were all directed to that fatal goal which Ahab their one lord and keel did point to.

Here, we are told that the crew is comprised of thirty men but also that this thirty-man crew is bound together as one. At the time that Melville was penning *Moby-Dick*, thirty states made up the Union, and as Heimert notes, the term ‘Ship of State’ was used as a metaphor in American politics to refer to America (Heimert 500). This detail certainly

ties the *Pequod* to the Union. Additionally, it is evident that the ship itself also reflects the crew, compiled of different materials and brought together by one 'keel' (MD 121).

The way the *Pequod* is run also symbolizes American society. Despite the diversity aboard the *Pequod*, there is a very clear racial structure aboard the whaling ship. This is a hierarchy that mirrors white hegemonic culture. Ahab, the white captain, commands the crew, but his first, second and third mate are all white, and the harpooners are people of colour. In a very practical way, the ship's operational system reinforces racial hierarchies because Ahab and his seamen function as part of a power system that places people of colour in the more menial or dangerous jobs and white members of the crew in positions of power. Heimert goes as far as to suggest that the harpooners represent the three races that America was built upon (Heimert 502). Even Pip, the young African American crew member, does not escape this racial hierarchy, and although Pip is eventually consoled by Ahab when Pip turns mad, there are instances in the novel that clearly expose the racial hierarchy aboard the *Pequod*. Race influences the power system on the ship. Moreover, given the prevalence of slavery in the South during 1850s and the limited opportunities in the North despite there being free states, the way that the *Pequod* is run also mirrors American society.

Moreover, as the harpooners are all people of colour, there is a crucial correlation between shipboard and plantation activity. The harpooners must engage in the most dangerous aspect of whaling, as they are the first to make contact with the whale. Though Ahab's monomania puts the entire crew in danger, the harpooners are the ones who are most at risk. Moreover, they are the ones who fuel the whaling economy. Understood in this way, the harpooner and slave have much in common, as slaves powered a significant part of America's economy through their labour on plantations. This connection is illuminated by some of the pictures taken on plantations,

and some of the illustrations that have been produced of *Moby-Dick*. Obviously, there are distinct differences between a harpoon and the tools used on a plantation. Most crucially, harpoons are weapons that are thrown, and the tools that were used in slavery generally, were not the same. Nonetheless, some of the poses are similar. Below, the first image, the well-known ‘Planting Sweet Potatoes’ taken of John Hopkinson’s plantation, in South Carolina in 1862, depicts slaves working in a fields using a hand tool called a hoe; the second, an 1858 engraving of slaves working on a sugar plantation; and the third picture is taken from a Mead Shaeffer illustrated version of *Moby-Dick*. The illustration shows Queequeg with a harpoon in hand.

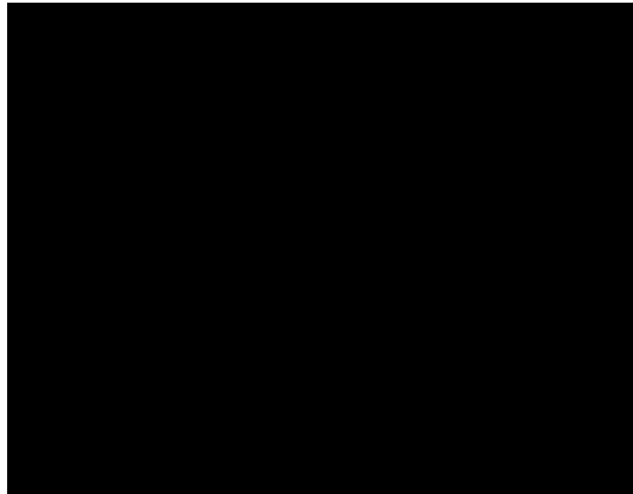


Figure 3. *Plantation Planting Sweet Potatoes* by James Hopkinson. (1862)
(New York Historical Society; from American Social History Project, *Freedom's
Unfinished Revolution* (New Press, 1996), p. 154)

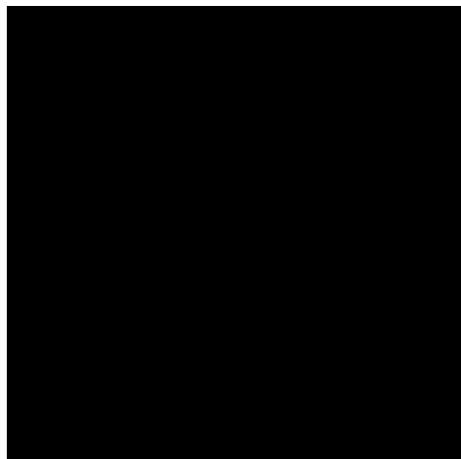


Figure 4 – *Sugar Cane Fields*

(From Edmund Ollier's 'Cassell's History of the United States')

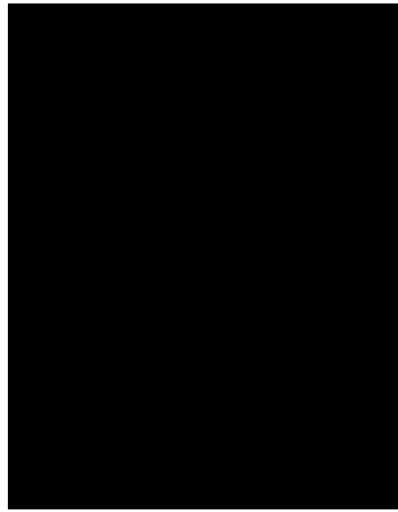


Figure 5 – *Queequeg* by Mead Schaeffer (1923)

(*Moby Dick* or *The White Whale*, First edition: Dodd Mead. P.540)

The first picture would have been familiar in the 1850s as it depicts an American plantation. Although their tools are different to a harpoon, the way that the hoe is held is similar to that of holding a harpoon; the second and last image bear a striking resemblance. The way that Queequeg is depicted in this 1923 illustration is reminiscent of the ways that the slaves are portrayed working on the sugar cane plantation. This connection seems more plausible after considering how Melville felt as he was writing *Moby-Dick*. In a letter that he wrote to his brother Duyckink, it was clear that Melville was viewing his life in America as if he were at sea. Melville explained, 'My room seems ship's cabin; & at nights when I wake up & hear the wind shrieking, I almost fancy there is too much sail on the house, & I had better go on the roof & rig in the chimney' (L 70). It is plausible that he saw slaves and saw them as harpooners at sea. This demonstrates the sea ship allegory. Thus, the iconography of slavery subtly

influences Melville's work. This is only reinforced by the racial hierarchy aboard the *Pequod* that is illuminated by several scenes in *Moby-Dick*.

There is no scene that exemplifies the racial hierarchical structure more than the one found in 'The First Lowering'. Flask is unsatisfied with the view from the 'logger head stand-point' in his boat, so Daggoo allows Flask to climb onto his back. The narrator explains:

Flask mounted upon gigantic Daggoo was yet more curious; for sustaining himself with a cool, indifferent, easy, unthought of, barbaric majesty, the noble negro to every roll of the sea harmoniously rolled his fine form. On his broad back, flaxen-haired Flask seemed a snow-flake. The bearer looked nobler than the rider. Though truly vivacious, tumultuous, ostentatious little Flask would now and then stamp with impatience; but not one added heave did he thereby give to the negro's lordly chest. So have I seen Passion and Vanity stamping the living magnanimous earth, but the earth did not alter her tides and her seasons for that. (MD 221)

We are made aware of the obvious racial significance here as the narrator tells us that Flask appeared as a 'snow-flake' upon Daggoo's broad shoulders. The imagery captures the racial hierarchy aboard the *Pequod* in a very practical way. Flask, a third mate, nicknamed 'Little King Post' is propped up by the gigantic Daggoo. Again, such imagery is evocative of slavery. Heimert was perhaps the earliest critic to read this scene as a representation of slavery in America during the nineteenth century. Heimert argued that Flask perched on Daggoo's shoulders 'seems like the southern economy itself, sustained only by the strength of the "imperial negro"' (Heimert 502). In Louis Maurer's well-known "The Rail Candidate" from 1860, the cartoon comically exhibits

the way that Abraham Lincoln straddled the line between abolition and proslavery during his presidential campaign. At the front, a slave carries Lincoln and at the back, Horace Greeley, an abolitionist.

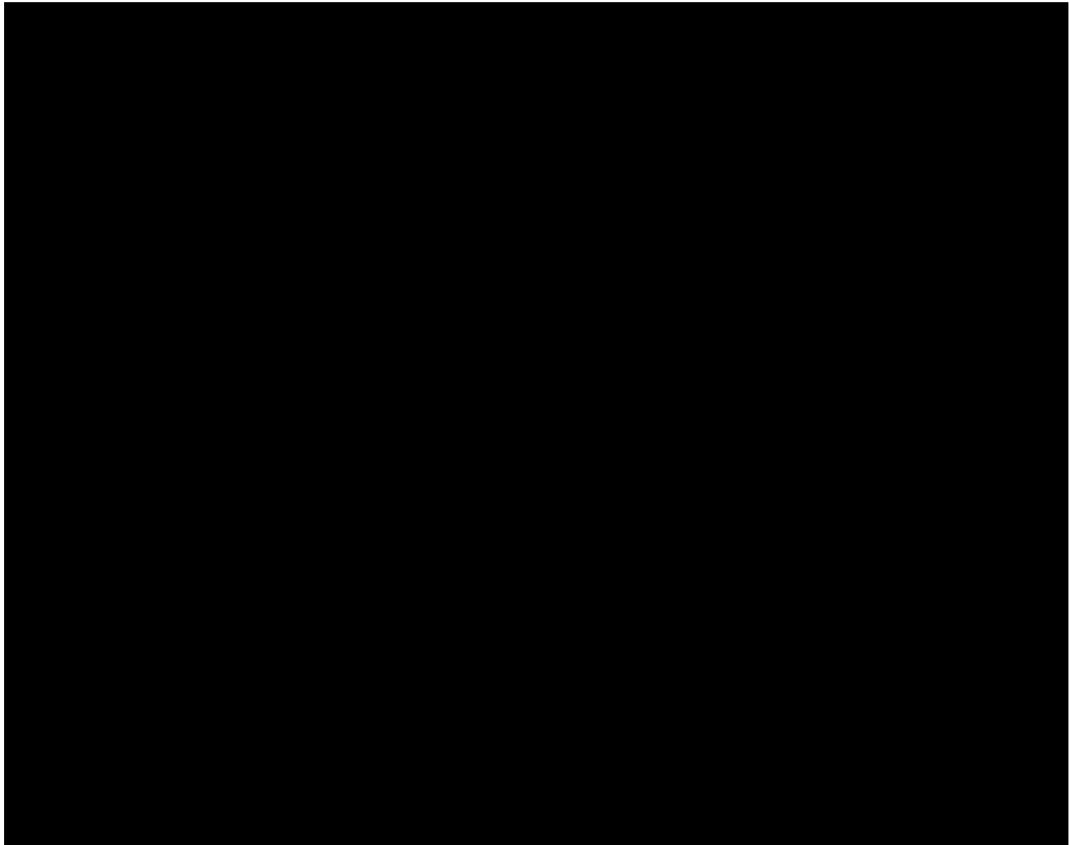


Figure 6 – *The Rail Candidate* by Louis Maurer (1860)
(Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution)

Thus, the imagery of Daggoo carrying Flask was not foreign to American society during the 1850s, and some even played on the imagery.

Certainly, race is significant and thematic in *Moby-Dick*. Through characters and imagery, we are made aware of the importance of race in the narrative. When race is considered in the narrative, Ahab's quest and failure to succeed carry racial connotations. By reading the whale as a location of meaning, Ahab's mission is very much an existential one, and given the importance of race aboard the ship, his mission also has racial significance. Ahab's mission mirrors a country trying to interpret their

founding documents and trying to solve its racial problems. Thus, when Ahab fails, the book more closely reflects an America on its way to a civil war.

ALLEGORIZING AMERICA'S CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

In addition to the political allegory inherent in *Moby-Dick*, the narrative works to dramatize the American constitutional crisis that was taking place during the nineteenth century. The power system present aboard the *Pequod* and elements of race and slavery reflect race and the hierarchical structure that was prevalent in American society. Nonetheless, particularly through the ambiguity of *Moby-Dick*'s whiteness and Ahab's monomania, the narrative also works to capture the problems caused by America's founding documents.

Critics have wrestled with the ambiguity of *Moby-Dick* since its publication. Ahab's monomaniacal quest is enigmatic and complex because his motive to capture *Moby-Dick* is, at times in novel, unclear. Furthermore, there is no aspect of *Moby-Dick* more perplexing than *Moby-Dick*'s whiteness. However, the ambiguity of *Moby-Dick*'s whiteness manages to allegorize the ambiguity of America's founding documents, primarily because it causes blankness that resists interpretation. Despite the emphasis on human liberty evident in America's founding documents, Americans struggled to implement equality in their society during the nineteenth century. Moreover, the 1850s became a time when tension around the concept of human liberty reached a crisis. Conflict over slavery was controlled. However, by the decade before the Civil War, the growing hostility between abolitionist and proslavery advocates became uncontrollable.

Beginning in 1764 and continuing up until 1791, several documents were created to establish America's founding principles. Among them, the Declaration of

Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, documents that would become central to America's political philosophy. As well as being foundational to America's government, these documents, in particular, cemented human liberty as a central principle of American society. Divided into three parts, the Declaration of Independence was the first document drafted, in 1776, and it helped the early colonies establish independent states. The Declaration of Independence outlined how American government ought to be run, and it also condemned British tyranny and declared freedom from it.

Just over a decade later, in 1787, the Constitution was created. With the intention of replacing the Articles of Confederation (1777), the United States Constitution complimented the Declaration of Independence by developing a federal government that recognized the independence of the states. The judicial, legislative, and executive branches of government were created to regulate and balance power. George Washington was the first constitutional president who was elected to the executive branch.

Following, in response to concerns that arose in regard to the Constitution, in 1789 the Bill of Rights was created by James Madison. Initially, Madison attempted to make direct changes to the Constitution itself. However, after facing objections from some his contemporaries, he wrote a list of amendments to the Constitution that would eventually become the Bill of Rights. The Amendments were sent to the House, Senate, and eventually the states to vote on. What had originally been seventeen Amendments would eventually be narrowed down to ten that would accompany the United States Constitution.

The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights would historically become considered as America's founding documents. Moreover, the concept of human liberty was central to these documents. Although individuals such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams may have shared a mutual understanding about what freedom in America ought to mean, defining, or rather upholding, the concept of freedom would prove to be very difficult. In particular, slavery made the concept of liberty difficult to uphold. The Founding Fathers were faced with the challenging task of defining liberty in a nation that practiced chattel slavery. Moreover, the Declaration of Independence was used to formally sever ties with British tyranny, and yet, despite opposing monarchical oppression, many early settlers still practiced slavery. As well as this paradox, the abolition of slavery in England took place before it did in America. Thus, the issue of liberty in a country that had just declared independence but still enslaved people was very a complex and problematic one.

Those who participated in drafting the founding documents were aware of the intricate issues that would arise as a result of America's concept of liberty. When the Declaration of Independence was being drafted, the original draft condemned slavery. In the original draft, when Jefferson condemns the British King, one of the things that he objects to is the King's objection to the slave trade (Janda 59). Although Jefferson was not explicitly challenging the practice of slavery, representatives from Georgia and South Carolina, two Slave States, ordered that this portion of the Declaration be removed. As a result, Jefferson removed this part from final draft, and he included that America was a country that consisted of both Free and Slave States. Moreover, the development of a federal government would also demonstrate how difficult it would be to interpret and define liberty in American society, as the Anti-Federalists believed that

the constitution needed to include a Bill of Rights to protect individual liberty. Although Federalists believed that amending the document was unnecessary, the Anti-Federalists were concerned that their individual freedoms would be violated by the establishment of a federal government. Therefore, the definition of liberty was very ambiguous, as whites were fighting for liberty while denying it to African slaves.

This level of ambiguity is captured in the meaning of Moby-Dick's whiteness. In 'The Whiteness of the Whale', the novel's protagonist, Ishmael, attempts to enunciate the meaning of the whale's whiteness but only manages to capture the ambiguity of whiteness. This ambiguity perverts the novel and is crucial to the narrative because it complicates Ahab's motivation. Put another way, it makes it difficult to understand why Ahab obsesses over Moby-Dick, and more importantly, why Ahab is willing to risk his crew's lives to capture the whale. Ahab's conceivable motivations are plentiful. For example, his motivation could be vengeance, or profit, or possibly both. Nonetheless, the whale's whiteness complicates motivations and perhaps is the eventual reason for the *Pequod's* destruction.

At the beginning of 'The Whiteness of the Whale', we become immediately aware of how important Moby-Dick's whiteness is to both Ishmael and the narrative. Early in the chapter, Ishmael explains, 'It was the whiteness of the whale that appalled' him (MD 188). More crucially, Ishmael views an explanation, or even an unsuccessful explanation, of the allure of the whale's whiteness as vital to the entire narrative. He inquires 'but how can I hope to explain myself here; and yet, in some dim, random way, explain myself I must, else all these chapters might be naught' (MD 188). Thus, we are made aware that the whale's colour is significant and is crucial to the novel's meaning, and Ishmael explicitly asserts this.

Nonetheless, the meaning of the whale's whiteness is far from straightforward. At the end of the chapter, Ishmael tells us that *Moby-Dick* explicitly symbolizes the nature of whiteness, but this nature is obscure. To Ishmael, whiteness is many things. Firstly, he explores whiteness' ability to '[enhance] beauty' (MD 188). From japonicas to the 'Lord of the White Elephants', Ishmael analyses why and how whiteness is acknowledged with a 'certain royal pre-eminence' (MD 188). As well as exploring the beauty of whiteness, Ishmael also addresses the way that whiteness is used to typify justice, majesty, and spiritual purity. Of Christian priests, he points out that they 'derive the name of one part of their sacred vesture, the alb or tunic' from the Latin word meaning white and also that 'white is especially in the celebration of the Passion of our Lord' (MD 189). Hence, Ishmael uses the first portion of his discussion of whiteness to highlight its 'sweet, and honourable, and sublime' qualities (MD 189).

However, Ishmael offsets his analysis of the ways that whiteness symbolizes magnificence and purity; in the next part of the chapter, he examines how the elusive quality of whiteness brings terror. Specifically, he draws our attention to the ways that sharks and Polar bears epitomize terror. He writes, 'what but their smooth, flaky whiteness makes them the transcendent horrors they are? That ghastly whiteness it is which imparts such an abhorrent mildness, even more loathsome than terrific, to the dumb gloating of their aspect. So that not the fierce-fanged tiger in his heraldic coat can so stagger courage as the white-shrouded bear or shark' (MD 189). To Ishmael, these animals, though white, are frightening and overwhelming.

By juxtaposing the 'kindly associations' of whiteness with the chilling, Ishmael reveals the paradoxical nature of whiteness, and he shows his readers that whiteness resists interpretation because it is so ambiguous. At the end of 'The Whiteness of the Whale', Ishmael's questions illustrate *Moby-Dick's* ambiguity. Ishmael asks 'Is it that

by its indefiniteness it shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation, when beholding the white depths of the milky way?’ (MD 195). He also asks, ‘Or is it, that as in essence whiteness is not so much a color as the visible absence of color; and at the same time the concrete of all colors; is it for these reasons that there is such a dumb blankness, full of meaning, in a wide landscape of snows — a colorless, all-color of atheism from which we shrink?’ (MD 195). Here, as Richard Dyer points out, Ishmael ‘acknowledges the beauty and virtuousness of white’ (Dyer 212). Thus, the chapter works to uncover the hermeneutic ambiguity of whiteness, making Ishmael’s motive to show us that the meaning of whiteness can be ambiguous.

Nonetheless, Ishmael’s discussion of whiteness in ‘The Whiteness of the Whale’ does not exclude race. He touches on nineteenth century race theory by explaining that the pre-eminent dynamic of race has ‘given the white man ideal mastership over every dusky tribe’ (MD 189). Moreover, he later addresses what he refers to as the ‘Albino man’ and explains that ‘The Albino is as well made as other men- has no substantive deformity- and yet this mere aspect of all-pervading whiteness makes him more strangely hideous than the ugliest abortion’ (MD 191). Prior to this, Ishmael draws our attention to the way that whiteness is valued at the top of the racial hierarchy, but in his discussion of the Albino man, he wonders why when a man is too white he is viewed as hideous and ‘loathed by his own kith and kin!’ (MD 191). Ishmael makes it clear here that the vagueness of whiteness that he emphasizes includes race. Crucially, as Melville ends the chapter and tells his readers that the whale is a symbol of everything, he refers to Moby-Dick as the ‘Albino whale’ (MD 195). By doing so, he reminds us of race’s implication in what the whale signifies, reminding us of his earlier discussion of the Albino man (MD 191). Moreover, his references to Albinism

work to reinforce the normalcy of whiteness amongst the crew. As Dyer points out “extreme whiteness coexists with ordinary whiteness; it is exceptional, excessive, marked. It is what whiteness aspires to” (222). Put another way, the extremity of the whale’s whiteness also draws our attention to the racial whiteness of the crew. It establishes normalcy and a backdrop for racial enactments by people of colour. Crucially, in the chapter, Ishmael points out that whiteness is ambiguous and resists interpretation, and according to Ishmael, this is as true for the Grey Albatross as it is for the human race. Ishmael’s inclusion of race in his discussion of whiteness is important aboard the *Pequod* because race is a central issue, as race shapes the power system aboard the ship, and Melville uses allegory that points to aspects of America’s racial politics.

However, this inclusion also works to capture the Constitutional crisis that was prevalent in America during the nineteenth century, a crisis primarily caused by racial tension. America’s Founding Fathers struggled to define liberty in the United States. Although the creators of America’s founding documents made efforts to clearly define liberty and tried to address the concerns that were made at the time of their drafting, many of those concerns were never completely resolved. Consequently, there was still a growing concern in the 1850s. During this decade, it was clearly evident that ‘all men’ were not created equal in America, and ‘Life, liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness’ was not obtainable by everyone, as there were a considerable amount of blacks in the South that were still enslaved (Jefferson 77). What Lincoln would fear at the end of the 1850s was starting to take place years before; the Union was fragmenting, and slavery was central to the nation’s division. Specifically, slavery divided the nation in two: Slave States and Free States. Moreover, the Founding Fathers could not foresee the invention of Eli Whitney’s Cotton Gin, a device that revolutionized the cotton industry and textile

manufacturing as a result of its ability to clean cotton. The rural South benefited considerably from Whitney's invention, as 'It helped give the South its "king" crop, cotton' (Shectman 67). Factories in Europe, and in eventually industrialized New England demanded large quantities of cotton, thus creating sizable profits for cotton plantations in the South. Shectman points out that 'By 1820, the United States grew almost a third of the world's cotton—in excess of 180,000,000 pounds annually. Five years later, nearly 171,000,000 pounds were exported to England alone' (Shectman 67). With this thriving economy in place, slave owners were reluctant to consider freeing their slaves, and they wanted even more slaves than they previously owned for 'planting and bailing' (Shectman 67).

Thus, rather than die out, slavery became more rampant. Instead of a move towards establishing a nation where everyone could have 'unalienable Rights', black people in the South became subject to conditions designed to preserve their enslavement. Slave owners made it harder for slaves to read and educate themselves. In Frederick Douglass's *Narrative*, when Mr Auld discovers that Mrs Auld has been trying to help Douglass read, he recalls Mr Auld saying:

'If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master — to do as he is told to do. Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world. Now', said he, 'if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy'. (Douglass 6)

Along with maintaining high illiteracy rates amongst slaves, masters also forced their slaves to breed. As Carl and Dorothy Schneider point out, 'Slave owners read magazine

articles on the best conditions for breeding and talked about the capabilities of particular women for that task. Masters were obsessed with the potential for increasing their capital. They forced male slaves to take more than one wife and to stand at stud' (Schneider 117). Slaves were also given rewards for producing large numbers of offspring, such as money, and in some cases, emancipation (Schneider 117). Once Southern plantation owners realized how much wealth they could accumulate from slavery, the numbers of sugar, cotton, and indigo plantations rose drastically. As Johnathan Sheckman notes, 'By 1825, the slave population in South Carolina and Georgia was ten times that of the early 1790s' (Sheckman 67).

An intense national debate accompanied the growth of slavery in the nineteenth century. Although those who were proponents of slavery, such as Josiah Nott, George Fitzhugh, Henry Clay, and John Calhoun, endeavoured to buttress their proslavery arguments in various ways, the issue of human liberty proposed in the founding documents was central to the national debate over chattel slavery. Advocates of slavery attempted to dehumanize slaves to justify why their liberty should not be granted. Some arguments presented slaves as property or machinery that helped to boost the American economy, and this perspective, especially in the South, was ingested and accepted as a part of history, a part of life. As Sheckman notes, slavery in the South 'became deeply rooted in the American psyche and way of life' (Sheckman 67). In particular, Clay and Calhoun were reliant on generating nostalgic images of the 'Old South' to support their position on slavery. Time and time again, plantation life was romanticized to demonstrate that slaves were content on their master's land.

Moreover, proslavery advocates also dehumanized Africans by suggesting that they were children, unable to look after themselves. In the *Sociology of the South* (1854), Fitzhugh suggests that 'Athenian Democracy' would not suit a 'Negro Nation'

because ‘He is but a grown- up child [...] improvident [...] inferior to the white race’ (Fitzhugh 82). Therefore, Jefferson’s definition of liberty would not be applicable to Africans as a result of the Africans’ inferiority. To Fitzhugh, it would be futile to explain America’s democratic principles to an African because they are childlike. To reinforce this claim, apologists tried to scientifically prove that blacks were inferior, such as Nott attempted to do in his lectures on *The Natural History of the Caucasian and Negro Races* (1844), positing that ‘The brain of the Negro [...] is [...] smaller than the Caucasian by a full tenth’ (Nott 23). Other contentions suggested that slavery was justifiable because Negroes needed to be civilised and plantation owners were in fact doing their part to civilize them. Some even went as far as suggesting that the slave trade was even more humane than wage slavery. These arguments worked to support why Africans should not receive the liberty that was included in the Declaration of Independence.

Nonetheless, the innumerable arguments that were made to explain why Africans should not be beneficiaries of America’s concept of freedom were met by just as many abolitionist contentions. Although the Founding Fathers had made efforts to remove any words from the Declaration of Independence that denounced slavery, abolitionists would still turn to the founding document to buttress arguments that opposed slavery. In particular, abolitionists would often highlight that America was failing if people failed to grant the Declaration of Independence’s definition of freedom to all those within America’s confines. At the ‘Declaration of the American Anti-Slavery Convention’ in 1834, *The Liberator* founder, Henry Lloyd Garrison proposed that the promises of Jefferson’s Declaration have not been upheld, and he perceived it as his duty to ‘entreat the oppressed to reject the use of all carnal weapons for deliverance from bondage’ (qtd. in Garrison 240). Garrison had felt the deficiencies of Jefferson’s Declaration so deeply

that he later, in *To The Public*, writes ‘I unreflectingly assented to the popular but pernicious doctrine of gradual abolition. I seize this opportunity to make a full and unequivocal recantation and thus publicly to ask pardon of my God, of my country, and of my brethren the poor slaves, for having uttered a sentiment so full of timidity, injustice, and absurdity’ (qtd. in Grimké). He felt a deep sense of responsibility to grant black slaves their freedom because he thought that the freedom that America was founded upon should be granted to everyone.

Some abolitionists even turned on the Founding Fathers themselves, such as David Walker who was a black dissenter who openly fought for emancipation. In his provocative abolition tract, *Appeal* (1834), Walker abruptly went after Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* asking ‘Has Mr Jefferson declared to the world, that we are inferior to the whites both in endowments of our bodies and minds?’ (qtd. in Aptheker 72). Walker continues with ‘It is indeed surprising, that a man of such great learning, combined with such excellent natural parts, should speak so of a set of men in chains’ (qtd. in Aptheker 72). Rather than argue that America’s concept of freedom ought to be granted to Africans, he fervently addresses those who decided to remove any condemnation of slavery from the Declaration of Independence. Though his argument was an unconventional abolitionist attack on one of America’s Founding Fathers, Walker still draws our attention to the contradiction of the Declaration, the contradiction of a nation championing liberty but practicing slavery.

As well as the abolitionist and anti-abolitionist arguments that were presented, the government attempted to mitigate the national conflict over slavery through bargaining and compromise. In 1819 when Missouri requested to be made a Slave State, a request that would upset the balance of Free States and Slaves States in America, those that opposed Missouri becoming a Slave State, such as New York’s senator Rufus

King, argued that Congress had the power to prevent slavery in newer states, but those that argued for Missouri becoming a slave state asserted that Missouri was entitled to the same rights as older states (Foner 737). The debate lasted four months, eventually leading to a compromise – Missouri was accepted as a Slave State on the grounds that Maine would be made free and slavery be prohibited north of latitude 36°30' in the Louisiana Purchase (Foner 737). The agreement was known as the Missouri Compromise and was one of the ways that representatives attempted to appease the growing tensions over slavery.

There were other settlements and methods used to attempt to dissolve the tension caused by slavery, following the Missouri Compromise. One procedure that was used to appease the conflict was completely banning congressional debates about slavery. The Gag Rule, as it was referred to, was established in 1836 and prevented Northern Whigs, such as John Quincy Adams and Joshua Giddings, from bringing up any abolitionist sentiment before Congress. As Michael Green points out, the Gag Rule 'referred abolitionist petitions to a house committee that would bury them' (Green xvii). Essentially, under the power of a Jacksonian government, Congress voted in favour of the Gag Rule in an attempt to ignore the slave question completely.

Nonetheless, ignoring the slave issue or attempting to come to a compromise failed to solve the conflict. As Congress attempted to resolve issues raised after the Mexican-American War in 1846 through proposals such as the Wilmot Proviso, tension over slavery began to rise once more. The man who had played a significant role in the Missouri Compromise, Henry Clay, came forward again in 1850 with a plan that he thought would lessen the discord. Like the Missouri Compromise in 1820, Clay's 1850 Compromise was agreed upon. However, it did very little to resolve the conflict between Abolitionists and Apologists. On the contrary, various parts of Clay's

newfound Compromise augmented the struggle between North and South, Free States and Slave States. In particular, The Fugitive Slave Law, a law included in the Compromise, was instrumental in ramping up the hostility. With the Fugitive Slave Law in place, any runaway slaves that were found in Free States had to be returned to the South. According to Harriet Jacobs, the new law allowed slaves to be ‘given up by the bloodhounds of the north to the bloodhounds of the south’ (Jacobs 171). As Jacobs puts it, ‘It was the beginning of a reign of terror to the colored population’ (Jacobs 171). The Fugitive Slave Law only served to anger abolitionists and was a primary catalyst of the Civil War in the following decade.

The way that the American Declaration of Independence’s concept of liberty was interpreted was ambiguous and problematic. The prevalence of slavery ensured that liberty was not granted to all as Jefferson proposed. This issue was fundamental to arguments between abolitionists and proslavery advocates. To demonstrate that Africans should not be recipients of American liberty, apologists attempted to propose that Africans were less than human. Contrastingly, abolitionists argued for their humanity, often directly addressing the founding documents to reinforce their claims. For example, William Lloyd Garrison’s abolitionist effort stemmed from his belief that the Declaration of Independence should apply to everyone. Nonetheless, hoping that the slave issue would someday solve itself, some politicians attempted to put a compromise in place to resolve the tension that took place over slavery. Did American Liberty mean that Africans should be free on American soil? Were Africans unable to be free in America because they were not American or human? Did American liberty mean that America could be a place where Africans could be both free and enslaved? Many wrestled over what American the Founding Fathers had promised, offering

different interpretations. In the 1850s, it was clear that Americans were still searching for what being an American ought to mean.

The ambiguity of the meaning of whiteness manages to capture the Constitutional crisis that America experienced during the 1850s. However, this crisis is allegorized further through Ahab's monomania. After Moby-Dick takes away Ahab's leg, we are informed that 'all that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby-Dick' (MD 184). The whale becomes everything to Ahab, causing Ahab to become 'madness maddened' (MD 188). The narrator continues 'he piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down, and then as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it' (MD 184). Whiteness becomes a location where Ahab places his anger and all that stirs him. Comparatively, whiteness became a location for many during the 1850s to place their 'rage and hate' (MD 184). The Constitutional crisis that took place when America's founding documents were being drafted was largely the result of a monomaniac obsession with racial whiteness, and this obsession, like what happens to the *Pequod*, eventually leads to destruction.

Additionally, there is a dual nature to Ahab's madness, and in 'Sunset', he provides insight into the dynamics of his madness. Ahab's monomania causes him to be intensely focused on Moby-Dick, but when Ahab is not consumed by the thought of capturing Moby-Dick, he has the ability to think both critically and sanely about his world and sometimes even his madness as he demonstrates in 'Sunset'. Ahab explains 'What I've dared, I've willed, and what I've willed, I'll do! They think me mad-Starbuck does; but I'm demoniac, I am madness maddened! That wild madness that's

only calm to comprehend itself!’ (MD 168). Here, Ahab demonstrates that he can examine his own condition as well as being able to evaluate his crew’s reaction toward him. Thus, he is not completely consumed by his monomania. Later, we are also informed that Ahab’s sanity and monomania coexist; Ahab’s ‘special lunacy [storms] his general sanity’ (MD 185). However, this coexistence is driven by his madness, a madness that eventually leads to disaster. This dynamic mirrors the tension caused by the Constitution as Ahab’s madness allegorizes the conflict between North and South, a conflict escalated by the South’s refusal to rid itself of slavery.

What is more, Ahab’s belief that his mission, if prophetic, also works to allegorize the Constitutional crisis that was taking place, as prophesy played a significant role in shaping the thoughts of both sides of slave debate, a debate that was central to the Civil War. Abolitionists perceived their plight as prophetic, a call from God to awaken a deaf world. This is evident in Thoreau’s ‘Slavery in Massachusetts’ (1854). Nonetheless, apologists also argued that slavery was prophetic. As, Southern clergyman, Benjamin Morgan Palmer had done throughout the nineteenth century. Palmer used Genesis, 9:11, specifically, Noah’s prophecy to construct a biblical argument for chattel slavery in the United States (Haynes 13). Palmer argued that slaves were descendants of Ham, thus suggesting that they were cursed and were summoned, as Canaan was, to a life of slavery. The South’s employment of biblical prophecy, as a reason to justify slavery, contributed to the issues that America’s founding fathers had with the Constitution, because it complicated America’s definition of liberty. Moreover, this tension took place within the prophetic notion that America was to be an example for the rest of the world, as John Winthrop put it ‘The City Upon a Hill’ (1630). A sense of prophecy is also evident in Ahab. During his soliloquy in ‘Sunset’, Ahab explains, ‘The prophecy was that I should be dismembered; and – Aye! I lost this

leg. I now prophesy that I will dismember my dismemberer' (MD 168). Though Ahab takes this sense of prophecy one step further by suggesting that he is more than 'ye great gods' because he is both 'prophet and the fulfiller', this sense of prophecy is evident during his mission to capture Moby-Dick, and it subtly allegorizes the prophetic nature of apologists and abolitionist arguments for or against slavery that contributed to the Constitutional crisis (MD 168).

Moreover, through Ahab's monomania, the true nature of democracy is dramatized and allegorized. The *Pequod* appears to be democratic, but after careful observation, it becomes apparent that there is very little democracy aboard the *Pequod*. The ship is driven by Ahab's tyranny. Ahab's control lies at the helm of the *Pequod*. Though Ahab implies that his madness could possibly be controlled, by the end of the novel, it is clear that Ahab has very little control over his monomania. Thus, both Ahab and crew become victims to Ahab's madness. Comparatively, though politicians from both North and South attempted to appear democratic, their efforts were not enough to conceal the slavery that was taking place during the nineteenth century.

Both the ambiguity of whiteness and Ahab's monomania work to allegorize America's path towards the Civil War. Despite efforts to compromise and mitigate growing tension during the 1850s, a country at war with itself was on its way to cataclysm. The ambiguity of whiteness captures the confusion surrounding interpretation, and this ambiguity is amplified by Ahab's monomania. Moreover, Ahab's monomania strengthens the way that *Moby-Dick* allegorizes the Constitutional crisis that was taking place and that centred on slavery. Ahab's tyrannical rule of the *Pequod* is built upon a racial hierarchy and his madness and fixation upon Moby-Dick's whiteness in many ways allegorizes America's fixation on race and whiteness.

Additionally, the dynamics of his madness serve to capture the crisis that took place before the Civil War.

GEORGE WASHINGTON CANNIBALISTICALLY DEVELOPED

Queequeg's racial significance has occupied considerable space in Melville criticism. He is perceived as a clear racial marker in *Moby-Dick*, managing to connote different racial issues throughout the novel. Robert Martin argues that Queequeg's idol resembles a 'Congo Baby', thus reinforcing Queequeg's African significance (79). Contrastingly, in 'Come back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!' (1955), Leslie Fiedler focuses more on the meaning of the interracial that takes place between Ishmael and Queequeg. Fiedler argues that their relationship transforms *Moby-Dick* into a love story that demonstrates 'chaste male love as the ultimate emotional experience' (Fiedler 144). Geoffrey Sanborn builds on Fiedler's central contention in 'Whence come You, Queequeg?' (2005), by developing new answers to 'the question of *Moby-Dick*'s relationship to politically conservative depictions of interracial male friendship' (229). However, within the course of this discussion, Sanborn also reminds us that 'Queequeg is neither black nor Native American, a circumstance that has made it relatively difficult to identify the specific history of injustice that is obscured by his friendship with a white man' (229). To reinforce this point, Sanborn notes Melville's use of *The New Zealanders* (1830) before he wrote *Moby-Dick*, and Sanborn argues that Queequeg's character is primarily based on Tupai Cupa from *The New Zealanders*. Sanborn's observations have been one of the most recent arguments that have broaden the ways that Queequeg is viewed in terms of race. In this section, I will examine some of the ways that Queequeg's relationship with Ishmael can be linked to the minstrel tradition.

Despite Ishmael's fondness of Queequeg, Ishmael is initially reluctant to interact with Queequeg. The landlord tells him that he will have to share a bed with a harpooner who turns out to be Queequeg. However, Ishmael is resistant to sharing a bed with another, explaining that he 'never liked to sleep two in a bed' (MD 14). Nonetheless, Ishmael decides that he 'would put up with the half of any decent man's blanket' rather than 'wander further about a strange town' (MD 14). His decision to share a bed with a harpooner quickly changes once he discovers that the harpooner is a 'dark complexioned chap' who never eats dumplings only 'steaks, and he likes em rare' (MD 14). Nonetheless, he explains that after the landlord gave him this brief description of the harpooner, he felt 'suspicious of this "dark complexioned" harpooner' and he made up his mind that if they would have to sleep together, the harpooner must undress and get into bed before' he did (MD 26). After going back and forth, Ishmael decides that he will share the bed with the harpooner because he recognizes that he might be 'cherishing unwarrantable prejudices against this unknown harpooner' (MD 26).

Moreover, through their relationship, Ishmael learns as much about himself as he does about Queequeg. Their relationship works to challenge many of the 'unwarrantable prejudices' that Ishmael demonstrates earlier in the text. Furthermore, skin becomes one of the ways that Ishmael's prejudices are challenged, and it is really in this challenge that we are introduced to the minstrel-like implications of their relationship. Firstly, Ishmael recalls:

I remembered a story of a white man—a whaleman too—who, falling among the cannibals, had been tattooed by them. I concluded that this harpooner, in the course of his distant voyages, must have met with a similar adventure. And what is it, thought I, after all! It's only his outside; a man can be honest in any

sort of skin. But then, what to make of his unearthly complexion, that part of it, I mean, lying round about, and completely independent of the squares of tattooing. To be sure, it might be nothing but a good coat of tropical tanning; but I never heard of a hot sun's tanning a white man into a purplish yellow one. However, I had never been in the South Seas; and perhaps the sun there produced these extraordinary effects upon the skin. (MD 21)

This recollection becomes characteristic of the way that Ishmael considers Queequeg. Like Huck's memorable observation that he could tell Nigger Jim that he 'knowed he was white inside', Ishmael takes a similar approach (Twain). As James Leonard notes in 'Blackface and White Inside' (1992), Huck's comment about Jim has minstrel connotations, especially in the context of Jim's subservience. Although Queequeg is from the Polynesian Islands, Ishmael views Queequeg similarly as a white man covered by black skin. In this instance, Ishmael struggles to understand how the sun can transform a white man into a 'purplish yellow one' (MD 21).

He takes this way of viewing Queequeg further when he refers to Queequeg as George Washington cannibalistically developed in 'My Bosom Friend'. Ishmael remarks 'Savage though he was, and hideously marred about the face at least to my taste-his countenance yet had something in which was by no means disagreeable' (MD 49). Ishmael continues to examine Queequeg, pointing out that his head was 'phrenologically an excellent one' reminding him of 'George Washington's head' (MD 50). Thus, like Huck, Ishmael considers that beneath Queequeg's hideous tattoos and skin, there is a white man, in particularly a very prominent white man. Therefore, though Ishmael refers to Queequeg as a savage, he believes that he is really white inside. Furthermore, this is fundamentally Ishmael's method of certifying Queequeg's humanity, and this method can be traced back to Tom in Melville's *Typee*.



Figure 7. *Tattooing on the face of Tupai Cupa*

(*The New Zealanders* (London: Charles Knight, 1830), 332)



Figure 8. *Portrait of Tupai Cupa*

(*The New Zealanders* (London: Charles Knight, 1830), 331)

Moreover, the extent to which Queequeg's face was tattooed was minstrel-like. Sanborn's uncovering of Tupai Cupa's influence on Queequeg's creation allow us to look at illustrations of Tupai Cupa and see Queequeg. In Figure7, we see the heavily

tattoo marks on Tupai Cupa's face. Though very intricate, the proximity of each line does darken the face, and in the context of Melville's creation of *Moby-Dick*, the blackface minstrel show was extremely popular. Also the lips were exaggerated in blackface, and the form of Cupa's tattooing similarly extenuate his lips, making them look bigger than they really are. What is more, as Otter points out, the tattoo often '[disintegrated] over time into a Negro-like disarray' (27). With Cupa's type of tattooing in mind, it is not difficult to understand how the tattoos give a person from the Polynesian islands the appearance of an African American. Although Queequeg does not apply burnt cork to his face, given the historical context of *Moby-Dick* and the style of the tattoos, Queequeg's tattooed appearance is evocative of 'blacking up'.

Furthermore, the thought of a white man being covered in darker skin, though permanently in Queequeg's case, is comparable to minstrelsy, as the show originally featured white actors painting their faces black. Additionally, by engaging in relationship with Queequeg, Ishmael puts on Queequeg's racial identity in both practical and theoretical ways. Practically, Ishmael participates in Queequeg's rituals. For example, he smokes with Queequeg which is considered a ritual in Queequeg's culture that weds the pair, a point that challenges both racial and sexual boundaries that were prevalent during the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, as well as smoking, Ishmael also puts on Queequeg's vest, a move that Susanne Hamscha perceives as blacking up. The poncho-like garment has a very profound impact on Ishmael when he puts it on. Ishmael explains, 'I put it on, to try it, and it weighed me, like a hamper' (MD 20). As well as the weight of the garment, Queequeg's vest also has cultural significance as he also mentions that he struggles with understanding how a harpooner could wear such a garment in 'Christian streets' (MD 20). Moreover, once Ishmael wears it, he is immediately disturbed by it. He manages to see his reflection in a small piece of glass

and says, 'I never saw such a sight in my life. I tore myself out of it in such a hurry that I gave myself a kink in my neck' (MD 20). This scene marks the beginning of Queequeg's role in the novel. After this point, we are introduced to Queequeg and Ishmael develops a close relationship with him. As well as considering this scene as Ishmael's way of blacking up, Hamscha considers it as a moment in which Ishmael experiences Ethnic Ventriloquism, a term coined by Banjeree. Banjeree argues that 'By assuming an ethnic voice, the white subject creates a situation in which it is un-identical with itself. Ethnic ventriloquism represents the strategy of a white subject looking at itself through – presumably – ethnic eyes' (Banjeree). Hamscha considers this happening to Ishmael because after this scene, he is able to see his whiteness through Queequeg. Moreover, the other characters are only able to speak through Ishmael (Hamscha 219). The poncho is evocative of one's skin, and Ishmael's prejudices are the reason why he is repulsed by it.

Recent research on the minstrel show proposes that this form entertainment was more than a form that ridiculed and mimicked black people. As Lott suggests, some minstrel performers also felt a deep sense of adoration for black culture, and therefore, though performance, demonstrated this adoration. Particularly, Thomas D. Rice, considered; the pioneer of blackface, possessed an adoration for black culture, and he did not intend for his performance of 'Jump Jim Crow' to become a form of entertainment that was so racist. Comparably, after Ishmael wears Queequeg's poncho and develops a relationship with him, Ishmael develops an understanding of black culture that is similar to some of the white performers of blackface who fell in love with black culture.

FLEECE'S STUMP SERMON

Melville's Fleece enacts one of the most notable performances of race in *Moby-Dick*, a performance that evokes minstrelsy. In 'Stubb's Supper', Fleece's interaction with Stubb has racial overtones. Unhappy with the way that his whale-steak has been cooked, Stubb orders Fleece to attend to him then, Stubb decides to give Fleece nonsensical orders. From the moment that Fleece enters the scene, we are reminded of minstrel imagery as his actions are evocative of the 'ol Ducky figure'. The narrator explains:

The old black, not in any very high glee at having been previously roused from his warm hammock at a most unseasonable hour, came shambling along from his galley, for, like many old blacks there was something the matter with his knee-pans, which he did not keep well scoured like his other pans; this old Fleece, as they called him, came shuffling and limping along [...] this old Ebony floundered along. (MD 294)

Fleece's shuffling and limping reminds us of one of the earliest and impactful minstrel performances that took the stage. Rice's 'Jump Jim Crow' was a performance that Rice claimed he learned from a 'crippled black slave who belonged to a white named Crow' (Irons 12). The dance that accompanied the song, 'wheel about and turn about', was created to mimic the black slave's disability. The performance turned Rice into a national icon, and his performance was considered to be one of the pioneering and foundational minstrel acts in America. Thus, the 'demeaning portrayal of a grinning, shuffling black man' became iconographic, and the image a familiar marker that signified the minstrel tradition. Moreover, this image also became a term that was often integrated to black life offstage. Though the South would eventually adopt the term to reference segregation during the Reconstruction, 'abolitionist newspapers adopted the term to describe the segregated railroad cars in northern cities' as early as the 1840s (Irons 12). Therefore, Fleece's 'shuffling entrance' is evocative of minstrelsy

given the significance of the 'Jim Crow' image that was made popular by Rice's stage performance.

Nonetheless, what happens next connects Fleece to minstrelsy in a deeper way. Angered by the noise that the sharks are making as they feed on the whale's carcass, Stubb orders Fleece to talk to the sharks and tell them to 'Keep quiet' and 'go and preach to them' (MD 294). Fleece then proceeds to give a minstrel-like sermon to the sharks. Fleece proceeds:

'Your woraciousness, fellow-critters. I don't blame ye so much for; dat is natur, and can't be helped; but to govern dat wicked natur, dat is de pint. You is sharks, sartin; but if you govern de shark in you, why den you be angel; for all angel is not'ing more dan de shark well governed. Now, look here, bred'ren, just try wonst to be cibil, a helping yourselbs from dat whale. Don't be tearin' de blubber out your neighbour's mout, I say. Is not one shark dood right as toder to dat whale? And, by Gor, none on you has de right to dat whale; dat whale belong to some one else. I know some o' you has berry brig mout, brigger dan oders; but then de brig mouts sometimes has de small bellies; so dat de brigness of de mout is not to swaller wid, but to bit off de blubber for de small fry ob sharks, dat can't get into de scrouge to help demselves'. (MD 295).

Here, we are exposed to Fleece's exaggerated dialect that was often adopted in blackface. Moreover, Fleece appears to follow Stubb's orders in a serious way. Initially, Fleece swears at the sharks by asking 'Do you is all sharks and by natur wery woracious yet I zay to you, fellow critters, dat dat woraciousness- 'top dat dam slappin ob de tail! How you tink to hear 'spose you keep up such a dam slapping and bitin' dare?' (MD

295). Stubb then informs Fleece that he will not tolerate swearing, so Fleece then addresses the shark in a serious way. Though the scene has comical overtones, Fleece solemnly follows Stubb's orders here.

This scene is, in many ways, a blackface stump speech as African American religious practices were frequently mimicked in minstrel performances. This trend can be traced back as far as Charles Mathews' performances in 'A Trip to New York' (1823). Mathews, 'a crucial prototype for Ethiopian delineation', as well as performing 'Possum up a Gum Tree' also performed as a black preacher (Mahar 15). Eric Lott goes as far as to note that stump speeches 'do appear to have grown out of white observations of black churches and black street oratory' (Lott 247). He continues, 'Whites were clearly nonplussed by black religious practices. In part because of its demonstrative character, black worship put whites in mind of secular culture' (Lott 247). Some whites marvelled at the ways that black people worshipped in predominantly black churches because it differed greatly to the ways that they did. In Gary Nash's *Forging Freedom* (1991), he explains that 'one white visitor described how 'when the preacher ceased reading, all [...] fell on their knees, bowed their heads to the ground, and started howling and groaning with sad heart-rending voices' (Nash 222). In addition, after the Virginia Minstrels introduced a structured form for blackface performance, the *olio* became a permanent and popular feature in minstrel performances (Strausbaugh 105). During the olio, actors often gave a 'short one act burlesque [...] also called an afterpiece', and stump speeches were frequently performed during this segment to parody and mimic aspects of popular culture (Strausbaugh 105-106). Commonly, actors would parody Shakespeare's plays, 'yielding farces with titles like *Desdemonum*' and '*Hamlet the Dainty*' (Strausbaugh 106). Moreover, white actors would often exaggerate black religious practices during stump speeches. Blackface performers would draw on

some of the differences between black and white religious groups and integrate them into stump speeches for comedic purposes. Their appropriation took place alongside significant growth in the amount of all-black congregations. As Mahar points out, New York experienced substantial growth in the number of churches in the black community noting that there were ‘fifteen Negro Methodist and five Baptist churches’ by the 1850s (Mahar 84).

Blackface songs, such as ‘Trip to a Nigga Meeting’, exaggerated African American preaching as well as popular stereotypes that were associated with black people.

When I got to de meeting house

Dey say you better go,

Kase you come to raise de debril here,

And Jump Jim Crow

So I creep though de window

And sat myself a down,

Broder Clem gub de text—

Den dey hand de plate around.

In de ninety-lebneth chapter

Ob de new Almanack

Dar it tell all about dare,

De white man and de brack

He says dat Cane was de fuss man,

Julycome Cesar was de toder

Dey put Adam on de treden mill,

Kase he kill him broder

And den dat Mr.Samson

Was de man who build de ark,

Mr. Jonas was de fisherman

Who swallowed down de shark. (qtd. In Mahar 84)

The dialect here is comparable to Fleece's, and in many ways as nonsensical. The speaker's declaration that Samson 'built de ark' and Jonas was 'swallowed down the shark' is inaccurate. Distorting biblical narratives was often used to demonstrate that black people were not as intelligent as white Americans. What is more, these types of performances worked to challenge the rise of intellectual figures such as Frederick Douglass who demonstrated that black people could be educated and could articulate themselves.

Given the clear appropriation of black religious practices and minstrelsy, when Fleece starts to preach to the sharks, this performance is suggestive of blackface. Not only is Fleece's shuffling entrance suggestive of 'Jim Crow' but what he proceeds to do next, give a sermon to sharks, certainly carries minstrel overtones. What is more, his sermon is clearly for Stubb's entertainment. As Fleece is preaching, Stubb says, 'Well done, old Fleece [...] that's Christianity go on' (MD 295). Despite requesting that Fleece give a sermon to the sharks, Stubb really wants to tell Fleece how to cook his

steak. Stubb tells Fleece to talk to the sharks primarily for his pleasure. Stubb's desire to be entertained added to the performative nature of Fleece's sermon.

Fleece's sermon compares significantly to Father Mapple's sermon that comes at the beginning of the novel. As Father Mapple tells his congregation to 'clinch the last verse of the first chapter of Jonah', the overall tone and nature of his sermon is clearly different (MD 42). Firstly, Unlike Fleece, Mapple is clearly the authority in the scene. At the beginning of the sermon, the narrator explains 'Father Mapple rose, and in a mild voice of unassuming authority ordered the scattered people to condense [...] There was a low rumbling of heavy sea-boots among the benches, and a still slighter shuffling of women's shoes, and all was quiet again, and every eye on the preacher' (MD 41). Mapple's control is clearly evident throughout the chapter. He maintains a clear command of his congregation. When his sermon is over, the narrator states, 'He said no more, but slowly waving a benediction, covered his face with his hands, and so remained kneeling, till all the people had departed, and he was left alone in the place' (MD 48). The seriousness and authority of his sermon is central to the chapter, and he has an obvious command of his audience. Contrastingly, Fleece does not possess this control. Furthermore, when race is considered, Fleece, a black man, and Mapple, white, their sermons compliment racist ideology that was prevalent during the nineteenth century.

The impact that Mapple's sermon has on not only the congregation but the narrative itself overshadows Fleece's sermon to the sharks. Mapple's sermon on Jonah foreshadows what is to come in the rest of the narrative. Jonah's disobedience is central to Mapple's sermon, as Mapple insists 'if we obey God, we must disobey ourselves; and it is in this disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists' (MD 43). His words clearly foreshadow Ahab's actions because like Jonah, Ahab also

believes that ‘a ship made by men, will carry him into countries where God does not reign but only the Captains of this earth’ (MD 43). Thus, what happens to the *Pequod* is forecast by Mapple’s words to his congregation, unlike Fleece’s nonsensical sermon. To make Fleece’s sermon more comical, after Fleece addresses the sharks, Stubb interrogates him about his religious beliefs and quips Fleece’s answers. When Fleece tells Stubb that ‘some bressed angel will come and fetch him’, Stubb mocks him by saying ‘Fetch him? How? In a coach and four, as they fetched Elijah? And fetch him where?’ (MD 297). Then, when Fleece replies ‘Up Dere’, Stubb responds with ‘So, then, you expect to go into our main-top, do you, cook, when you are dead? But don’t you know the higher you climb, the colder it gets? Main-top, eh?’ (MD 297). Stubb refuses to take Fleece’s religious beliefs seriously instead his religion is mimicked.

Nonetheless, despite the comedic elements of Fleece’s sermon, some of the points that he makes when talking to the sharks work to subversively challenge the power system on the ship. Additionally, his words also subtly address the colonial mind-set that was widespread during the nineteenth century. Through his nonsense, there is a subtle critique, like stump speeches that critiqued transatlantic influence on popular culture or political issues. When Fleece talks to the sharks, he says ‘You is sharks, sartin; but if you govern dat wicked natur, dat is de pint. You is sharks, sartin; but if you govern de shark in you, why den you be angel [...] Don’t be tearin’ de blubber out your neighbour’s mout, I say. Is not one shark dood right as toder to dat whale? And, by Gor, none on you has de right as toder to dat whale; dat whale belong to some one lese’ (MD 295). Though Fleece speaks in broken English, his words could be profoundly addressing slavery or Manifest Destiny as he questions the sharks’ ownership of the whale. Viewing his words in this way strengthens Fleece’s words at the end of the chapter.

As the chapter concludes, Fleece mutters ‘Wish, by gor! Whale eat him, ‘stead of him eat whale. I’m bressed if he ain’t more of shark dan Massa Shark hisself’ (MD 297). Thus, Fleece sees the shark’s behaviour in the way that Stubb treats him. Though he is not taken seriously, like Mapple, Fleece’s sermon also foreshadows what will happen, as Moby-Dick will destroy the *Pequod*. However, given the significance of slavery, if the whale as allegory for slavery, his words also forecast what will happen to the South in the Civil War, as well as some of the violent slave rebellions that took place.

Although Stubb orders Fleece to address the sharks for comedic purposes, Fleece’s performance subtly addresses the poor way that Stubb treats him. Fleece is not wearing burnt cork and yet his sermon is significantly minstrel-like, especially with blackface’s emphasis on religion in mind. The dual nature of Fleece’s behaviour around Stubb also reinforces the sense of performance and minstrelsy in the chapter. He agrees to perform for Stubb and follows his order, and yet he wishes that the whale would eat him. This duality marks a significant development from the cooks in *White-Jacket* who entertain the crew in a jovial way; Fleece does this also but he additionally gives us insight into what he is truly feeling. We later witness this sense of revolt manifest in both Benito Cereno and the Black Guinea.

PERFORMING (PIP)ANINY: PIP AS THE *PEQUOD’S* MINSTREL CHILD

Although there are several characters of colour aboard the ship, there is perhaps no character more significant, in terms of American racial politics, than Pippin, or Pip as he is generally referred to. Furthermore, Pip performs race in the narrative. This performance occurs during *Moby-Dick’s* ‘Midnight, Forecastle’, one of the most theatrical chapters in the novel, and Pip’s performance works in reaction to the racial

hierarchy evident aboard the *Pequod*. Written using dialogue format, Melville presents the chapter as if it is a play, and its short yet meaningful performance is racialized. As I shall suggest in this section, Pip endorses minstrelsy as much as Stowe's Topsy does, making Pip the foundational Picaniny figure.

Unlike Daggoo, Pip is a product of the Union. Daggoo, a black harpooner, is described as 'a gigantic, coal-black negro-savage, with a lion-like tread-an Ahouseurus to behold [...] never having been anywhere in the world but in Africa, Nantucket, and pagan harbors most frequented by whalemens' (MD 104). From this description, it is clear that Daggoo is not a product of the Union. He is described as an Ahouseurus, a name that was often used to describe a Persian King. Moreover, the narrator tells us that he has only been to Africa, Nantucket, and amongst whalemens. Hence, Daggoo has not had extensive experience in America, and he is perhaps unaware of its racial matrices. Although we are told that Daggoo has been to Nantucket, this does not mean that Daggoo would have been subjected to American slavery because slavery stopped being practiced in Nantucket as early as the late eighteenth century. Contrastingly, Pip does not share the same background, in 'Knights and Squires', we learn that 'Little Black Pip!' is a 'Poor Alabama Boy! On the grim *Pequod's* forecastle [...] beating his tambourine' (MD 121). Pip is from a state that practiced slavery as early as 1819, and during the 1850s, Alabama was often a state that individuals would steal slaves from.

Nonetheless, Pip is a product of the Union and not only of Alabama, because, as the narrator later tells us in 'Castaway', Pip is a native from Tolland County in Connecticut, a Free State. Thus, Pip embodies both sides of the Union, North and South (Heimert 513). The narrator tells us that Pip is both a native from Connecticut and from Alabama. The reason for this description transition in the narrative is unclear. However, the narrator explains that Pip is both from a Free and a Slave State. By comparing Pip's

background with Daggoo and by considering Pip's dual-background, Pip is clearly more of a product of American racism than any other central character of colour aboard the ship. Furthermore, Melville uses him to carry America's racial burden aboard the ship.

Despite Pip's young age, he is also subjected to Ahab's cruelty. Perhaps there is no scene crueller than the one in 'Castaway' where Pip is left at sea, a moment in the story that would lead to Pip's madness. In this chapter, we are made aware of how poorly he is treated and how he is devalued by the crew. After Stubb's oarsman sustains a sprain, Pip is ordered to become Stubb's new oarsman. However, during their first outing, Pip leaps from the boat because he is shocked by the impact that the 'darted iron', a weapon used by harpooners to capture whales, causes (MD 224). As a result, both Pip's chest and neck become wrapped in whale line, and his face turns blue as he starts to choke. This scene brings lynching to mind. Although lynching African Americans became widespread after the Reconstruction era, lynching was also still taking place during the 1850s. Harriet C. Frazier notes that there were at least 22 recorded hangings of blacks between 1856 and 1860 in Kansas alone (22). Moreover, Frazier suspects that there were more as the mob hangings were not recorded. Frederick Douglass also makes it clear that lynching was significant by the 1850s. In *Narrative of the Life Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845), Douglass points out 'to strike a white man is death by Lynch law' (78). Thus, it was not uncommon for blacks to be lynched during the 1850s, and Pip being choked by a whale line brings this point to mind. As Pip hangs from the whale line, both Tashtego and Stubb are faced with an important decision. They must decide to cut the line and save Pip or let Pip hang and capture the whale. The reader gains insight into the racial hierarchy in this scene because Tashtego asks Stubb whether he should cut the line. Pip is choking and yet

Tashtego defers to Stubb's command. Angrily Stubb replies 'Damn him. Cut!' and the narrator tells us that the 'whale was lost and Pip was saved' (MD 413). The entire crew are angered by Pip, but it is Stubb's words that are the most wounding. Stubb exclaims:

'Stick to the boat, Pip or by ther lord, I won't pick you up if you jump mind that. We can't afford to lose whales by the likes of you: a whale would sell for thirty times what you would, Pip, in Alabama. Bear that in mind, and don't jump any more' (MD 413)

Stubb's words are invocative of slavery as Stubb places the whale's value over Pip's value. Thus, we are reminded of the central issue of the 1850s once more through the crew's interaction with Pip. Moreover, during the next time that they are together in the boat, Pip is startled again and jumps from the boat. 'Stubb, too true to his word', leaves Pip at sea, and the scene is perhaps the most haunting in *Moby-Dick*. When this occurs the narrator tells us, 'In three minutes, a whole mile of shoreless ocean was between Pip and Stubb. Out from the centre of the sea, poor Pip turned his crisp, curling black head to the sun, another lonely castaway, though the loftiest and the brightest' (MD 413). But Pip eventually, in the narrator's words, is 'by the merest chance' rescued 'but from that hour the little negro went about the deck an idiot; such at least, they said he was' (MD 414). Hence, despite Pip's age, he is subjected to harsh conditions, and in various instances in the narrative, he is treated as if a slave boy.

Moreover, after Pip returns to ship, he internalizes this image in a deeper way. In the midst of his madness, he says:

Bell-boy, Sir; ship's-crier; ding, dong, ding! Pip! Pip! Pip! One hundred pounds of clay reward for Pip; five feet high – looks cowardly – quickest known by that! Ding, dong, ding! Who's seen Pip the coward?

Here, Pip uses language that would have been familiar during the 1850s after the Fugitive Slave Law was enforced. Pip's language is reinforced by the earlier language found in 'Fast-Fish, Loose-Fish', a chapter in which the narrator's discussion of whale passion strikingly echoes a society practicing the Fugitive Slave Law. According to the narrator, a Fast-Fish is a fish that 'belongs to the party fast to it', and a Loose Fish 'is fair game for anybody who can soonest catch it' (MD 396). To illustrate these terms, the narrator uses a 'curious case of whale- litigated in England, wherein the plaintiffs set forth that after a hard chase of a whale in the Northern seas' (MD 396). Ultimately, the plaintiffs lost possession of a whale and another crew captured it, and the judge eventually decides to grant the defendants ownership. The example allegorises the Fugitive Slave Law. Firstly, this case takes place on the Northern seas, similar to the way that the Fugitive Slave law was enforced in Northern States to prevent slaves from escaping their masters in the South. Secondly, the narrator makes this allegory stronger by asking 'Is it not saying in every one's mouth. Possession is half of the law: that is, regardless of how the thing came into possession? But often possession is the whole of the law. What are the sinews and souls of Russian serfs and Republican slaves but Fast-Fish, whereof possession is the whole of the law?' (MD 395). Here, the narrator's reference to 'Republican slaves' can be read as a reference to chattel slaves or wage slaves. Nonetheless, his questions work to allegorize the chapter as not only a comment on whaling but also a comment on slavery. He also later asks 'What are the Rights of man and the Liberties of the World but Loose Fish?' and later turns on the reader asking and 'What are you, reader, but a Loose-Fish and a Fast-Fish too?' (MD 397). These questions are similar to Ishmael's earlier questions, when he asked, 'Who ain't a slave?' (MD 6). Moreover, the narrator's efforts to urge the reader to consider the ways that the case of Loose Fish and Fast Fish allegorize slavery is not limited to slavery. The narrator

also makes a point of turning our attention to colonialism as the narrator asks ‘What was America in 1492 but a Loose-Fish?’ (MD 398). Although the cetology chapters humanize the whales thus making their capture similar to slavery, the questions that the narrator poses in ‘Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish’ work to allegorize the whaling case featured in ‘Loose-Fish Fast-Fish’ by bringing our attention to slavery.

Pip’s actions are made more significant as a result of the ways that the Fugitive Slave Law is allegorized in *Moby-Dick*. In figure five below, there are some obvious similarities between the language that Pip uses and the language of Fugitive Slave posters. As the Fugitive Slave poster describes incentive and attributes, Pip offers a reward and gives a description of himself – ‘five feet high’. Thus, Melville certainly uses Pip to intensify the significance of race and racial politics in *Moby-Dick*.

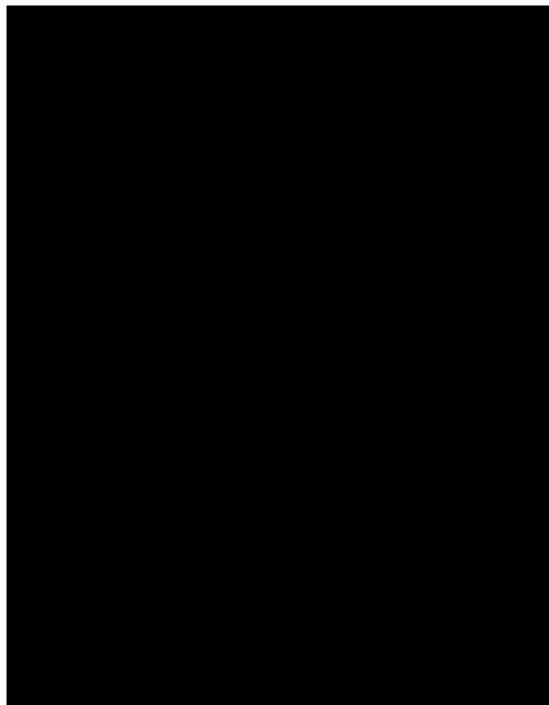


Figure 9. *\$2,500 Reward!* (Mississippi Co., Missouri, broadside, August 23, 1852)

(From the Gilder Lehrman Collection)

As well as being explicitly linked to slavery, Pip also performs racially in 'Midnight, Forecastle'. Though often not closely or critically read together, the chapter comes at the most theatrical part of the narrative. Prior to this, Melville gives us 'The Quarter-Deck' and three soliloquies from Ahab, Starbuck, and Stubb. These chapters are inextricably linked to 'Midnight, Forecastle' because 'Midnight, Forecastle' records the crew's reaction to Ahab's theatrical rallying speech in 'The Quarter-Deck'. The soliloquies work to capture Ahab's, Starbuck's, and Stubb's private reflections about capturing Moby-Dick. Then, 'Midnight, Forecastle' works as a very public reaction to the speech that Ahab gives in 'The Quarter-Deck'. Together, these chapters arguably comprise the most theatrical part of the text. What is more, Melville presents these chapters theatrically by using stage directions, and he writes 'Midnight, Forecastle' using a standard stage play format.

The chapter starts with Ahab's harpooners and sailors singing 'Spanish Ladies!' and the first Nantucket sailor immediately forbids them from singing the song because he perceives it as too 'Sentimental' and starts to recite a song more specific about their work aboard the *Pequod* (MD 95). Nonetheless, Melville's decision to include 'Spanish Ladies' in this portion of the text is significant for two primary reasons. Firstly, the song has a British origin. It was made popular as a result of being included in Captain Frederick Marryat's *Poor Jack* (1840), a novel about an abandoned sailor's son left stranded to survive in England. The song also appeared in several broadsides prior to its use in *Poor Jack*. Ultimately, the song is about British sailors who had to say goodbye to their wives. This brings me to my second point: the song is also significant because it fetishizes 'othered' women. As Gavin Daly notes, though he refers to soldiers in the Peninsular War, British soldiers 'exoticized Spanish women's real and imagined 'difference' and 'otherness' relative to other models and ideals of femininity' (Daly

201). Daly also points out that the soldiers were attracted to the 'black hair and eyes' and even the mystery created by their 'Moorish' sense of style (Daly 202). The British soldiers developed a fetish for Spanish women because they represented the exotic. This infatuation is reflected in 'Spanish Ladies'. Thus, the Nantucket sailor's rejection of this song is not only significant because the song is British but also because the song signifies a British infatuation with 'othered' women. In other words, this rejection is an attempt to appropriate the crew's work, American work at that, whilst moving the crew away from foreign influences.

This reading is cemented by the Nantucket sailor's song. It is a song about work, a song that supports Ahab's reckless pursuit of the white whale, and as soon as the sailor encourages the crew to sing it, they immediately follow despite having sung a different song.

Our captain stood upon the deck,
 A spy-glass in his hand,
 A viewing of those gallant whales
 That blew at every strand.
 Oh, your tubs in your boats, my boys,
 And by your braces stand,
 And we'll have one of those fine whales,
 Hand, boys, over hand!
 So, be cheery, my lads! may your hearts never fail!
 While the bold harpooner is striking the whale!
 Mate's Voice from the Quarter-Deck
 Eight bells there, forward! (MD 173)

The sailor perceives this song as a way that the crew can deal with Ahab's pursuit. He refers to it as 'Tonic' (MD 173). This song governs the song that came before it and steers the sailors into performing a song that complements Ahab's mission. He urges the crew to be 'cheery' despite being victims to Ahab's monomania. The sailor's origin is also important here, given Nantucket's importance in American colonial history and whaling.

Race becomes significant in the chapter, immediately after the song change. Soon after, the second Nantucket sailor urges Pip to perform. The sailor immediately draws attention to Pip's race, as he calls him a 'blackling' (MD 174). As I point out in the introduction, the way that Pip is treated in this scene is minstrel-like, and Stuckey has also pointed this out. Here, I will elaborate on this claim because Pip, in many ways, embodies the ways that minstrel children were portrayed. Imaginably, there is no stronger connection to the minstrel tradition than Pip and the minstrel song 'Ten Little Niggers'. This song would eventually become a children's group by the latter part of nineteenth century, 'Ten Little Niggers' was performed by the Christy's Minstrels, one of the most popular minstrel troupes in America. The Christy's Minstrels are often considered to be the group responsible for formalizing minstrelsy by giving minstrel shows their structure. The lyrics in 'Ten Little Niggers' presented black children as abandoned and unkempt.

Ten Little Niggers

Ten little nigger boys went out to dine;

One choked his little self and then there were Nine.

Nine little nigger boys sat up very late;

One overslept himself and then there were Eight.

Eight little nigger boys travelling in Devon;
 One said he'd stay there and then there were Seven.
 Seven little nigger boys chopping up sticks;
 One chopped himself in halves and then there were Six.
 Six little nigger boys playing with a hive;
 A bumble bee stung one and then there were Five.
 Five little nigger boys going in for law;
 One got into Chancery and then there were Four.
 Four little nigger boys going out to sea;
 A red herring swallowed one and then there were Three.
 Three little nigger boys walking in the Zoo;
 A big bear hugged one and then there were Two.
 Two little nigger boys sitting in the sun;
 One got frizzled up and then there was One.
 One little nigger boy left all alone;
 He went out and hanged himself and then there were none. (Pieterse 166)

The overall tone of the song mirrors the ways that Melville drafted Pip. The song presents black children as abandoned and ragged. The song starts with one of the children being choked and ends with another being hanged. As previously mentioned, in 'Castaway', Pip experiences an incident when he is choked at sea. Moreover, the children in the song are also out to sea, and we see this with Pip. In the song, children are discarded, and this is evident in Pip. In California Newsreel's documentary film *Ethnic Notions* (1986), the narrator informs us that the black children were usually portrayed as brutes or 'picaninnies' and were not used to generate empathy but to

demonstrate that black children were sub-human (Ethnic Notions). In the documentary, folklorist Patricia A. Turner goes on to point out that:

They're [black children] always on the river, in the uh, on the ground, in a tree, partially clad, dirty, their hair unkempt. This suggests that there was a need to imagine black children as animal-like, as savage. If you do that, if you make that step and say that these children are really like little furry animals then it's much easier to rationalize and justify the threat that's embodied in having an alligator pursuing the child. (Ethnic Notions)

Turner's reference to an alligator is not an exaggeration as it was not uncommon for areas in the South too use black children as 'Alligator bait'. Some whites would even post advertisements in the newspaper that requested black babies. One such advertisement appeared in *The Roanoke Times* on June 20, 1890. The crocodile hunter made it clear that 'when a dark brown infant with curling toes sits on a bank and blinks at them, they [the crocodiles] throw off their cloak of laziness and make their preparations for a delicate morsel of Ceylonese humanity' (TRT). Using black children as 'Alligator Bait' would eventually become the subject of several films in the twentieth century. *Alligator Bait* (1900), *The Gator and the Pickaninny* (1900), and *Untamed Fury* (1947) were all movies made depicting black children being used as 'Alligator Bait'. As Turner suggests, black children were consistently portrayed as abandoned by their parents and subject to danger. The Christy's Minstrels song portrays this, and Pip is also depicted this way. He has no parents and must endure a dangerous and arduous life aboard the *Pequod*.

Interestingly, Pip is not widely considered as a conventional child, stock minstrel figure. Another character that came a year afterwards would assume that place.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's Topsy is considered to be the first minstrel depiction of a child.

Of Topsy in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), Stowe's writes:

She was one of the blackest of her race; and her round shining eyes, glittering as glass beads, moved with quick and restless glances over everything in the room. Her mouth, half open with astonishment at the wonders of the new Mas'r's parlor, displayed a white and brilliant set of teeth. Her woolly hair was braided in sundry little tails, which stuck out in every direction. The expression of her face was an odd mixture of shrewdness and cunning, over which was oddly drawn, like a kind of veil, an expression of the most doleful gravity and solemnity. She was dressed in a single filthy, ragged garment, made of bagging; and stood with her hands demurely folded before her. Altogether, there was something odd and goblin-like about her appearance,— something, as Miss Ophelia afterwards said, 'so heathenish',

This description became significant because it would become the foundation that depictions of children in minstrel shows would be built upon. Once Stowe's novel was published, some blackface troupes produced adaptations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and they became more popularly known as 'Tom Shows' during the 1850s. Many directors who produced adaptations of Stowe's novel made light of her life as a slave and presented her in a comical way. The illustration below is the cover used for J.H. Tully's Instrumental for the production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This was the typical way that Topsy was portrayed in Tom Shows.

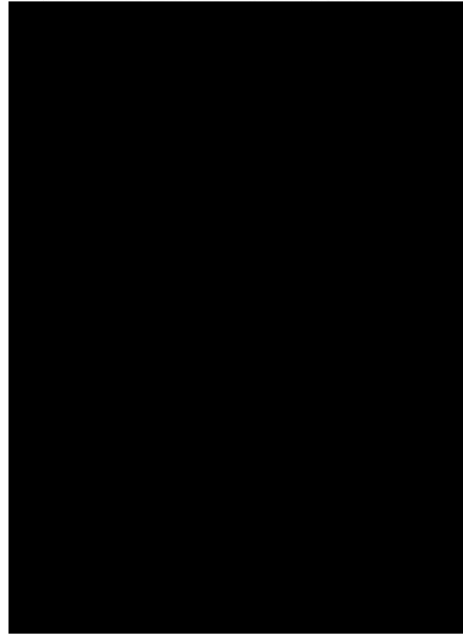


Figure 10 – *Topsy* (Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York)

Topsy's character, like the children in the Christy's Minstrels 'Ten Little Niggers', fitted the mould of the wild and sub-human black child.

Nonetheless, Pip's character had come before Topsy's and ought to be considered as a significant character within the minstrel tradition. In 'Midnight, Forecastle', as the sailors change songs and dance, Pip is made to perform. In view of Pip's character being evocative of slavery, Pip's performance is racialized in many ways. As mentioned, Pip is immediately called a 'blackling', thus drawing attention to his race. However, his performance is even more evocative of the minstrel tradition.

One of the most significant aspects of Pip that reinforces minstrelsy is his use of the tambourine. When the Christy's Minstrels developed blackface's structure they made blackface minstrelsy more musical. They were one of the first minstrel troupes to have actors who were talented musicians. In addition to providing the interlocutor, they also included two 'Endmen', who were referred as Mr. Tambo and Mr. Bones. Mr. Tambo was a dim-witted character who played the tambourine, and Mr. Bones was a

charlatan who played the ‘bones’, an old instrument that slaves played that was made from ‘hog’s ribs’ (Conlin 331). Regardless of the specific show, the Endmen would always mock one another throughout the performance, and they became an integral part of not only the Christy’s Minstrels but of all blackface productions. Both characters would become staples. Mr. Tambo was informally known as ‘Tambo’ and Mr. Bones was ‘Bones’, but was occasionally referred to as ‘Zip Coon’. Thus, Melville’s decision to place a tambourine in Pip’s hands reinforces the minstrel tradition as the tambourine was such a significant feature of minstrelsy in the 1840s and 1850s.

The scene that critics such as Stuckey point to as Pip’s minstrelsy is when the sailors aggressively force Pip to perform. Initially, when Pip is asked to play he is described as being ‘sleepy and sulky’, and he tells the crew that he cannot find the tambourine (MD 174). Yet, the sailors try to force him to play. The French sailor aggressively tells Pip to turn his body into an instrument, ‘Beat thy belly, then and wag thy ears’, he orders, thus demonstrating the importance of Pip’s performance (MD 174).

Once Pip eventually starts playing his tambourine, the tambourine works as a catalyst to excite the crew. Although some go to bed, the chapter informs us that at least half dance to Pip’s tambourine. While dancing, the Azore sailor yells to Pip, ‘Go it, Pip! Bang it, bell-boy! Rig it, dig it, stig it, quig it, bell boy! Make fire-flies, break the jinglers!’ (MD 175). Pip complies, he says ‘Jinglers, you say? There goes another, dropped off; I pound it so’ (MD 175). The Chinese sailor also tells Pip, ‘Rattle thy teeth then, and pound away, make a pagoda of thyself’ (MD 175). In the middle of this performance Pip is made to perform like a minstrel character for the rest of the crew to enjoy even against his own will. Moreover, as well as Pip being referred to as a ‘blackling’, Tashtego draws our attention to how racialized the performance is by saying, ‘That’s a white man; he calls that fun: humph! I save my sweat’ (MD 175).

Tashtego makes it clear that the performance though improvised is what the white man calls fun.

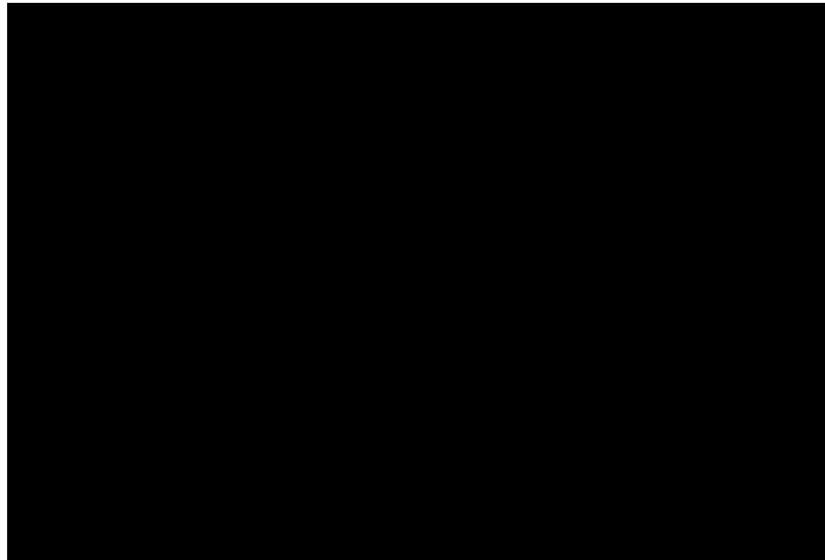


Figure 11 – Allen Tallenby performing a ‘Pip’ in John Huston’s adaptation of Moby Dick, 1976

The issue of race becomes most substantial by the end of the chapter, once the performance is over. Daggoo and the Spanish sailor fight over the colour of the storm. After seeing the storm, the Old Manx sailor says, ‘This is the sort of weather when brave hearts snap ashore, and keeled hulls split at sea. Our captain has his birth-mark; look yonder, boys, there's another in the sky - lurid-like, ye see, all else pitch black’ (MD 177). Daggoo is angered by this, and he replies, ‘What of that? Who's afraid of black's afraid of me! I'm quarried out of it!’ (MD 177). The Spanish sailor is aggravated and responds, ‘He wants to bully, ah! - the old grudge makes me touchy. Aye, harpooner, thy race is the undeniable dark side of mankind - devilish dark at that. No offence. Jollies?’ (MD 178). The Spanish sailor’s dialogue is accompanied by the stage direction ‘advancing’ (MD 178). Both Daggoo and the Spanish are getting ready to fight. The only thing that prevents the two from fighting is the sound of lighting.

The storm works to diffuse the racial tension that takes place between Daggoo and the Spanish sailor. Moreover, at the end of the chapter, Pip's enigmatic words allude to the relevance of race in the storm. Pip says, 'But those chaps there are worse yet - they are your white squalls, they. White squalls? white whale, shirr!' (MD 178). Pip sees the white squalls in the dark storm, and suggests that it is the white squalls that are far worse. Race seems relevant here because of the racial tension that the storm created between Daggoo and the Spanish sailor. The tension that arises between Daggoo and the Spanish sailor and Pip's comments ought not to come as a surprise, as Pip's performance works to conceal the racial hierarchy and Ahab's monomania aboard the ship. His performance is redolent of blackface, and he is made to play as the *Pequod* moves closer to destruction.

Ultimately, Pip's performance works to conceal the true nature of Ahab's totalitarianism. Although the crew are apprehensive about Ahab's mission, they perform contented roles aboard the *Pequod*. Pip's racial significance makes race important whenever Pip performs. When the Picaninny character is considered when examining Pip, his proximity to minstrelsy seems very clear. Moreover, his performance in 'Midnight, Forecastle' comes when the crew are considering what Ahab's mission means. They decide to sing and go about their work, and within this performance Pip gives us an act that endorses minstrelsy. In this chapter that exhibits the crew's anxiety, Pip's performance plays the happy darky as if the crew are not anxious about Ahab's obsession with *Moby-Dick*.

The connection between Pip and minstrelsy is made even clearer much later in narrative. In 'The Doubloon', Pip says:

‘Here’s the ship’s navel, this doubloon here, and they are all one fire to unscrew it. But, unscrew your navel, and what’s the consequence? Then again, if it stays here, that is ugly, too, for when aught’s nailed to the mast it’s a sign that things grow desperate. Ha! ha! old Ahab! the White Whale; he’ll nail ye! This is a pine tree. My father, in old Tolland county, cut down a pine tree once, and found a silver ring grown over in it; some old darkey’s wedding ring. How did it get there? And so they’ll say in the resurrection, when they come to fish up this old mast, and find a doubloon lodged in it, with bedded oysters for the shaggy bark. Oh, the gold! the precious, precious gold!- the green miser’ll hoard ye soon! Hish! hish! God goes ‘mong the worlds blackberrying. Cook! ho, cook! and cook us! Jenny! hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, Jenny, Jenny! and get your hoe-cake done!’ (MD 435)

Here, Pip perceives the Doubloon as this ship’s navel, and he suggest that once the Doubloon is removed, the *Pequod* will be destroyed. He then retells a story about his father retrieving a ring from a tree but never knowing how it got there. Pip predicts that the same thing will happen to the Doubloon. He suggests that the ship will be destroyed and only the Doubloon will remain. He ends this forecast with the lines of a famous minstrel song. As Lott notes, the lines are from ‘one of the most popular minstrel songs in the 1840s’: the Virginia Minstrels’ ‘Old King Crow’ (1843) (168). This moment cements the connection between Pip and minstrelsy, and it comes during one of the most important parts of the narrative, as Pip envision the *Pequod*’s end.

CONCLUSION

The ambiguity of racial equality found in *Moby-Dick* reflected 1850s American society. Although *White-Jacket* came slightly after the sailor flogging debate began, the text

clearly critiques flogging, especially white sailors. When black sailors are flogged, the treatment in *White-Jacket* is minute in comparison to when white sailors are flogged. Nonetheless, a lot had changed during the time between Melville's finishing the *White-Jacket* manuscript and his working on *Moby-Dick*. There was the Compromise of 1850, the Fugitive Slave Law, and Lemuel Shaw. If Americans made efforts to resist thinking about slavery, it would have been impossible to ignore these events at the turn of the decade. What is more, Melville had to personally wrestle with the tension caused by racial inequality. Melville's Father-in-Law was at the centre of the Fugitive Slave Law conflict. Once considered as someone who opposed slavery, the Fugitive Slave law would force Shaw to make a public decision about slavery. Shaw's position would complicate matters further for Melville because he had a good relationship with him. Shaw had helped look after Melville when his father died, and Shaw helped Melville purchase his home. Thus, even if Melville strongly contested slavery personally, publically denouncing slavery would mean publically condemning his father-in-law.

Moreover, Melville's friends did not appear to have strong views on slavery. By the time that he started working on *Moby-Dick*, he had developed a good relationship with Nathaniel Hawthorne, and it was unclear where Hawthorne stood upon the slave issue. There are very few explicit references to slavery in Hawthorne's work. Like many Americans, those who surrounded Melville thought that slavery would somehow sort itself out. This view was a popular one and would later be captured in Lincoln's 'House Divided' (1858). As Lincoln put it, 'I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided' (Lincoln). Lincoln, like those that surrounded Melville, believed that the conflict that surrounded slavery would end organically.

Nonetheless, Melville's fervent disdain for tyranny would eventually push him to wrestle with race and slavery explicitly in his 1850s texts. In earlier works, he hints

at what his views on slavery could be. In *Typee*, his admiration for the people on the Polynesian islands and contempt for Captain Vangs tells us what his views on slavery could be. In *Mardi* (1848) and *Redburn* (1849), he references and perhaps also gives us signs. In *Mardi*, he gives the handbill promising the bounty for runaway slaves, and in *Redburn*, the Lord Nelson statue causes the narrator's mind to think about African slaves. However, in *Moby-Dick*, race's presence is more significant. The symbolism in *Moby-Dick* represents American society. From the crew members matching the same number of states to Pip being both from Connecticut and an 'Alabama Boy', race and slavery are very much a part of *Moby-Dick*.

However, although Melville gives more space to race issues, this does not mean that his views are clear. He manages to capture the mood of a country about to go to War over slavery. Like the ambiguity of the founding documents, race is ambiguous in *Moby-Dick* and was ambiguous to Melville. Through Pip, Melville addresses many of the racial issues that plague 1850s America. Pip is a black product of the Union and also very much a part of the minstrel tradition. In 'Midnight, Forecastle', Pip explicitly takes on this minstrel persona by being made to perform for the entire crew. However, his performance also works as a way for the crew to deal with the 'dumb blankness' caused by Ahab's monomaniacal quest to capture Moby-Dick.

In this chapter, I have primarily examined the ways that Pip's performance works to conceal the true nature of the tyranny that is taking place aboard the *Pequod*. Despite being an 'Alabama Boy', Pip is still being subjected to Ahab's monomania. To mask Ahab's tyrannical rule, Pip performs minstrelsy. He beats his tambourine in the face of Ahab's authoritarianism. Moreover, Pip's performance is illuminated by Melville's use of political symbolism in the text. The crew are representative of the Union and the power system aboard the *Pequod* is racialized as those who have power

are white. These aspects of *Moby-Dick* work to make Melville's epic novel about more than whaling. Through Melville's use of symbolism, we see a country on its way to Civil War.

Moby-Dick marks a change in the way that Melville addresses race in his work. The previous year, in *White-Jacket*, his focus appears to be on the issue of sailor flogging. However, by *Moby-Dick*, Melville, though using symbolism, starts to turn his attention to slavery. He uses the smallest member of the *Pequod* to bring up issues of slavery and race in the narrative. Through Pip, we not only see the Union's approach to race, but we also see a product of the Union. Pip is from both Alabama and Connecticut. Additionally, the ambiguity of the whale's whiteness works to complicate Ahab's totalitarianism, and as I point out at the beginning of the chapter, it replicates or creates similar conditions to a country that championed liberty but yet practiced it and interpreted it ambiguously.

Ultimately, the ambiguous textual representations in *Moby-Dick* are translated through Melville's allegorical treatment of slavery. Rather than directly conveying America's issues, they are conveyed through a series of signs that can be interpreted in different ways. More clearly, they do and do not treat slavery, thus representing the national racial crisis. The distance that these signs convey are a hallmark of the Romance. Moreover, there are other practical aspects of the allegorical mode that work to mirror the national racial dilemma that was taking place in America during the 1850s. Firstly, the allegorical mode, as Paul De Man points out, works to capture time's finitude, thus capturing the allegorical nature of race itself. More clearly, race works to represent something. This aspect of race is also captured by Judith Butler's theory on hate speech. She suggests that "hate speech is an act that recalls prior acts, requiring a future repetition to endure" (20). It is through this repetition that we witness the

temporality of race, allowing us to think of racial signs as allegorical. Secondly, allegory can allow capture the practical nature of race because of allegory's link to crisis. This observation is brought to light in *Exiled Waters: Moby Dick and the crisis of Allegory* (1982), Bainard Cowan argues that allegory tends to be created during times of crisis, and *Moby-Dick* is no exception. Thus, allegory in *Moby-Dick* creates textual representations that work to mirror the racial problems that Americans were facing during the nineteenth century.

Having focused primarily on *Moby-Dick* in this chapter, Chapter Three shall focus on *Benito Cereno*, a novella published by Putnam's Monthly. *Benito Cereno* is central to critical discussions of racial performance in Melville's work. I read the text as a narrative about racial passing and suggest that the novella marks a development of racial performance in Melville's work because he moves from forms of racial performance that are less theatrical and towards more social performances in *Benito Cereno*. Moreover, these social performances work to blend *Benito Cereno* represents a growing sensitivity to both race and racial performance in Melville's narratives as it was produced in a time when racial performance was significant and meant the price of freedom to some slaves who managed to pass as white. Also, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had intensified the sense of racial performance in American society both theatrically and socially, and I analyse the ways that *Benito Cereno* functions in reaction to Stowe's novel. The chapter also explores the way that the narrative manages to capture the historical moment's ambiguity towards race.

THREE

Benito Cereno!* An 1850s Same-Race Passing Narrative?: Racial Masquerade in Melville's *Benito Cereno

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,-
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

- Paul Laurence Dunbar, 'We Wear The Mask'

This chapter focuses on Melville's *Benito Cereno* (1855) and strives to investigate the ways that the novella marks an important stage in the development of racial performance in Melville's work. Additionally, I examine the ways that the narrative works to mirror social enactments of race during the 1850s. I precisely ask: How does racial performance in *Benito Cereno* echo race in American society? What is the nature of race enacted in *Benito Cereno*? What is the relationship between the racial enactments evident in *Benito Cereno* and the racial performances found in Melville's earlier and later works during the 1850s? Finally, how do the racial portrayals in this narrative correlate with the national racial crisis?

Divided into six sections, this chapter primarily focuses on the ways that racial identity is enacted by the literary characters in *Benito Cereno*. To lay the foundation for the chapter, the first section outlines the conventions and influence of slave narratives. In the second section, I examine racial masquerade during the 1850s, particularly, focusing on a form of racial masquerade formally referred to as racial passing. In this

section, I point out that racial passing was a culturally visible phenomenon that was especially widespread after the Fugitive Slave Law was introduced. To explore passing, I consider one of the most recognized occurrences of passing in the 1850s: William and Ellen Craft. However, in the latter portion of the section, I focus on examples of racial passing that were included in literary fiction. To assist me in accurately analysing racial passing, I divide racial passing into two terms, cross-racial passing and same-racial passing. Cross-racial passing is when an individual masquerades as if they are from a different race. Contrastingly, same-racial passing describes the process of an individual who performs racial stereotypes that are associated with their racial group. These definitions shall be made clearer in the second section of this chapter. Section three explores the ways that Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) symbolized and amplified racial performance during the 1850s. As well as giving a brief outline of that text, this section explores the ways that racial masquerade is cultivated in *Benito Cereno*. Section four points out the ways that the passing in *Benito Cereno* works to oppose conventional literary portrayals of racial passing. Towards the end of the section, I posit *Benito Cereno* as a text that challenged conventional depictions of racial performance in passing narratives. In section five I argue that in *Benito Cereno* Melville gives us a deeper exploration of race than conventional texts, such as slave and passing narratives, which dealt with racial masquerade. Section six surveys the ways that the racial performance complements the form and dynamics of the novella. To conclude, I analyse the ways that racial performance relates to America's developing slavery debate in the 1850s.

THE CONVENTIONAL SLAVE NARRATIVE

Benito Cereno was written during a period in which there was considerable interest in slavery. In *The Slave Narrative: Its Place in American History*, Marion Straling writes, ‘The autobiographical record of George Washington Carver, published in 1994, is the last of more than six thousand extant narratives of American Negro slaves, the first of which was published nearly two and a half centuries ago, the narrative of one Adam, ‘servant of John Saffin, Esquire’, printing in Boston in 1703’ (1). The amount of slave narratives that were published are testament to their popularity. Moreover, slave narratives fed into abolitionist agendas, thus making them a political resource as well as a form that provided money. Despite being posited as individual ‘unvarnished’ accounts of slavery, slave narratives endorsed a clear form that was established by some of the major narratives such as Frederick Douglass’ *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845). In ‘“I Was Born”: Slave Narratives’ (1984), James Olney convincingly outlines this form. Olney writes:

The conventions for slave narratives were so early and so firmly established that one can imagine a sort of master outline drawn from the great narratives and guiding the lesser ones. Such an outline would look something like this: A. An engraved portrait, signed by the narrator. B. A title page that includes the claim, as an integral part of the title, ‘Written by Himself’ (or some close variant: ‘Written from a statement of Facts Made by Himself’; or ‘Written by a Friend, as Related to Him by Brother Jones’; etc.) C. A handful of testimonials and/or one or more prefaces or introductions written either by a white abolitionist friend of the narrator (William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips) or by a white amanuensis/editor/author actually responsible for the text (John Greenleaf Whittier, David Wilson, Louis Alexis Chamerovzow), in the course of which preface the reader is told that the narrative is a ‘plain, unvarnished tale’ and that

naught 'has been set down in malice, nothing exaggerated, nothing drawn from the imagination'-indeed, the tale, it is claimed, understates the horrors of slavery. D. A poetic epigraph, by preference from William Cowper. E. The actual narrative: 1. a first sentence beginning, 'I was born ... ', then specifying a place but not a date of birth; 2. a sketchy account of parentage,, often involving a white father; 3. description of a cruel master, mistress, or overseer, details of first observed whipping and numerous subsequent whippings, with women very frequently the victims; 4. an account of one extraordinarily strong, hardworking slave often 'pure African'-who, because there is no reason for it, refuses to be whipped; 5. record of the barriers raised against slave literacy and the overwhelming difficulties encountered in learning to read and write; 6. description of a 'Christian' slaveholder (often of one such dying in terror) and the accompanying claim that 'Christian' slaveholders are invariably worse than those professing no religion; 7. description of the amounts and kinds of food and clothing given to slaves, the work required of them, the pattern of a day, a week, a year; 51 8. account of a slave auction, of families being separated and destroyed, of distraught mothers clinging to their children as they are torn from them, of slave coffles being driven South; 9. description of patrols, of failed attempt(s) to escape, of pursuit by men and dogs; 10. description of successful attempt(s) to escape, lying by during the day, travelling by night guided by the North Star, reception in a free state by Quakers who offer a lavish breakfast and much genial thee/thou conversation; 11. taking of a new last name (frequently one suggested by a white abolitionist) to accord with new social identity as a free man, but retention of first name as a mark of continuity of individual identity; 12. reflections on slavery. F. An appendix or appendices composed of

documentary material bills of sale, details of purchase from slavery, newspaper items-, further reflections on slavery, sermons, anti-slavery speeches, poems, appeals to the reader for funds and moral support in the battle against slavery. (50-51)

This 'Master Plan for Narratives', as Onley calls it, is also reinforced by his decision to frame the article with a discussion of memory. Onley discusses Paul Ricoeur's theory on narrative and hermeneutics to highlight the ways that slave narratives are performed and purposely structured to fulfil a narrative purpose. As Ricoeur points out:

Poiesis both reflects and resolves the paradox of time [...] It reflects it to the extent that the act of emplotment combines in various proportions two temporal dimensions, one chronological dimension. It characterizes the story as made out of events. The second is the configurational dimension, thanks to which the plot construes significant wholes out of scattered events. (qtd, in Onley 47-48)

Onley applies this dynamic of narrative to slave narratives to reinforce that they employ a structure, and he also compares them to autobiography to demonstrate that even texts that profess to be purely reflections of life are reliant upon structure. To support his argument he suggests that autobiographies such as Augustine's *Confessions* like slave narratives 'exhibit a highly conventional, rigidly fixed form that bears much the same relationship to autobiography in a full sense as painting by numbers bears to painting a creative act' (Onley 48).

Given this rigid structure, Onley goes on to point out that the slave narrative is foundational to African American literature primarily as a result of the inherent structure in slave narratives. However, the slave narrative was foundational to

American literature as a whole, especially upon one of the most important literary texts of the 1850s: Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Moreover, slave narratives played a fundamental role in shaping narratives that dealt with racial masquerade. The emphasis on religion, violence, mixed parentage, and literacy can be found in texts that arguably fall outside of the slave narrative genre. Melville's inclusion of some of these themes in his 1850s texts also demonstrates their significance.

However, as shall be discussed in this chapter, many these themes are reworked and challenged in some of his texts that explicitly deal with slavery. For example, *Benito Cereno* managed to challenge the way that Christianity was depicted in slave narratives. Christianity was, in many ways, considered to be a solution to all of the problems that arose from slavery. Even the narratives themselves were structured around religious patterns, ultimately ending with redemption or a sense of spiritual awakening. Nonetheless, Christianity thwarts rather than solves the slavery issues that are brought up in the narratives. The slaves aboard the *San Dominick* are not saved by Judeo-Christian beliefs.

RACIAL MASQUERADE DURING THE 1850s

Before examining how *Benito Cereno* reacted against some of the central themes that can be found in slave narrative, what follows below is a discussion of some of the racial masquerading that took place during the years that ran up to the Civil War. Firstly, the section focuses on the racial masquerade that William and Ellen Craft employed to escape from Georgia to the Free North. Secondly, I review some of the prominent literary texts, also referred to as passing narratives, that were written during and about racial passing in the 1850s. Ultimately, as well as providing a starting point to highlight thematic differences between *Benito Cereno* and slave narratives, this section will

underscore the social significance of racial performance in the world that Melville was living in.

The most highly publicized example of racial masquerade that had taken place during the 1850s was William and Ellen Craft. They were both slaves in Georgia but decided to plan an escape in 1848. Ellen was of mixed heritage; her father was a white slave owner, and Ellen's mother was a black slave. Favouring her father, the pigment of Ellen's skin was 'nearly white', (Craft 30). However, William appeared much darker as his parents were both black slaves. The pair decided to flee to the Free States in the North, eventually deciding to escape to Boston. They devised a plan in which Ellen would pose as white 'invalid gentleman', and William would pose as her slave (Craft 29). The reason they decided to make Ellen pose as an 'invalid' was so authorities would not make her write as she was illiterate.

Initially, Ellen was reluctant to see the plan through as a result of the dangerous consequences that they might face if they were caught. However, after considering her condition as a slave, Ellen changed her mind. William explained, 'She saw that the laws under which we lived did not recognize her to be a woman, but a mere chattel, to be bought and sold, or otherwise dealt with as her owner might see fit. Therefore the more she contemplated her helpless condition, the more anxious she was to escape from it' (30). As William pointed out, Ellen's desire to be recognized as a woman in society was important to her. Additionally, both William and Ellen decided not to have children while they are enslaved. The desire to have children was also something that pushed Ellen towards attempting to escape.

William and Ellen's performance began when they arrived at the train station. Suspecting that William and Ellen were trying to escape, William's cabinet-maker

owner went to the station to look for them. He interrogated the ticket-seller ‘and then commenced looking rapidly through the passengers and the carriages’ (Craft 43). At that moment, William believed that they would be caught. Nevertheless, the cabinet-maker failed to recognize Ellen, and the train left the station before the cabinet-maker peered into William’s carriage.

Once the train left the station, Ellen also noticed that an old friend of her master, Mr. Cray, was in the same carriage as her (Craft 46). However, Mr. Cray failed to recognize Ellen, and he tried to start a conversation with her. Afraid that her voice might incriminate her, Ellen then pretended that she was deaf, so she did not have to speak. Her plan worked, and she listened to ‘the three great topics of discussion in first-class circles in Georgia, namely, Niggers, Cotton, and the Abolitionists’ (Craft 45). Ellen also encountered several white people on her journey who attempted to dissuade her from bringing William to the Free States. The most intense exchange occurred when a slave-dealer confronted her:

I would not take a nigger to the North under no consideration. I have had a deal to do with niggers in my time, but I never saw one who ever had his heel upon free soil that was worth a d—n [...] Now stranger [...] if you have made up your mind to sell that ere nigger, I am your man; just mention your price, and if it isn't out of the way, I will pay for him on this board with hard silver dollars [...]What do you say, stranger?[...]You will have to get on without him if you take him to the North, [...] for I can tell ye, stranger, as a friend, I am an older cove than you, I have seen lots of this ere world, and I reckon I have had more dealings with niggers than any man living or dead. I was once employed by General Wade Hampton, for ten years, in doing nothing but breaking 'em in; and everybody knows that the General would not have a man that didn't

understand his business. So I tell ye, stranger, again, you had better sell, and let me take him down to Orleans. He will do you no good if you take him across Mason's and Dixon's line; he is a keen nigger, and I can see from the cut of his eye that he is certain to run away. (47-48)

Despite the slave dealer's fervent words, Ellen managed to maintain her masquerade by reassuring the slave-dealer that she did not wish to sell her slave because she could not 'get on well without him' (48). She also explained that she had 'great confidence in his fidelity' (48). Although her response angered the slave dealer, Ellen still managed to maintain her disguise, and she managed to fool all of the people that she interacted with.

William also performed. He did so when he was in the carriage with Ellen. However, he also performed when he interacted with other slaves. When he took his 'master's' boots out of the carriage to polish them, William encountered a slave from South Carolina.

'Say, brudder, way you come from, and which side you goin day wid dat ar little don up buckra (white man)?

I replied, 'To Philadelphia'.

'What!' he exclaimed, with astonishment, 'to Philumadelphly?'

'Yes', I said.

'By squash! I wish I was going wid you! I hears um say dat dare's no slaves way over in dem parts; is um so?'

I quietly said, 'I have heard the same thing.'

‘Well’, continued he, as he threw down the boot and brush, and, placing his hands in his pockets, strutted across the floor with an air of independence—
 ‘Gorra Mighty, dem is de parts for Pompey; and I hope when you get dare you will stay, and nebber follow dat buckra back to dis hot quarter no more, let him be eber so good.’

I thanked him; and just as I took the boots up and started off, he caught my hand between his two, and gave it a hearty shake, and, with tears streaming down his cheeks, said:--

‘God bless you, broder, and may de Lord be wid you. When you gets de freedom, and sitin under your own wine and fig-tree, don't forget to pray for poor Pompey’ (53-54).

In this exchange, William performed before the slave. To reinforce his masquerade, he explained that ‘I was afraid to say much to him, but I shall never forget his earnest request, nor fail to do what little I can to release the millions of unhappy bondmen, of whom he was one’ (54). Thus, although telling a slave that he is trying to escape may not have the same consequences as telling a white person, he still maintained his performance and was afraid to disclose his plans. Also, the slave was also fooled by Ellen’s disguise, and William worked to preserve her performance as well.

Once William and Ellen managed to reach the North, they settled in Boston, and Abolitionists helped them to establish lives in the North. After living in the North for two years, the Fugitive Slave Law was introduced, and they decided to flee to England. Once there, they gave public lectures about their escape from slavery and eventually published *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom* (1860), an autobiographical work detailing their experience. After the Civil War, the Crafts would eventually return to

the United States as free people. They lived the remainder of their lives in Georgia, the state that they initially escaped from.

The Craft's narrative was both nationally and internationally recognized. Their experience highlighted the ways that American racial ideology could be manipulated. Moreover, William and Ellen's escape to the North was representative of many instances of racial masquerade. Their performance meant the difference between freedom and slavery. Being able to pass on that train heading north led to their eventual freedom. Explicitly, Ellen managed to perform whiteness and pass as white. This is what I term as cross-racial passing because her passing takes place between and across two racial groups. Although socially categorized as black, she masqueraded as if she was from a different race and gender. There were flaws in her performance. An officer became frustrated with the polite way that William spoke to Ellen and said:

You will excuse me, Sir, for saying I think you are very likely to spoil your boy by saying 'thank you' to him. I assure you, sir, nothing spoils a slave so soon as saying, 'thank you' and 'if you please' to him. The only way to make a nigger toe the mark, and to keep him in his place, is to storm at him like thunder, and keep him trembling like a leaf. Don't you see, when I speak to my Nod, he darts like lightning; and if he didn't I'd skin him. (50)

Though Ellen was criticized, her performance was enough to convince those around her. Moreover, while passing, in the 1850s, was generally considered to be black people passing as white to gain privilege, William also demonstrated how passing could also be considered as black people passing as black. This is what I term as same-racial passing.

Same-racial passing is better understood in the context of slavery because black people were generally considered to be slaves in the South but could possibly be free in the North. Hence, by performing as a slave in the South, William performed his blackness because his race was so tightly bound to his freedom. By performing as if he was a slave accompanying his master to the North, William was also participating in racial masquerade and was passing as black by passing as a slave. The captain, the officer, and the slave dealer all exhibited vehement racial views that helped to buttress the Crafts' performances. Rather than paying attention to Ellen's dialect and the sling that covered her face, they were more interested in conveying their prejudice in conversations about slavery and abolitionists. Nonetheless, their bigotry, along with William's and Ellen's performances, enabled the Crafts to escape to the North. What is more, William's ability to pass was just as important as Ellen's racial masquerade.

The Crafts' escape was arguably the most publicized and celebrated account of racial masquerade. Although they published *Running* in 1860, their story was known throughout the 1850s. Moreover, their story was not the only episode of racial passing. Another famous account of racial masquerade was Frederick Douglass' escape to the North. After failing to escape several times, on September 3, 1838, Douglass disguised himself as a black sailor in order to flee to New York. Douglass wrote:

Had I gone into the station and offered to purchase a ticket, I should have been instantly and carefully examined, and undoubtedly arrested. In choosing this plan I considered the jostle of the train, and the natural haste of the conductor, in a train crowded with passengers, and relied upon my skill and address in playing the sailor, as described in my protection, to do the rest. One element in my favor was the kind feeling which prevailed in Baltimore and other sea-

ports at the time, toward 'those who go down to the sea in ships'. 'Free trade and sailors' rights' just then expressed the sentiment of the country. In my clothing I was rigged out in sailor style. I had on a red shirt and a tarpaulin hat, and a black cravat tied in sailor fashion carelessly and loosely about my neck. My knowledge of ships and sailor's talk came much to my assistance, for I knew a ship from stem to stern, and from keelson to cross-trees, and could talk sailor like an 'old salt'. I was well on the way to Havre de Grace before the conductor came into the negro car to collect tickets and examine the papers of his black passengers. This was a critical moment in the drama. My whole future depended upon the decision of this conductor. Agitated though I was while this ceremony was proceeding, still, externally, at least, I was apparently calm and self-possessed. He went on with his duty -- examining several colored passengers before reaching me. He was somewhat harsh in tone and peremptory in manner until he reached me, when, strange enough, and to my surprise and relief, his whole manner changed. Seeing that I did not readily produce my free papers, as the other colored persons in the car had done, he said to me, in friendly contrast with his bearing toward the others:

'I suppose you have your free papers?'

To which I answered:

'No sir; I never carry my free papers to sea with me.'

'But you have something to show that you are a freeman, haven't you?'

'Yes, sir,' I answered; 'I have a paper with the American Eagle on it, and that will carry me around the world.' (681)

Although Douglass does not pass in the conventional sense, like William Craft, he racially masquerades a role to achieve his freedom. He passes as black (same-racial passing). To reinforce the sense of masquerade in the narrative, Douglass used phrases such as ‘playing the sailor’ and words such as ‘drama’. Also, the conductor displayed a certain ignorance that was comparable to Delano and the passengers who travelled with Crafts. The conductor is far more concerned with Douglass’ possible status as a slave than the actual quality of the documents that Douglass provided.

Writers also produced fictional accounts about racial passing. Just two years prior to Melville’s *Benito Cereno*, William Wells Brown’s *Clotel* (1853) was published, and it was one of the most notable fictional accounts of racial passing during the 1850s. The narrative traced the lives of Curren, the ‘bright mulatto’, and her daughters Clotel and Althesa, daughters fathered by Thomas Jefferson (Brown 5). Similar to Ellen Craft, Althesa’s light appearance allowed her to cross-racially pass and marry the white, ‘kind and affectionate’ Henry Morton; the pair also had two daughters, Jane and Ellen (Brown 68). Tragically, when Althesa and Henry died, their daughters were placed into bondage. Thus, racial passing was a significant theme in *Clotel*, and the narratives central characters were all impacted by this form of racial masquerade.

Frank J. Webb’s *The Garies and Their Friends* (1857) was another text with racial passing at its centre. The narrative detailed the lives of the Garies family who must wrestle with America’s racial lines and slave laws. Clarence Garies is a wealthy white slave owner who falls in love with one of his slaves, Emily, who is both black and white. They live in Georgia and have two children, Emily and Clarence, who both appear white. However, despite having a white father, they are still considered to be black, and as their mother is legally recognized as Mr. Garies slave mistress, the

children are considered to be slaves. As the text was set in Georgia, Clarence could not legally marry Emily. However, although many in Georgia condemned their union, they still managed to continue with their lives.

With Mr. Garies alive, his children avoided being enslaved because despite being legally considered to be slaves in Georgia, Mr. Garies did not treat Emily and Clarence like slaves. Nonetheless, if Mr. Garies died, Mrs. Garies feared that both her children and herself would be enslaved. To remove this fear, the Garies decided to move to Philadelphia, so that they could live in a Free State. This was one of the major twists in the narrative because after they moved north they experienced more racial prejudice than they had done in the South. Although the children passed as white, Mrs. Garies had darker skin, so many white members of their community did not accept the family. A minister refused to legally marry the Garies, and the children, who were mixed-race, encountered problems at school when parents of their classmates discovered that fact. More fatally, Mr. Stevens plotted to kill Mr. Garies in a mob attack. Therefore, the narrative challenged the racial conceptions of the Free North by illustrating that the Garies lives were made worse after they relocated to Philadelphia. Additionally, the narrative revealed that racial masquerade did not work and could not be sustained throughout a lifetime. We witnessed this in the children's experience at school, and also when the Garies' son, Clarence, was told never to contact Anne Bates because her father discovered that he was not white.

This tragic narrative is comparable to Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig* (1859), another story with passing as its central theme. Wilson also managed to portray the Free North negatively, revealing that it was equally as prejudiced as the proslavery states. This was evident in the way that the narrative's central character Frado was treated by

the Belmont family. Frado was of mixed parentage and is abandoned at the Belmont's after her mother, Mag Smith, decided that she could no longer look after her. Mr. Belmont accepted Frado because she appeared white, but his daughter, Mary, and his wife were unhappy with her living with them. Frado's experience at the Belmont's is crucial to the narrative and impacted the way that she viewed herself, as she began to wish to appear white and to be white so that she would be accepted. The harrowing narrative grappled with America's racial categorizations and revealed some of the tensions that arose as a result of being mixed-race but appearing as white.

Moreover, passing was such a central matter during the 1850s that some writers who wrote about the subject much later used the 1850s as the setting for their narratives. This is evident in Charles W. Chesnutt's *The Passing of Grandison*, a short story included in *The Wife of his Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (1899). In an attempt to impress Charity Lomac, Dick Owens, the son of a plantation owner, decided to help one of his father's slaves to escape. To carry out his plan, Dick explained to his father, Colonel Owens, that he wanted a slave to accompany him to some of the Northern States. Initially, Dick requested his father's slave Tom. However, his father believed that Tom would try to escape and told Dick to take Tom's brother Grandison instead.

Once they arrived in the North, Dick attempted to help Grandison escape. However, Grandison refused to leave Dick, so Dick decided to have Grandison kidnaped and left the North without him. Upon receiving the news that Dick had helped a slave to escape, Charity decided to marry Dick. Nonetheless, after several days had passed, Grandison returned, and Colonel Owens celebrated and made Grandison his house servant. Grandison's return cemented the colonel's view that the plantation was a good place for black people, and he held more firmly to the notion of the loyal slave.

However, these views were tarnished several weeks after Grandison's return because he decided to flee North with his family. Grandison did not pass as white, but he passed as the docile slave, and this allowed him to fool Colonel Owens and even Dick to some degree. Colonel Owen's perception of Grandison was shattered by Grandison's escape after his being made a house slave.

Certainly, racial passing became a central issue during the 1850s. Some authors gave autobiographical accounts such as William and Ellen Craft, and others gave fictional accounts such as Brown's *Clotel*, Webb's *Garies*, and Wilson's *Our Nig*. Some accounts that were written about passing and were published after the 1850s used the period as setting for their narratives. We witness this with 'The Passing of Grandison' and also in Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. Moreover, from these accounts both fictional and non-fictional, we learn some of the dynamics of the colour line during the 1850s. More crucially, passing displays the ways that racial masquerade takes place socially and cuts many different ways. William's Sambo like performance was as important as Ellen's masquerade. Passing has both a cross-racial and same-racial dynamic that many of these works managed to address.

THE BRIDGE THAT STOWE'S *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN* BUILT: *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN* AND THE RISE OF THE 'TOM SHOW'

While the last section examined racial masquerade, this section shall examine the ways that the relationship that evolved between Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the blackface minstrel show illuminated the importance of racial performance during the 1850s. In doing so, I create a backdrop for my subsequent analysis of Melville's *Benito Cereno*, a novella that came only three years after Stowe's novel.

Published in 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* shook America and various parts of the world during the heart of America's slave debate. With moving characters such as Uncle Tom and Eliza, the narrative was one of the primary texts written in the 1850s that turned the reader's attention towards race and slavery. Given the importance of slavery at the time the book was published, the text was interpreted by polemicists on either side of the slavery debate. Moreover, the text redefined the ways that publishers perceived popular books, as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sold a staggering 300,000 copies in its first year in print. Stowe's narrative also became popular in European countries such as Great Britain. Some of her followers viewed her as the American female version of Charles Dickens, producing a narrative that received international acclaim.

Nevertheless, in many ways, Stowe built upon the inherent form and popularity of slave narratives. Amongst many similarities, there is a strong emphasis on reading and literacy. Aunt Chloe marvels at George's ability to both read and write and his willingness to visit Uncle Tom and give him reading lessons. Aunt Chloe remarks 'How easy white folks al'us does things! [...] The way he can write, now! And read, too! And then to come out here evenings and read his lessons to us,-it's mighty interestin!'

(Stowe 10). Her words illustrate the importance of literacy to the slaves. She values literacy and praises George for how easily that he reads. As Onley, points out literacy was significant in slave narratives, being able to read a write was a marker that complimented their freedom.

In addition, some of the rhetoric that Stowe uses to certify the humanity of the black characters is also evident in slave narratives. In *Archives of American Time: Literature and Modernity in Nineteenth Century*, Lloyd Pratt points out that 'the African American life narrative was expected to testify to the dehumanization and the

humanity of African Americans at one and the same time. We can trace the contradictory demand in the literature's effort to highlight the vague outlines of an experience of progress that might have been otherwise nearly indiscernible in the lives of this literature's subjects' (157). Stowe builds on this from the outset, entitling the first chapter in a way that illuminates the humanity of her protagonist, Uncle Tom, and also, arguably Harry. These aspects of the novel, along with the emphasis of violence and religion, are firmly rooted themes in slave narratives.

However, Stowe managed to outsell all of the slave narratives that came before *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the narrative's success was also accompanied by the significant impact that the narrative had on society, especially politics and popular culture. One of the most considerable influences that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had was on theatre. Crucially, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* managed to create and illuminate a complex relationship between theatre and literature. By the 1850s, minstrelsy's popularity had grown. Unlike Shakespeare and Italian Opera, blackface appeared to be home-grown, and it was a form of theatre that many Americans felt was made and belonged to them. In particular, the show was especially popular with, as Toll notes, working-class white men (178). There were sections such as the Pit where members of the audience could be boisterous, yelling and sometimes throwing things at the performers (Toll 10-11). The show that exponentially evolved from Rice's 'Jump Jim Crow' had become a standard form of entertainment by the 1850s. The Virginia Minstrels and Christy's Minstrels had assisted in giving blackface a standard structure and form. Endmen, Mr. Tambo and Mr. Bones were added. Mr. Bones was a charlatan, posing as aristocracy. Contrastingly, Tambo was cast as a dim-witted slave. They would bicker with one another throughout the show. Additionally, the show had an interlocutor, often

appearing in whiteface, who would formalize blackface performances and attempt to regulate the Endmen's behaviour.

Blackface is very important when considering *Uncle Tom's Cabin* because several of Stowe's characters endorse characteristics evident in the minstrel tradition. The most obvious example is Uncle Tom, a Christian, whose docility and loyalty eventually leads to his death. As blackface was so inextricably linked with race because it started with white actors painting their faces black, playwrights would often use the form as a medium to give social commentary on race. Moreover, the North and South divide over slavery would also shape the ways that slavery was presented. Toll writes:

The watered-down, pro-Southern versions of the play proved more in touch with the general public's tastes as the decade continued and opposition to slavery threatened to destroy the Union. To be sure, anti-slavery versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* ran in Boston and Philadelphia, but what happened when the play opened in Baltimore was more representative of late antebellum versions. To make production acceptable to the audience, John E. Owens, a comedian who managed the theater, adapted and softened the Aiken version. Owens ordered the parts of Legree and George and Liza Harris toned down, and he himself played Uncle Tom as a low-comedy type. 'I've raked up all sorts of situations from old and so on—anything to cover up the real drift of the play.' (Toll 92)

Shows that were seen in the South frequently reinforced proslavery ideology, showing the happy-strumming slave enjoying plantation life. However, some stage shows included abolitionist rhetoric. Uncle Tom's character was often replicated in shows that endorsed a pro-slavery doctrine because it illustrated that slaves were content with a life of slavery.

A less obvious example that demonstrates minstrelsy's influence upon Stowe's novel can be found, as Sarah Meer notes, in the relationship between Topsy and Ophelia. As I explored in chapter two, Topsy became the quintessential Picanniny figure in minstrelsy. However, her frequent responses that undermine Miss Ophelia were also evident in minstrelsy. Like this dynamic of their relationship, the Endmen would often indirectly mock the interlocutor. Ophelia's formality and Topsy's broken English and facetious tone mirror the relationship that was often evident during minstrel shows. One of the most memorable scenes in the narrative that mirrors minstrelsy is in the scene where Miss Ophelia is teaching Topsy how to make the bed. St. Clare has just given Topsy to Miss Ophelia and soon after Miss Ophelia asks Topsy 'Have you ever heard anything about God [...] Do you know who made you?' (Stowe 32). Topsy replies with a laugh, 'Nobody as I knows on [...] Spect I grow'd. Don't think nobody ever made me' (Stowe 32). Here, Topsy subtly undermines Miss Ophelia. However, as the scene continues, Topsy plays the role of docile slave. After her response to religion, Miss Ophelia interrogates Topsy once more; she asks 'What can you do? What did you do for your master and mistress?' and Topsy responds with 'Fetch water, and wash dishes, and clean knives, and wait on folks' (Stowe 30). The scene is cemented as a minstrel scene when Miss Ophelia decides to teach Topsy how her bed is made. Although Topsy responds with an emphatic 'Yes, missis', while Miss Ophelia bends over Topsy quickly seizes 'a pair of gloves and ribbon, which were lying on the dressing-table, and slipped them up her sleeves' (Stowe 30). The narrator then tells us that 'when Ophelia looked up again, the naughty little girl was standing with meekly-folded hands as before' (Stowe 31). The scene is evocative of the relationship maintained between the interlocutor and Endmen during minstrel shows. They would

constantly make jokes and play tricks on the interlocutor despite the interlocutor's authoritative and aristocratic presence on stage.

The likeness of Uncle Tom to the staple slave found in minstrel shows and the similarities that are evident between the dialogue that took place between the interlocutor and Endmen, and between Topsy and Miss Ophelia, demonstrate two of the ways that *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* reflected the minstrel tradition. By the 1850s, the minstrel show was a phenomenon and Americans were surrounded by it. The development of the railroad in the late 1820s and 1830s made minstrelsy more accessible. Moreover, there are parts of Stowe's narrative that reflect minstrelsy, and these parts represent a link between theatre and literature. These instances in dialogue and character demonstrate ways that Stowe used the blackface tradition to develop *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

However, the connection between blackface and Stowe does not only go one way. Put another way, after Stowe's narrative was published, blackface shows also borrowed from her. When *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published, the copyright regulations did not control theatrical versions of Stowe's novel until around 1856. Stage directors took advantage of this delay and made significant changes to the novel's plot and characters. There were some directors who attempted accurate portrayals of Stowe's text, such as George Aiken, as Eric Lott notes (Lott 221). However, in other cases, Uncle Tom endured significant changes, such as H.J Conway's version (Lott 221). Directors often transformed Uncle Tom into a happier character, to satisfy white audiences, which was one of the reasons for the show's widespread popularity. By the end of the nineteenth century there were hundreds of 'Tom shows', as they were aptly named, being performed (Austen & Taylor 65).

Blackface troupes also performed revisions of Stowe's *Uncle Tom Cabin*. In many ways, the text and stage form became adapted with one another. Though Topsy became a central figure, the most demonstrative moment of this amalgamation was Rice's performance of Uncle Tom, occurring two years after the novel's publication in the Bowery theatre (Lott 214). As mentioned, Rice was a pioneer of the minstrel show and to see him perform as Uncle Tom made the novel's union with blackface explicit. Taylor and Austen note that there were as many as four major blackface adaptations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* being performed in New York at the same time (Austen & Taylor 56). And it was not long before black troupes began performing their versions of the text. Although some directors made efforts to marginalize Uncle Tom in blackface stage shows, to mitigate the bleak nature of his character, others diluted it. They made Uncle Tom on the stage and Uncle Tom in Stowe's novel very different. The earlier watered down versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and blackface's portrayal of Uncle Tom are primary reasons for 'Uncle Tom' becoming a racial epithet for an overly compliant black person. Particularly in blackface productions, Uncle Tom's devotion to his master was exaggerated, and Uncle Tom's subservience was a primary ingredient that tied him to the minstrel trope. Black acquiescence is a foundational trait in minstrelsy, and an exaggerated Uncle Tom fitted perfectly.

The bridge evident between *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and minstrelsy is a very intriguing and important one. It symbolizes the proximity between literature, theatre, and the race debate of the 1850s. With its style considerably influenced by the slave narrative genre, the narrative was many things to many people. William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* hailed the text as an anti-slavery novel, and as stated in folklore, Abraham Lincoln perceived the book as a catalyst for the Civil War. Nonetheless, the book was also used to support Apologist's arguments. Proslavery advocates exploited

some of the comedic moments that were evident in the narrative to demonstrate that slavery was justified because slaves were happy within their peculiar institution. Others simply wanted to capitalize on the text's commercial success, as there had not been an American writer who received as much notoriety as Stowe did after writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The impact that the narrative had on American society was phenomenal, and one of the most phenomenal aspects of the book was the bridge that was created between the narrative and minstrelsy. 'Tom Shows' and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* amplified the significance of racial performance during the 1850s because it demonstrated the ways that race was being enacted in an explicit way.

RACIAL MASQUERADE ABOARD THE *SAN DOMINICK*

This part of the chapter marks my close reading of Melville's *Benito Cereno*. This section begins with a detailed overview of the novella and will end with a discussion of the ways that racial masquerade is evident in the novel. Provocatively, the narrative manages to capture the racial masquerade that was taking place during the 1850s. In this section, I will also point out the ways that the racial masquerade evident in *Benito Cereno* works to counter the conventional forms of racial performance that were heavily publicized in society and that were illustrated in theatre and literature.

As I point out in the introduction, *Benito Cereno* is unequivocally about racial performance. One of the primary reasons that Captain Delano is deceived is because everyone aboard the *San Dominick* performs their part. The Senegalese slaves act as if they are still under Benito Cereno's control, and perhaps more crucially, Cereno acts as if an uprising had never occurred. As Delano never realizes what has taken place on the *San Dominick* prior to walking its decks, the racial enactments that take place continue throughout the majority of the novella. This is significantly different to other texts that Melville wrote before *Benito Cereno*. As examined in this thesis, in *White-Jacket*, an

actual theatrical takes place within the larger context of the narrative, and in *Moby-Dick*, Melville gives us theatrically presented themes. However, in *Benito Cereno*, most of the narrative is performance. More clearly, the narrative displays shipboard life constituted by performance. The characters in *Benito Cereno* do not mark out a stage or create a playbill. Instead, like the Crafts, they perform without a literal stage or script. The performance in *Benito Cereno* is more social and less theatrical. Moreover, Melville turns his attention more explicitly to slavery in *Benito Cereno*. Slavery is not allegorical or symbolic in *Benito Cereno*; the narrative is explicitly about slavery. Thus, in *Benito Cereno*, Melville demonstrates his sensitivity to a growing issue that will eventually fracture the Union.

Race is performed in several different ways aboard the *San Dominick*. The two explicit examples of racial performance are enacted by the African slaves and Cereno's crew. In order to deceive Delano, the slaves, led by Babo, must act as slaves to quiet Delano's suspicions. This is what I referred to earlier as same-racial passing. Babo acts as a slave so he can deceive Delano. Given the association of slavery with blackness during the 1850s, when he performs as a slave, he performs his blackness. Likewise, Cereno and his crew must act as if they are in control of the slaves in order to convince Delano that an uprising has not taken place. I also consider this to be same-racial passing because Cereno's colour is so closely linked to his freedom and control. Delano, perhaps more subtly, also performs racially, and his performance works to deceive himself as much as those aboard the *San Dominick* do.

The believability of the racial performances aboard the *San Dominick* largely rests upon Delano's shoulders, as Delano takes turns with a third-person omniscient narrator to tell the story. Thus, readers must rely on Delano to detail what is taking place aboard the *San Dominick*. The ways that racial markers are enacted are made

convincing as a result of Delano's interpretation. Though Delano has his suspicions about what is and perhaps has taken place aboard Cereno's ship, his racial prejudice, as well as the performances that take place, prevent him from believing that his suspicions are warranted. Ultimately, his narration fashions the ways that the Senegalese slaves' and Delano's crew's portrayals of race are interpreted.

The slaves enact race through their servility, a characteristic frequently associated with black people during the nineteenth century. Servility is not enacted by every Senegalese slave on the ship. Delano witnesses a slave boy assailing a young member of Cereno's crew with a knife, two slaves attacking a sailor, and Cereno's timid rule over the slaves on the ship. Nevertheless, it is Babo's docility towards Cereno that eclipses the suspicious activity that Delano witnesses on the ship. During one juncture in the book, Delano thanks Babo for tending to him, and Babo replies 'Ah, master [...] don't speak of me; Babo is nothing; what Babo has does was but duty' (BC 57). Here, Babo's words veil what has truly taken place aboard the *San Dominick*. Furthermore, Babo's willingness to serve Cereno exceeds Delano's expectations. In another scene, the narrator explains:

The negro [Babo] placed a rug under Don Benito's feet, and a cushion behind his back, and then stood behind, not his master's chair, but Captain Delano's. At first, this a little surprised the latter. But it was soon evident that, in taking his position, the black was still true to his master; since by facing him he could the more readily anticipate his slightest want. (BC 89-90)

Once Delano witnessed this gesture, he whispers, 'This is an uncommonly intelligent fellow of yours, Don Benito' (BC 90). Delano becomes so impressed with Babo and his ability to manage the rest of the slaves aboard the ship that he even expresses interest

to Cereno to pay for them and train them to be sailors aboard his ship (BC 90). Nonetheless, Babo manages to conceal the uprising for such a sustained amount of time because he performs the dim-witted and devoted slave, and this performance complements Delano's racial prejudices that are evident in various sections of the narrative. He makes it clear that he equates blackness with servanthood. At one point in the narrative, he remarks:

There is something in the negro which, in a peculiar way, fits him for avocations about one's person. Most negroes are natural valets and hair-dressers; taking to the comb and brush congenially as to the castinets, and flourishing them apparently with almost equal satisfaction. There is, too, a smooth tact about them in this employment, with a marvellous, noiseless, gliding briskness, not ungraceful in its way, singularly pleasing to behold, and still more so to be the manipulated subject of. And above all is the great gift of good-humor. Not the mere grin or laugh is here meant. Those were unsuitable. But a certain easy cheerfulness, harmonious in every glance and gesture; as though God had set the whole negro to some pleasant tune.

When to this is added the docility arising from the unaspiring contentment of a limited mind and that susceptibility of blind attachment sometimes inhering in indisputable inferiors, one readily perceives why those hypochondriacs, Johnson and Byron—it may be, something like the hypochondriac Benito Cereno—took to their hearts, almost to the exclusion of the entire white race, their serving men, the negroes, Barber and Fletcher. (BC 83-84)

In addition to these views, Delano also perceives blacks as being unintelligent. When Delano wonders if he might be the victim of deceit, he counters the thought by

reminding himself that blacks ‘were too stupid’ to forge such a plan (BC 75). To preserve this notion, Babo spends large portions of the text never speaking or interjecting in the conversations that take place between Delano and Cereno. Instead, Babo plays the stupid slave, and if he needs to communicate with Cereno he does so in subtle ways that do not disrupt his performance as the docile servant. This is a clear example of same-racial passing.

Babo’s performance is also buttressed by the way that he is dressed, and the narrator highlights this. The narrator states:

The scene was heightened by, the contrast in dress, denoting their relative positions. The Spaniard wore a loose Chili jacket of dark velvet; white small-clothes and stockings, with silver buckles at the knee and instep; a high-crowned sombrero, of fine grass; a slender sword, silver mounted, hung from a knot in his sash—the last being an almost invariable adjunct, more for utility than ornament, of a South American gentleman's dress to this hour. Excepting when his occasional nervous contortions brought about disarray, there was a certain precision in his attire curiously at variance with the unsightly disorder around; especially in the belittered Ghetto, forward of the main-mast, wholly occupied by the blacks.

The servant wore nothing but wide trowsers, apparently, from their coarseness and patches, made out of some old topsail; they were clean, and confined at the waist by a bit of unstranded rope, which, with his composed, deprecatory air at times, made him look something like a begging friar of St. Francis. (98)

Thus, the way that both Babo and Cereno are dressed fortifies their performance, making it more believable. What is more, Delano’s preconceived notions of black

people amplify the charade. Babo's performance only serves to reinforce the racial markers that Delano already perceives are true of black people.

In addition to the racial performance of the Senegalese slaves, Cereno and his crew also perform racially. They enact their whiteness by masquerading as if they are in control of the *San Dominick* when they are not. Although Cereno's performances do not exhibit his control and dominance all of the time, Cereno does enough to convince Delano that he is the Captain of the ship. Both Babo's and Cereno's performances are reliant upon one another. At various points in the narrative, the more vulnerable that Delano seems, the more Babo's devotion to Cereno is illuminated. Accordingly, though Delano remains dubious about Cereno's control aboard the ship, he also perceives Babo's servitude as a mark of Cereno's authority. This is emphasized when the narrator states, 'As master and man stood before him, the black upholding the white, Captain Delano could not but bethink him of the beauty of that relationship which could present such a spectacle of fidelity on the one hand and confidence on the other' (BC 57). While infrequent, Delano witnesses episodes that illustrate a master and slave relationship, and it is Babo's excessive subservience that generates these scenes.

Moreover, Delano equates Cereno's shortcomings to his nationality. Thus, to Delano, Cereno's performance is a convincing portrayal of a Spanish Captain. This is evident as Delano waits for his ship to approach the *San Dominick*, and he starts to recollect some of the strange things that he has seen. The narrator explains:

But what then, thought Captain Delano, glancing towards his now nearing boat—what then? Why, Don Benito is a very capricious commander. But he is not the first of the sort I have seen; though it's true he rather exceeds any other. But as a nation—continued he in his reveries—these Spaniards are all an odd

set; the very word Spaniard has a curious, conspirator, Guy-Fawkish twang to it. (BC 79)

Delano is not oblivious to the flaws in Cereno's performance. He notices how physically dejected Cereno is and notices Cereno's lack of authority. Yet, he equates these shortcomings to Cereno's racial identity. Thus, Cereno same-race passes as a white captain.

The way that Delano views Cereno's clothing also unveils some of the prejudice that Delano feels towards Cereno. Although Babo's and Cereno's costumes heighten their performances, we are told by the narrator that Cereno's clothing is unkempt. The narrator explains:

However unsuitable for the time and place, at least in the blunt-thinking American's eyes, and however strangely surviving in the midst of all his afflictions, the toilette of Don Benito might not, in fashion at least, have gone beyond the style of the day among South Americans of his class. Though on the present voyage sailing from Buenos Ayres, he had avowed himself a native and resident of Chili, whose inhabitants had not so generally adopted the plain coat and once plebeian pantaloons; but, with a becoming modification, adhered to their provincial costume, picturesque as any in the world. Still, relatively to the pale history of the voyage, and his own pale face, there seemed something so incongruous in the Spaniard's apparel, as almost to suggest the image of an invalid courtier tottering about London streets in the time of the plague. (BC 58)

The narrator's observations of the way that Delano views Cereno's clothing demonstrates that Delano views Cereno as an inferior. His clothes are enough for Delano to pass as the captain of the *San Dominick*, but they do not seem good enough.

Delano generally looks down upon Cereno, constantly giving advice and explaining how he, 'the American' would do things differently. Ultimately, Delano's view of Cereno's performance is shaped by his view of Cereno being inferior.

Delano's portrayal of race is possibly the least apparent form of racial performance in the narrative. The most obvious role that Delano occupies is that of a spectator as he watches the charade that takes place aboard the *San Dominick*. However, Delano subtly performs as an American. Throughout the narrative, Delano and the narrator make reference to Delano's American-ness as he is frequently referred to as 'the American'. Moreover, his identity shapes his interpretation of the truth whilst informing his racial prejudice. His views of the slaves are tainted by his experience as an American, a sealer from Duxbury. Additionally, Delano's view of Cereno is influenced by his nationality as he constantly measures who he is as an American against who Cereno is as a Spaniard. Ultimately, Delano views himself as superior. This is most clear when Delano notices that Cereno seems despondent:

The Spaniard's manner, too, conveyed a sort of sour and gloomy disdain, which he seemed at no pains to disguise. But this the American in charity ascribed to the harassing effects of sickness, since, in former instances, he had noted that there are peculiar natures on whom prolonged physical suffering seems to cancel every social instinct of kindness; as if, forced to black bread themselves, they deemed it but equity that each person coming nigh them should, indirectly, by some slight or affront, be made to partake of their fare. (BC 53)

Here, Delano silences his wariness about Cereno's condition by being charitable, a trait that is implied as American. It is as if Delano perceives it as his American duty to be

good-natured, and so he performs this form of American ‘generosity and piety’ when he boards Cereno’s ship (BC 112).

Unlike any previous narrative of Melville’s, *Benito Cereno* is explicitly about racial performance, racial performance that takes place off-stage. In *Benito Cereno*, we find a more developed and nuanced form of racial performance. We find racial masquerades and examples of same-racial passing. In *Moby-Dick*, Pip does demonstrate depth, but his undersized body seems unable to sustain the racial issues that arise in the narrative. Performance is explored in *Moby-Dick*, but not to the same extent as it is on the *San Dominick*, where many of Melville’s characters perform, and their performances have racial connotations. Babo and Cereno perform to deceive Delano, and yet, Delano performs his American whiteness in the form of his charity. These are examples of same-racial passing.

These enactments of racial performance also have larger implications on both a national and international scale. Sundquist points out that ‘Delano is an American in relation to Cereno's European colonial rule, and a northerner in relation to Cereno's southern planter rule’ (157). Delano, the sealer from Duxbury, clearly represents the American North; whereas, Cereno, as Karcher and Yellin have previously pointed out, represents a character comparable to the southern Caviller, often featured in plantation fiction (Karcher 132, Yellin 683). Read in this way, the performances of Delano and Cereno represent the Free North and Slave South. However, Delano, like many white Northerners, is not free from benign racism. Moreover, Babo’s revolt reflects the growing tensions that would eventually lead to the Civil War in 1861. Delano regrets the lives lost at the end of the narrative, and he can never recover in both mind and spirit. Primarily, this unrest comes as a result of Cereno’s inability to forget about Babo. Delano says to Babo, ‘the past is passed; why moralize upon it. See, you bright sun has

forgotten it all, and the blue sea, and the blue sky; these have turned over new leaves' (BC 116). Nonetheless, Cereno cannot forget 'The negro' (BC 116). After Cereno expresses his discontent and unrest, the narrator informs us that 'there was no more conversation' (BC 116). This sense of unrest reflects the sentiment after the Civil War. Even Melville, as is evident in his *Battle Pieces* (1866), demonstrates a similar sadness.

In addition to reading *Benito Cereno* as a performance reflecting national tensions during the 1850s, the narrative also has international implications. Obvious tension was growing in a nation that declared their independence whilst simultaneously practicing slavery, and Cereno can be read, as H. Bruce Franklin puts it, as a marker of old European rule. Additionally, however, Cereno represents America's anxiety about continuing the practice of slavery. Slavery results in Cereno's eventual decline, and by the end of the narrative he takes the issue of slavery to his grave. The narrator explains

But if the Spaniard's melancholy sometimes ended in muteness upon topics like the above, there were others upon which he never spoke at all; on which, indeed, all his old reserves were piled. Pass over the worst, and, only to elucidate let an item or two of these be cited. The dress, so precise and costly, worn by him on the day whose events have been narrated, had not willingly been put on. And that silver-mounted sword, apparent symbol of despotic command, was not, indeed, a sword, but the ghost of one. The scabbard, artificially stiffened, was empty. (BC 116)

This image foreshadows what will eventually come to pass in the New World, and Delano's frustration with Cereno could very well be the result of his anxiety.

Nonetheless, the episodes of racial passing evident in *Benito Cereno* go beyond the narrative as they challenge the conventional ways that racial performance was

depicted during the 1850s. The passing narrative and Stowe's influence on minstrelsy are opposed to the forms of racial masquerade that are apparent aboard the ship. This is evident in various ways. Primarily, Melville's focus on same-racial performance rather than cross-racial performance counters the ways that conventional passing narratives were constructed. Typically, passing narratives featured protagonists who wished to cross-racially pass. This was certainly evident in *Clotel* and *The Garies*. Where protagonists and subordinate characters who wished to cross-racially pass wanted to receive some sort of material security or social mobility. This could only occur by cross-racially passing as white, as black people in the nineteenth century were both enslaved and marginalized. Therefore, passing narratives would conventionally involve a black character, or a character of mixed race, attempting to pass as white.

Similarly, cross-racial passing was also the focus of forms of racial masquerade that were found in American society. Although the Craft's experience displayed both, Ellen's ability to pass as white seemed more central to their account than William's. Contrastingly, Melville's *Benito Cereno* challenges this because he focuses on forms of same-racial passing, and by doing so, he unveils the multiplicity of racial masquerade, creating questions that challenge not only aspects of racial performance but aspects of racial identity as well. The thought of an individual performing as black whilst also being culturally labelled as black poses a challenge to racial essentialism because it demonstrates that racial categories are not fixed if they can be performed. Thus, by producing a narrative that focuses on same-racial passing in the 1850s, Melville's text counters the ways that race was thought of and portrayed in racial passing narratives.

As well as opposing the passing narrative genre by producing a narrative that focuses on same-racial passing, Melville's depiction of passing opposes the sentimental

ways that passing narratives were presented. Often, passing narratives would end in tragedy. Moreover, the 'Tragic Mulatto' or 'Tragic Octoroon' character was often featured in passing narratives and symbolized the racial sentimentalism that was associated with people who attempted to cross-racially pass. Considered the pioneer of the 'Tragic Mulatto' character, Lydia Maria Child's 'The Quadroons' (1842) and 'Slavery's Pleasant Homes' (1843) created the groundwork for a character that would so recurrently appear throughout the 1850s. In 'The Quadroons', Childs gives us Xarifa, the daughter of a black slave woman and white male plantation owner. Her light skin allows her to pass as white, but when her father dies, she is placed into slavery. Child's influential narrative creates racial sentimentalism as her protagonist is clearly the victim of racism. While Stowe's endorsement of the 'Tragic Mulatto' is not as sentimental as earlier depictions of the character, she still adopts aspects of this literary strategy. For example, Cassy is a tragic mulatto. She is as a mistress to her owner and even decides to kill her son Henry with laudanum to prevent him from being sold into slavery. Additionally, Cassy's daughter, Eliza, must also face hardship, and her husband, George, is also subjected to hardship. *Benito Cereno*, however, does not carry this sentimentalism. Babo might be a victim of slavery, but he manages to cause an uprising. Put another way, though Babo is a slave, his character is not as sentimental as those conventionally portrayed in passing narratives.

Yet, Melville does not abandon these views completely, he shows us how endorsing this form of sentimentalism towards blacks can be problematic. For example, Delano embracing this sort of sentimentalism in *Benito Cereno*. Delano's view of the African slaves is a delicate and complex one, reflecting the complicated ways that black people were viewed during the nineteenth century. In *The Black Image in the White Mind: the Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny 1817-1914*, George M.

Fredrickson points out that 'racial romanticism' shaped the ways that black people were viewed. Crucially, the nineteenth century was heavily influenced by the teachings of German philosopher, Johann Gottfried von Herder. Instead of endorsing the 'rigid hierarchical division of mankind into four or five races', Herder proposed that different cultural and national groups were gifted with different attributes (Fredrickson 97). This was foundational to American conceptions of nationalism because it helped to fuel America's fascination with diversity. For the Romantic, it also mitigated anxieties caused by inadequacies because Herder suggested that humans were gifted with only select traits and not all of them.

Romanticism had a profound influence on how black people were viewed. As Fredrickson points out, 'The biological school saw the Negro as a pathetically inept creature who was a slave to his emotions, incapable of progressive development and self-government because he lacked the white man's enterprise and intellect' (101). However, those influenced by Romanticism often perceived black people differently. Taking on Herder's relativist proposal of race, many Romantics perceived that blacks possessed 'redeeming virtues and even evidences of black superiority' (101). Nonetheless, this did not mean that these 'redeeming virtues' did not reinforce racist views of black people. Glorifying childhood was foundational to Romanticism. Earlier European works such as William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1789) and William Wordsworth's 'Intimations on Immortality' (1804) elevated childhood innocence above adult life. American Romantics often viewed black people as children, and they wanted to end slavery because they perceived it as a form of child abuse rather than a violation of human liberty (Frederickson 101). This view was heavily influential in Northern states, and in many ways, Delano's views are evocative of this racial Romantic mind-set. The narrator explains that Delano saw free black men near his

home and was on 'half-gamesome' terms with them. However, this does not vanquish Delano's prejudice, as the narrator also informs us that Delano perceives the 'Negro' as innocent and possessing the 'unaspiring contentment of a limited mind' (BC 84).

Delano's racial romanticism works against him as the African slaves prove that they are far from jovial and docile. Delano's erroneous view that black people are unintelligent and servile works to counter the sentimental ways that blacks were represented in passing narratives and Stowe-inspired versions of minstrelsy because in the case of the *San Dominick* the slaves demonstrate that they can plan a revolt. What is more, the character of the 'Tragic Mulatto' is explicitly countered. Francesco is a mulatto and was Don Alexandro Aranda's steward. Aranda, owner of the slaves and Cereno's close companion, was killed during the mutiny. However, Francesco played the role of an accomplice to the slaves during the mutiny. Delano's deposition informs us that:

[T]he mulatto steward, Francesco, was of the first band of revolters, that he was, in all things, the creature and tool of the negro Babo; that, to make his court, he, just before a repast in the cabin, proposed, to the negro Babo, poisoning a dish for the generous Captain Amasa Delano; this is known and believed, because the negroes have said it; but that the negro Babo, having another design, forbade Francesco. (BC 111)

Francesco is far from the 'Tragic Mulatto or Mulatta' who became a staple character in both slave and passing narratives. He helps Babo during the revolt and performs as much as any slave aboard the *San Dominick* does. The narrator explains:

On their way thither, the two captains were preceded by the mulatto, who, turning round as he advanced, with continual smiles and bows, ushered them

on, a display of elegance which quite completed the insignificance of the small bare-headed Babo, who, as if not unconscious of inferiority, eyed askance the graceful steward. But in part, Captain Delano imputed his jealous watchfulness to that peculiar feeling which the full-blooded African entertains for the adulterated one. As for the steward, his manner, if not bespeaking much dignity of self-respect, yet evidenced his extreme desire to please; which is doubly meritorious, as at once Christian and Chesterfieldian...Captain Delano observed with interest that while the complexion of the mulatto was hybrid, his physiognomy was European—classically so. (BC 88)

Even though Francesco has participated in the revolt, he still performs as if he is the faithful usher. Delano does have suspicions about Francesco, but he also marvels at his European features. Delano expresses:

I am glad to see this usher-of-the-golden-rod of yours; the sight refutes an ugly remark once made to me by a Barbadoes planter; that when a mulatto has a regular European face, look out for him; he is a devil. But see, your steward here has features more regular than King George's of England; and yet there he nods, and bows, and smiles; a king, indeed—the king of kind hearts and polite fellows. What a pleasant voice he has, too?

Once again, he demonstrates his racial complacency, but this time Delano asserts that Francesco's European heritage purifies Francesco. After Cereno informs Delano that Francesco is a 'good man', Delano says:

Ah, I thought so. For it were strange, indeed, and not very creditable to us white-skins, if a little of our blood mixed with the African's, should, far from

improving the latter's quality, have the sad effect of pouring vitriolic acid into black broth; improving the hue, perhaps, but not the wholesomeness.

Delano's view of Francesco does seem ironic given Delano's admiration of Babo's docility. Nonetheless, his words demonstrate a racial hierarchy that was prevalent during the nineteenth century. Though Delano admires, what he terms, the 'simple-mindedness' of black people, he clearly perceives Europeans as superior and in his observations of Francesco, he deems Francesco's heritage as 'improving the hue'. Despite Delano's views, Francesco takes advantage of Delano's complacency, and Francesco works to counter conventional portrayals of the 'tragic Mulatto' because he is far from the victim of tragedy. One might argue that Stowe's George Harris is comparable to Francesco because he is a Mulatto that escapes and even shoots a man trying to capture him. However, he is not as violent and unforgiving Francesco. Harris only shoots Loker after Loker shoots at him. Additionally, George shows Loker sympathy by not killing him. Francesco on the other hand has little mercy for his master who he helps to kill.

Moreover, there is less sentimentalism in *Benito Cereno* because the slaves do not wish to pass in order to receive social mobility or security. The slaves aboard the *San Dominick* wish to return to Africa. Babo wants to be free, like the protagonists of passing narratives. However, Babo simply wants to return to Africa where he was taken from. Moreover, there is evidence that some of the slaves held high-ranking positions in Africa. For example, in the deposition, we are told that Atufal, Babo's primary accomplice, was a chief in Africa (BC 104). This differs to the central characters of passing narratives because those characters are born into slavery and do not possess the same explicit links to freedom. Indeed, they have African ancestry, but their lives in

America are central to their experience. Moreover, characters in passing and slave narratives conventionally attempt to flee to the Free North; whereas the African slaves in *Benito Cereno* attempt to go back to Africa, showing a rejection of America's promises. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Eliza and George wish to return to Africa, but they do so with the thought that they will somehow elevate the standards of Africans, demonstrating that Africans are intelligent. However, in *Benito Cereno*, the slaves do not want to return to prove something to the 'New World'. Moreover, as Greg Grandin points out, the West Africans were an advanced culture in their own right, practicing their own methods of spirituality and standards of community. This difference works against the conventions of slave and passing narratives.

Benito Cereno also counters slave and passing narratives by disclosing contradictions associated with Catholicism and Christianity. As Grandin points out, the *San Dominick* is a ship where both Christianity and Catholicism confront one another as Delano represents Protestantism and Cereno, Catholicism. Grandin asserts that Delano symbolizes Christianity, Protestantism to be exact, because Delano was heavily influenced by Christianity as a resident of Duxbury. What is more, Grandin explains that Delano heard Charles Turner, a Christian minister, express his sympathy for slaves from the pulpit (Grandin 81). Yet, in the context of *Benito Cereno*, Delano exhibits benign racism and is willing to accept slavery. As well as symbolizing Christianity, Delano represents its contradictions because he is willing to condone Cereno's possession of slaves. Contrastingly, Cereno signifies Catholicism in the narrative. For example, his ship is described in catholic terms, and this connection is underlined at the end of the narrative when Cereno, at the young age of twenty-nine, decides to retreat to the monastery in Agonia after the trial. Like Delano, however, the contradiction of a religious man practicing slavery is carried out by Cereno.

The contradiction of practicing slavery within a society professing to be inherently Christian was addressed in other texts. In particular, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* shines the light on an American society simultaneously practicing Christianity and slavery at the same time. However, Stowe demonstrates that Christianity is the solution to the slave issue. This is evident in the way that she presents her characters. The more religious a character is in the narrative, the more committed the character is to abolition. This is evident in Eva, a devout white Christian who is one of the narrative's strongest abolitionists. This is also evident in Tom Loker. When Loker is introduced, he is a slave catcher. However, the more that he becomes affiliated with the religious Quakers, the more anti-slavery he becomes. Eventually, Loker decides to reside with the Quakers and ends his vocation of capturing slaves.

Moreover, Christianity practiced by black characters also works against the institution of slavery, giving them a Christ-like quality. In particular, Uncle Tom possesses this quality. Even in the face of being beaten he still remains loyal to Legree, his second owner. When Tom attempts to convince Legree not to beat him, Tom pleads, 'Mas'r, if you was sick, or in trouble, or dying, and I could save ye, I'd give ye my heart's blood' (Stowe 370). Tom refuses to tell him any information concerning the runaway, Cassy, and Legree is angered by Tom's defiance. Remarkably, throughout Tom's plea, he shows exceptional loyalty towards his master, disregarding his own safety and discouraging Legree from doing anything that would bring darkness to his soul. Moreover, Tom also attempts to convert those around him. For example, when he meets with 'Old Prue' and tries to stop her from drinking Tom says, 'O, Lord have mercy on ye! poor crittur. Han't ye never heard of Jesus Christ?' (Stowe 301). Tom, then, proceeds to tell her about Christianity:

'Jesus Christ,—who's he?'

‘Why, he's *the Lord*,’ said Tom.

‘I think I've hearn tell o' the Lord, and the judgment and torment. I've heard o' that.’

‘But didn't anybody ever tell you of the Lord Jesus, that loved us poor sinners, and died for us?’ (Stowe 94)

Tom's dedication to Legree in the face of the violence he is subjected to, his desire to convert others to Christianity, and his eventual violent death makes Tom Christ-like. Stowe uses Tom as a figure to contest slavery.

However, in *Benito Cereno*, Christianity operates differently. Those who practice Christianity or Catholicism aboard the *San Dominick* are not Abolitionists. Put another way, Christianity does not have the purifying quality that it has in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Furthermore, as Grandin points out, some of the African slaves aboard the *San Dominick* were practicing Muslims (Grandin 8). Grandin asserts that in the original document it was evident that Mori, the African slave from Delano's account, who Babo is based on, was a Muslim. Therefore, the central characters aboard the *San Dominick* provide a stage where, to borrow from Grandin, the ‘World's Great three monotheistic religions – Cereno's Catholicism, Delano's Protestantism, and the West Africans' Islam’ confront one another (Grandin 8). This dynamic confronts Stowe's use of Christianity as a solution to slavery because the African slaves have religious practices of their own, and unlike Stowe's Eva, Cereno's and Delano's belief in Christianity does not move them towards abolition. The scene at the very end of *Benito Cereno* demonstrates this tension. The narrator explains that when Babo was killed his head was fixed on a pole in the Plaza that faced St. Bartholomew's church and the Monastery on Mount Agonia where Delano retreats to (BC 116). This imagery powerfully contests purifying Christianity imagery that is evident in Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Another significant aspect of passing narratives was the association of blackness with self-denial. For example, Xarafia denounces her black heritage in order to be perceived as white. Whereas, Babo does not do this. Instead, he performs out racial markers that are associated with being black to try to achieve his freedom. There is an embracing of blackness rather than a rejection of it that can be found in conventional passing narratives. Moreover, this sort of embrace is absent from Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the minstrel adaptations that followed the publication. These differences are significant and shape the racial masquerade evident in the text. The form and dynamics of passing in Melville's *Benito Cereno* works to confront and counter the sentimentalism found in both literature and the standard social examples of racial performance found in passing narratives.

Melville's decision to focus on same-racial passing reveals a more complex form of racial masquerade as same-racial passing goes against the essentialist view of race that was championed during the 1850s. Melville's exploration of racial masquerade in *Benito Cereno* is also complex because he includes the performance of whiteness by white people, and this was not explored in as much depth in passing narratives. Whereas Stowe gives us George Harris's ability to pass as Spanish, Melville gives us two white men, one American and the other Spanish, attempting to perform their nationalities. Thus, Melville not only challenges conventional portrayals of passing, but he also provides a more complex treatment of passing.

Moreover, Melville's audience would have been able to read the subversive nature of *Benito Cereno*, and they would have been able to identify his challenge to sentimentalism. Putnam's magazine had an audience who were well aware of challenges to Stowe's work and the use of irony to challenge literary conventions. Appearing several years earlier in Putnam's, both Mary Henderson. Eastman's *Aunt*

Phyllis's Cabin (1852) and Marvin J. McIntosh's 'The Lofty and the Lowly' (1852) were both ironic challenges to Stowe's classic, opposing the inherent abolitionist rhetoric in Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Thus, not only did Melville create a text that would subversively challenge modes of sentimentalism that were associated with race, but by publishing his work in Putnam's he would have been aware that he had members of his audience that would have been capable to understanding it.

BENITO CERENO'S ENCORE

Perhaps the most significant way that Melville challenges Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and conventional passing narratives comes once the narrative has ended. After the story's denouement, Melville includes the official legal document that was used during the trial of Babo. In particular, this portion of the narrative counters the conventional passing narrative because the racial masquerade does not end at the end of *Benito Cereno*; rather, it continues. Contrastingly, at the end of passing narratives, the racial masquerade also ends. Furthermore, in many cases, the disclosure of the passer's true racial identity results in tragedy, hence the 'Tragic Mulatto'. However, in Cereno's deposition, we are reminded that social enactments of race are endless, as Cereno's testimony is clearly staged and racialized.

During Melville's narrative, Cereno performs as if he is the leader of the *San Dominick* and Babo performs as if he is the docile and helpless slave. This continues in Cereno's deposition because Cereno dominates the trial. Despite the trial being against the 'negroes of the ship *San Dominick*', only Cereno's voice is heard (BC 103). Thus, even during the trial, Cereno performs his leadership and dominance. The performative nature of the deposition is heightened by Cereno's vulnerable state during the trial, another aspect that mirrors his performance aboard the *San Dominick*. When Delano boards the ship, although he perceives Cereno as the leader, he questions his leadership because Cereno appears too passive and weak. It is really Delano's prejudice that causes him to suspend his doubt and take Cereno to be the head of the Spanish ship. Similarly, during the trial, this form of racial prejudice is evident.

Firstly, the tribunal is struggling to believe Cereno's account because they perceive that such an uprising 'could never have happened' (BC 103). It is the other Spanish sailors' depositions that prevent the tribunal from rejecting Cereno's declaration. Therefore, from the outset, there is comparable racial prejudice that causes those who hear Cereno's account to deem it as untrue. However, more crucially, Cereno, despite being saved, remains in a fragile and vulnerable state. Before the deposition begins, the narrator explains that the 'tribunal inclined to the opinion that the deponent, [was] not undisturbed in his mind by recent events' (BC 103). Hence, although Cereno is given this platform of dominance during the trial, this dominance is performative because he is still haunted by Babo's revolt.

Cereno's false sense of superiority is reinforced by the numerous voices inherent within his deposition. To begin with, the sailors' depositions are really what validate Cereno's. Secondly, both the voices of Don Jose (leader of the tribunal) and Juan Martinez (Cereno's doctor) work to authenticate Cereno's account. At the beginning of deposition, Don Jose's words, 'I, Don Jose' reinforce the multiple voices that are integrated in Cereno's deposition. Ironically, Cereno's deposition starts with someone other than Cereno dominating it. Therefore, although Cereno's account dominates the trial, this domination comes as a result of the certification of others: his sailors, the notary, and the doctor. Furthermore, the deposition is not written in First-Person. Benito Cereno never takes ownership of the deposition. He is referred to as the 'deponent' or 'Don Benito Cereno'. Although this provides a sense of formality during the trial, it reinforces the fragility and performative nature of Cereno's vulnerability.

Cereno's deposition does not demonstrate his authority rather it illustrates the way that his authority is performed. This is evident throughout the narrative, and it is also evident in the legal document that follows Melville's novella. Melville reminds us that Cereno's performance of white superiority is indeed a performance because he remains in a frail state and can never forget what happened to him. At the end of the deposition, Melville integrates another scene that features Cereno and Delano after the trial. Delano cannot understand why Cereno still seems perturbed despite being saved. Delano says, 'you are saved: what has cast such a shadow

upon you?’ (BC 116). Cereno simply replies, ‘The negro’ (116). Regardless of the trial, Melville adds this section after the deposition to assert that Cereno is forever impacted by the slaves uprising. Furthermore, Melville also explains that Cereno can never look at Babo to identify him. The narrator states ‘when pressed by judges he fainted. On the testimony of the sailors alone rested the legal identity of Babo’ (BC 116). Cereno cannot bear to face Babo in light of all of the things that have happened. Moreover, Cereno never returns to leadership. At the end of the deposition, we are told:

He said that he is twenty-nine years of age, and broken in body and mind; that when finally dismissed by the court, he shall not return home to Chile, but betake himself to the monastery on Mount Agonia without; and signed with his honor, and crossed himself, and, for the time, departed as he come, in his litter, with the monk Infelez, to the Hospital de Sacerdotes. (114)

Thus, despite the failure of Babo’s revolt, Cereno is still haunted by Babo, and Cereno never reclaims his authority. Delano only manages to perform it against his fear of Babo.

As well as Cereno performing his racialized dominance, Babo also continues to perform his racialized inferiority, and this is done through the dramatic silence that runs throughout the trial. It was John Jay Chapman who explained that slavery was a sleeping servant in America, and Babo’s silence ensures that slavery continues to sleep. Although it is his trial, Babo never speaks. Instead, the tribunal is reliant upon Delano’s account. Babo continues his performance of the docile slave by not saying anything. His silence becomes more intriguing when considering that it is probable that Babo understood Spanish, as the deposition explains that both he and Atufal lived amongst Spanish people for many years. The narrator explains that ‘Seeing all was over, he uttered no sound, and could not be forced to’ (BC 114). However, by refusing to speak, he still performs racially as slaves were forbidden to speak. As Paul Finkelman suggests, ‘slavery was not simply a system of exploitive labor. Rather, it was a system of treating people like property-without the power to control their own lives, without the right to own to own land or personal property, without the power to speak out about their

own liberty, without the power to even control their families' (133). These were, as Finkelman points out, badges of slavery that were tied to race (134). On the *San Dominick* Babo's performance reinforced these racial markers associated with American chattel slavery. Additionally, Babo's silence during the deposition also reinforced the powerlessness of slaves inherent in the slave system.

Although the narrator explains that the masks that disguise the slaves' intentions are torn, Babo never completely removes the mask even after being caught. During each interaction that Babo has with whites, he plays his part. Even when Babo is dead, there is a theatrical and dramatic aspect to it. Of Babo, the narrator explains:

Some months after, dragged to the gibbet at the tail of a mule, the black met his voiceless end. The body was burned to ashes; but for many days, the head, that hive of subtlety, fixed on a pole in the Plaza, unabashed the gaze of whites.

His death is a continuation of his performance aboard the *San Dominick* as he still manages to have a white audience. His head is described as being under the gaze of whites. In Amy Louise Wood's *Lynching and Spectacle* (2011), Woods examines the ways that lynching was a form of entertainment for the public to see. Woods writes:

They [lynchings] were deliberately performative and ritualized, as if mobs expected their violence to be noticed. They were then frequently made public – even spectacular – through displays of lynched bodies [as] souvenirs, as well as through representations of violence that circulated long after the lynchings themselves were over: photographs and other visual imagery, ballads and songs, news accounts and lurid narratives. Lynching, indeed, carried cultural force as a form of racial terror through its most sensational manifestations. Terrifying images of white power and black helplessness refracted not only into black homes and communities but across the American racial landscape. (2)

Though Woods' analysis deals with a practice that took place at the turn of the twentieth century, her analysis illustrates the ways that blacks were killed in a performative way to convey 'messages about racial hierarchy and the frightening consequences of transgressing that hierarchy' (Woods 2). The performative nature of Babo's death is comparable to the mass lynching that took place after the Reconstruction era. The way that his body was pulled apart by a mule, the display of his head, and the white audience that gathered around his 'hive of subtlety' are evocative of racial performance. Moreover, as Woods points out, these violent performances served to reinforce the racial hierarchy. '[W]hite power and black helplessness' are performed by both Babo and Delano and Cereno, but even in his death this dynamic is reinforced.

Both Delano's deposition and Babo's silence are extensions of the racial performance that we witness in Melville's novella. Delano's account dominates the trial, and yet, he is not superior to Babo. The African slaves might appear inferior; at the end of the narrative, we are informed that Babo has a 'slight frame, inadequate to that which it held' (BC 116). However, we are also informed that Babo uses his brain to outwit Delano (BC 116). Babo might not be physically superior but seems to be intellectually so. By placing the actual document at the end of the narrative, Melville subtly draws our attention to the performative nature of identity but more specifically racial identity. Furthermore, as the narrative is based on an actual account, Melville reminds us of the impact and relevance of performance in society. Moreover, Melville's decision to then include more narrative at the end of the deposition highlights the connection between reality and fictional narrative. Within this connection, we are made aware of the ways that racial masquerade plays into narrative. Ultimately, the truth is only enacted because Babo never speaks. Additionally, Cereno's liberty becomes the focus of the trial, but the slaves' liberty is ignored. It is really their liberty that is violated first.

Certainly, *Benito Cereno* counters both the minstrel culture amplified by *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Passing narrative genre. The performative nature of race is endless and continues in the deposition. This contrasts greatly with passing narratives that often ended in tragedy.

Benito Cereno however resists interpretation and the text never ends. Babo's silence not only extends his racial masquerade, but it also creates ambiguity. This is probably the reason why the novella has received different critical reviews, ranging from C.L.R. James' perception that *Benito Cereno* was Melville's way of avoiding the race question to Carolyn Karcher's argument that *Benito Cereno* condemns slavery.

RACIAL PERFORMANCE FOR RACIAL PERFORMANCE'S SAKE: THE MEANING OF RACIAL MASQUERADE IN *BENITO CERENO*

In what follows, I consider the ways that the form of racial performance complements the dynamic of *Benito Cereno*. I discuss how academics have interpreted the minstrel show and how that has changed in direct correlation with time. I use this point to reveal the way that racial performance can work to enhance the provocative nature of *Benito Cereno*.

Racial performance as a form serves to complement the dynamics of *Benito Cereno* because it can be ambiguous, and *Benito Cereno* is an ambiguous text. Melville took a chapter from Delano's narrative and created a novella that captured. As race was a central concern in the 1850s, Melville tactfully projects issues raised from the slave debate onto a narrative that was located at the turn of the nineteenth century. Melville manages to manipulate the dates of the narrative to magnify its racial significance. The story is based on an uprising, the date of which was changed from 1805 to 1799. This change placed his novella within the period of the Haitian Revolution, and to cement this link, Melville also changed the name of the ship from *The Tryal* to the *San Dominick*. This change connects the narrative to the Haitian Revolution as St. Domingo was an important site during that revolution. I consider this link to be a development of Melville's earlier inclusion of the St. Domingo melodies in *White-Jacket*. Certainly, as

critics such as Karcher would agree, Melville drafted *Benito Cereno* with his historical moment in mind. Even the reputation of the magazine that published *Benito Cereno* in three separate instalments was being shaped by the slave debate. Since Putnam Monthly had published Abolitionist's texts before *Benito Cereno*, some started to view the magazine as abolitionist. Nonetheless, despite *Benito Cereno's* racial implications, a position on race is not made explicit, and racial performance compliments this dynamic because it resists interpretation.

Ultimately, *Benito Cereno* is a provocative text whilst capturing the historical moment of the 1850s slave debate. The country was moments from being shattered, and positions on slavery were often tortuous. Though many slaves fled to the North for freedom, many still experienced racial prejudice there. Moreover, some Abolitionists believed that slavery would somehow sort itself out. The Compromise of 1850 demonstrated American political efforts to keep the Union together. However, in many ways the Compromise worked to underline America's growing racial problems. With the Fugitive Slave Law in place, the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854), and the development of the Dred Scott case taking place, the first half of the decade became one of the most crucial periods, in terms of race, in American history. Arguably, the 1850s is the most critical moment in American history because it redefined the country's definition of liberty, and liberty was the most coveted value to a country that fought for its independence in the American Revolutionary War. *Benito Cereno* disturbingly captures the 1850s by evoking these complexities and the paradox between liberty and slavery that were prevalent during the decade. Melville had once said, in 'Hawthorne and His Mosses', 'You must have plenty of sea room to tell the truth', but in *Benito Cereno* he gives the reader room to decide what that truth is about slavery (HM 246).

Racial performance accommodates the ambiguity of the novella because it can create doubtfulness on the side of the viewer. For this reason, interpretations of blackface have been plentiful, and in many ways have changed with historical moments for both black and white audiences alike. As Toll notes, many black entertainers were viewed as celebrities. Moreover, earlier works on minstrelsy condemn the art form for its explicit mimicry of black life in America. However, more recent works such as Lott's *Love and Theft* and Taylor and Austin's *Darkest America* do not deny blackface's concretization of racist stereotypes, while they also argue that minstrelsy demonstrates a sentiment of admiration for American culture. Both sides are convincing, but these arguments are enabled in part as a result of the vagueness of racial performance. How and what an enactment of race can be is difficult to pin down. Additionally, a historical moment might also alter how a form of racial performance is viewed. For example, a shift in critical views of blackface that correlates with different historical moments can be detected. In other words, most of the later works suggest that blackface performances had a positive impact. Some contemporary authors have even made efforts to read their own historical moments into blackface, such as Austen and Taylor do by reading blackface within the context of Hip Hop.

Likewise, critics have managed to read their historical moments into *Benito Cereno*, and it is the racial enactment that is one of the critical factors as to why *Benito Cereno* can be read in this way. What are we to make of Babo's performance aboard the *San Dominick*? What are we to make of Delano's? What do these performances tell us about Melville's views on race? The racial performances in *Benito Cereno* distort the ways that readers respond to it. Thus, it is not difficult to understand why readers respond to the narrative differently. It is not difficult to understand why some read the novella as an anti-slavery tale and others a proslavery one, or why some readers

perceive it as both. James considered *Benito Cereno* as Melville's avoidance of the slave question, whereas Sundquist and Karcher perceived the novella as Melville's most fervent critique on slavery. Furthermore, like critics who have read Hip Hop into blackface performances, scholars have also read their own historical moments through the context of *Benito Cereno*. Morrison sees the OJ Simpson trial through the novella, and more recently, Grandin has seen the American public's treatment of Obama through the lens of Melville's narrative. Racial performance is not the only reason for this. However, it is a salient reason why critics argue on whether the novella is an anti-slavery or proslavery text, Abolitionist or Apologist text, or text that endorses or rejects racial essentialism.

To date, though published at the turn of the twentieth century, perhaps there is no critical text that captures the openness of *Benito Cereno* more than Maurice Lee's 'Melville's Subversive Political Philosophy: "Benito Cereno" and the Fate of Speech' (2000). Winner of the Melville Society's Hennig Cohen Prize Award, Lee's essay manages to capture the essence of *Benito Cereno* rather than offer a tight and rigid interpretation of the narrative. Lee argues that *Benito Cereno* is "'about" the failure of political speech – as a critical issue in Melville's America, as a challenge to his "great Art of Telling the Truth"', and as a theoretical inevitability founded in the political philosophies of Machiavelli and Hobbes, whose dark convictions undermine principles of American republicanism' (Lee 496). Rather than view *Benito Cereno* as disclosing a strong political stance on slavery one way or another, he argues that it is about politics itself. He views Delano's wanting to make sense of what happened aboard the *San Dominick* as a reflection of the shortcoming of politics. In other words, he suggests that politics are not always capable of making sense of society. This is where and how Lee sees *Benito Cereno* in Machiavelli and Hobbes. What is more, Lee recognizes the room

that Melville left for his readers, and he considers this to be one of the central reasons why it seems more popular today than it did when it was published.

Though Lee examines *Benito Cereno* in the context of political speech and my argument focuses on racial performance, Lee's argument is important. Similarly, we recognize the narrative's hermeneutic depth and possibilities. In terms of race, the text can be read as both a pro-slavery and anti-slavery text, and I consider racial performance to compliment this characteristic of the novella because of its interpretative resistance. When Babo performs Sambo what does it accomplish, as he is still silenced by the end of the narrative? Perhaps even more crucially, what does Delano's assistance do for Cereno? During the text's denouement Cereno is still haunted by the Negro. Does this mean that Babo's performance left an indelible mark in Cereno's mind? Answers to such questions are not straightforward. However, the fact that they are not definitive possibly tells us more about race and slavery than 1850s texts that were more firmly connected to slavery.

Although Abraham Lincoln did not tell Melville that his little novella had started the big war, *Benito Cereno* managed to capture America's sentiment of the period. In Delano, the sealer from Duxbury we see the failure and contradictory nature of American politics. In Cereno, we see slavery before the New World and a man shaken by slavery. In Babo, we see the shortcomings of racial essentialism but also a man who ultimately cannot overthrow his captor. These are only some of things that are evident in the narrative. However, they all manage to mirror an America only years from catastrophe. Melville provocatively gives us room in the text to consider what *Benito Cereno* could mean, and the racial performance prevalent in the text violently thrusts us into Melville's world and, also, our own. For both characters and readers

alike, *Benito Cereno* seems to be a narrative where the 'Past, present, and future seemed one' (BC 98).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have examined one of the stages of the development of racial performance in Melville's work. To provide a backdrop for the chapter and to demonstrate the ways that Melville's novella reflected racial performance in society, firstly, I explored racial passing. With the Fugitive Slave Law in place, racial passing became even more important because, for some, it meant the difference between freedom and slavery. I started with William and Ellen Craft to illustrate the reality of racial passing. However, I also turned to fictional examples to demonstrate how racial performance was explored. Secondly, I analysed the bridge that was created between *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and blackface. By doing this, I demonstrated how prevalent racial performance was in society. In the second section of the chapter, the first two parts work to accentuate racial masquerade as a central topic in the 1850s. In the subsequent parts, I discussed the ways that Melville's *Benito Cereno* not only mirrored the widespread presence of social enactments of race, but I also discussed the ways that racial performance works to accommodate the hermeneutic form of the narrative. To further articulate racial performance, I introduced two terms same-racial passing and cross-racial passing, to examine the dynamics of racial masquerade.

Having focused on *Benito Cereno* in this chapter, the last chapter of this thesis will turn to Melville's last publication of the 1850s, *The Confidence-Man*. Specifically, I will focus on the Black Guinea and examine the ways that he works as a marker showing us where both social and theatrical performance intersect. Moreover, I will analyse the impact that Melville's declining audience had on ambiguous representations

of race in his work. More crucially though, I also explore the effect the Black Guinea can have on the reader.

FOUR

IN WHICH AN AUDIENCE APPEARS: READING THE BLACK GUINEA'S AUDIENCE IN MELVILLE'S *THE CONFIDENCE-MAN*

Well I know this...and anybody who has tried to live knows this. What you say about somebody else (you know) anybody else, reveals you. What I think of you as being is dictated by my own necessities, my own psychology, my own fears...and desires. I'm not describing you when I talk about you...I'm describing me. Now, here in this country we got somebody called a nigger. It doesn't in such terms, I beg you to remark, exist in any other country in the world. We have invented the nigger. I didn't invent him, white people invented him.
- James Baldwin, *Take This Hammer*

This chapter concentrates on Melville's ninth publication, *The Confidence-Man* (1857). Published only four years before the beginning of the Civil War, the narrative was Melville's last publication before the conflict started. Throughout this study, I have examined different forms of performance. During the first chapter, I examined the on board theatrical production that takes place in *White-Jacket*. In the second chapter, I surveyed the theatrically presented themes in *Moby-Dick*, and in the third chapter, I investigated, shipboard life constituted through theatrics in *Benito Cereno*. In this chapter, I will complete the trajectory by observing the reactions of a theatrical audience. There are two primary areas that I shall explore in this chapter. Firstly, I examine the racial performance of the Black Guinea in the chapter 'In which a variety of characters appear' and consider how his performance correlates with prior episodes of racial performance in Melville's 1850s works. Secondly, I examine the audience's reaction within the context of the 1850s. Specifically, I inquire: What is the nature of

the Black Guinea's enactment of race? Furthermore, how does his performance impact the audience?

Separated into four sections, this chapter primarily offers an analysis of the Black Guinea and his audience in *The Confidence-Man* (1857). The first section details the narrative's plot and also outlines the Black Guinea scene in the novel. Towards the end of this section, I indicate the relevance of the Black Guinea's performance within the overall context of this thesis by suggesting that it is the location where both social and staged forms of racial performance meet. In the second section, I analyse the ways that the Passengers' treatment of the Black Guinea reflected how slaves were treated by abolitionists during slavery. In the third section, I explore the ways that the black body was commodified in society and a changing literary market. Then, in the final section, I explore the ways that the passengers' confusion over the black Guinea's race is a comment upon racial ambiguity.

DER BLACK GUINEA

This section will show that the Black Guinea is the location in which both definitions of racial performance, social and staged, meet. This section will provide the background for the latter part of my argument that deals with Melville's audience.

Set on a Mississippi River Boat, *The Confidence-Man* is a narrative that details the swindles of its protagonist. All taking place on April Fool's Day, these confidence tricks shape the entire novel as the chapters illustrate all of the characters that The Confidence-Man manages to deceive. The narrative has been connected to *Israel Potter* (1855). In *Israel Potter*, Melville gives us a Revolutionary War hero who commits his life to military duty and possesses a 'peculiar disinterested fidelity' for his country, the United States of America (32). However, by the end of his life, Potter's blind patriotism

debilitates him. Melville uses Potter to parody the limits and failed promises of the American Revolution. Similarly, Melville uses *The Confidence-Man* to poke fun at aspects of American society. Through the characters' naiveté and The Confidence-Man's deception, we are reminded of America's democratic and societal shortcomings.

In many ways, *The Confidence-Man* is a precursor to schools of thought that were developed in the nineteenth century. The narrative perverts notions of identity and virtue, and it uncovers the darker side of human nature. Though the text is written in a comedic way, there are moments when the text is covered by the shadow of, what Melville had earlier referred to as, a 'Calvinistic sense of Depravity and Original Sin' (HHM 243). Despite this presence, Melville still attempts to create characters that pursue virtue, and their pursuits in many ways are reminiscent of Delano's. At the end of *Benito Cereno*, we are told that Delano's charity and piety made him incapable of recognizing that an uprising was taking place. Similarly, many aboard the Mississippi Steam Boat suffer from a comparable blindness.

Melville's *The Confidence-Man* opens with his protagonist boarding the *Fidèle* in St. Louis. During the boat's journey to New Orleans, The Confidence-Man will dupe the ship's passengers. Early in the narrative, The Confidence-Man is simply referred to as a 'stranger', and we are given very few details about him. Of The Confidence-Man, the narrator explains:

His cheek was fair, his chin downy, his hair flaxen, his hat a white fur one, with a long fleecy nap. He had neither trunk, valise, carpet-bag, nor parcel. No porter followed him. He was unaccompanied by friends. From the shrugged shoulders, titters, whispers, wonderings of the crowd, it was plain that he was, in the extremist sense of the word, a stranger. (CM 3)

Thus, he boards the *Fidèle* with nothing, and we are told very little about him. Moreover, once the ‘stranger’ boards, he immediately sees a placard offering a reward for the capture of a ‘mysterious man’ (CM 3). This prompts the passengers to act in a theatrical way, as the narrator informs us that crowds were excitedly gathered around the placard as if surrounding a ‘theatre-bill’ (CM 3). We are then told that a mute stranger writes several messages on a slate about charity. The group who gathers around the placard find these messages unfitting and cannot perceive a connection between the placard and the mute stranger’s messages. The messages read ‘Charity suffereth long, and is kind’, ‘Charity endureth all things’, ‘Charity believeth all things’, and outside the captain’s office the stranger distributes a placard that explains that the passengers shall receive a financial reward if they manage to capture a ‘Mysterious Stranger’. Adding to the placard, the ‘Mysterious Stranger’ also writes on a slate that ‘Charity Thinketh No Evil’ and ‘Charity never faileth’ (CM 4-5). These supposedly ‘intrusive’ phrases are contrasted by the ‘No Trust’ sign that the barber aboard the *Fidèle* places outside his barbershop.

In the following chapter, the narrator explains that the passengers are excited about the ‘mysterious figure’. In addition, Melville uses this opportunity to tell us more about the audience. One of the most striking things about this description is its similarity to the crew in *Moby-Dick*. The narrator explains:

Natives of all sorts, and foreigners; men of business and men of pleasure; parlor men and backwoodsmen; farm-hunters and fame-hunters; heiress-hunters, gold-hunters, buffalo-hunters, bee-hunters, happiness-hunters, truth-hunters, and still keener hunters after all these hunters. Fine ladies in slippers, and moccasined squaws; Northern speculators and Eastern philosophers; English, Irish, German, Scotch, Danes; Santa Fé traders in striped blankets,

and Broadway bucks in cravats of cloth of gold; fine-looking Kentucky boatmen, and Japanese-looking Mississippi cotton-planters; Quakers in full drab, and United States soldiers in full regimentals; slaves, black, mulatto, quadroon; modish young Spanish Creoles, and old-fashioned French Jews; Mormons and Papists Dives and Lazarus; jesters and mourners, teetotalers and convivialists, deacons and blacklegs; hard-shell Baptists and clay-eaters; grinning negroes, and Sioux chiefs solemn as high-priests. (CM 9)

Here, Melville not only gives us a diverse group but one that opposes another group. This is very similar to *Moby-Dick*, but the conflicts are more subtle. For example, Pip is Ahab's foil, and Daggoo is the Spanish sailor's opposition. Brian Yothers perceives that these pairings 'resolve themselves into contradictions, only to reveal themselves upon further reflection to be complementary' (118). Yothers argues, 'The Quakers and the soldiers, for example, form an evident antimony: the Quakers are pacifists, and the soldiers are warriors, but their very attire joins them in a curious manner, in that both are wearing uniforms that call for suppression of individuality in the name of a communal good' (118). By drafting the passengers this way, Melville causes us to focus on how they appear rather than what they are. The groups are distinctively different but in many ways are all the same. Melville draws our attention to a similar redundancy or contradiction in the cetology chapters in *Moby-Dick*. In addition to this similarity, the narrator refers to this group as both a 'piebald parliament' and 'Anarchasis Cloots congress' (CM 9). Melville uses similar terminology in *Moby-Dick* referring to the crew as an 'Anarchasis Cloutz deputation' (MD 121). Therefore, very early in *The Confidence-Man*, Melville not only presents us with an audience that is in many ways theatrical – gathering around the placard as if it was a 'play-bill' – but he also gives us an audience who are as diverse as those aboard the *Pequod*.

Promptly after the narrator details who is aboard the *Fidèle*, we are supposedly given The Confidence-Man's first act of deceit – 'Der Black Guinea' (CM 10). I say supposedly because there is some mystery around the Black Guinea. The chapter is entitled 'IN WHICH A VARIETY OF CHARACTERS APPEAR'. This seems vague. Is it a reference to the Black Guinea or the section of the 'Piebald Parliament' that watch him? Moreover, the chapter begins with 'In the forward part of the boat, not the least attractive object, for a time' (CM 10). Similarly, this also complicates the identity of the Black Guinea because the narrator immediately takes us to a scene without providing the reader with enough information to determine whether the Black Guinea is The Confidence-Man. Then, the 'negro cripple' is introduced. This also provides a problem because the Black Guinea's racial identity is unclear. Critics have wrestled over this. Karcher quite rightfully points out that the Black Guinea could very well be a white man masquerading as black and pretending to be a 'cripple' (CM 15) However, this is not as straightforward as it might seem because the racial identity of The Confidence-Man is never identified. The only clue to his racial identity is that his cheek is fair. This implies whiteness, but there is no concrete confirmation. Another possibility is that the Black Guinea might not even be The Confidence-Man, but this is quite unlikely. Ultimately, pinning down the Black Guinea's racial identity proves difficult for the reader.

The passengers are also confused about the Black Guinea's identity. A large crowd gathers around him, and 'Der Black Guinea' is interrogated by passengers on the ship who are suspicious and believe that 'he's some white operator, betwisted and painted up for decoy' (CM 14). They also do not believe that he has a disability. Many who surround ask him for 'documentary proof, any plain paper about him' (CM 13). This works in the narrative to distort the Black Guinea's identity further. Trying to

uncover the Black Guinea's identity is the central conflict of the chapter, and the Black Guinea is questioned throughout. Ultimately, both reader and passenger alike are left to interpret. Hubris might have it that the Black Guinea is indeed white, but this is somewhat of an assumption on both the reader's and passenger's part.

In addition to recognizing the Black Guinea as a sign that makes us question issues that surround racial identity, I also consider the Black Guinea to be important because he symbolizes the height of racial performance in Melville's work. The Black Guinea fuses both staged and social forms of racial performance. As blackface has been important in this thesis, the Black Guinea also marks the location at which blackface explicitly intersects with the text. Furthermore, the Black Guinea is derivative of Melville's earlier attempts of dealing with race in his works. Equally as important, the ambiguity of the Black Guinea allows us to participate in it, as I discuss in sections below.

The Black Guinea is a by-product of Melville's earlier dealings with race because there are several distinct parallels that can be drawn between the Black Guinea and earlier works. Firstly, the Black Guinea manifests Melville's use of earlier analogies that link black people to animals. Particularly, in *Benito Cereno*, we are made aware of this. When Delano boards the *San Dominick*, his attention is drawn to a:

[Negress], partly disclosed through the lace-work of some rigging, lying, with youthful limbs carelessly disposed, under the lee of the bulwarks, like a doe in the shade of a woodland rock. Sprawling at her lapped breasts was her wide-awake fawn, stark naked, its black little body half lifted from the deck, crosswise with its dam's; its hands, like two paws, clambering upon her; its

mouth and nose ineffectually rooting to get at the mark; and meantime giving a vexatious half-grunt, blending with the composed snore of the Negress. (BC 73)

The imagery used here presents the black woman as an animal, a 'fawn' (BC 73). Additionally, the narrator also participates in this imagery. As Babo and Delano stand together, the narrator comments 'By his side stood a black of small stature, in whose rude face, as occasionally, like a shepherd's dog, he mutely turned it up into the Spaniard's, sorrow and affection were equally blended' (BC 51). We are also informed that Delano 'took to Negroes, not philanthropically, but genially, just as other men to Newfoundland dogs' (BC 84). In particular, viewing black men as if they were dogs is matched, and in many ways exceeded, by the Black Guinea.

Mirroring the analogy that Melville's narrator makes between the male, Senegalese slaves and dogs, the Black Guinea is immediately compared to one. The narrator explains that Black Guinea 'owing to something wrong about his legs, was, in effect, cut down to the stature of a Newfoundland dog; his knotted black fleece and good-natured, honest black face rubbing against the upper part of people's thighs as he made shift to shuffle about' (CM 10). Not only is the Black Guinea described as a Newfoundland, but the narrator explains that his disability causes him to move around as if he were a dog, rubbing his face against people's legs. This imagery continues through the Black Guinea's dialogue as he tells the 'purple-faced drover' 'Oh Sar, I am der dog widout massa' (CM 10). The man then replies 'A free dog, eh? Well, on your account, I'm sorry for that, Guinea. Dogs without masters fare hard' (CM 10). The onlooker's words are suggestive of Delano's ideas about slaves. The dog analogy continues in *The Confidence-Man* and is possibly exceeded as the Black Guinea crawls around the passengers' feet making his onlookers feel 'gay' as if he were a dog (CM 10). Moreover, the Black Guinea begs for pennies, the narrator explains that it put him

on a 'canine footing [...] In short, as in appearance he seemed a dog, so now, in a merry way, like a dog he began to be treated' (CM 11). Thus, the dog comparison is made clear.

Melville's analogy comparing black people to sheep also continues in *The Confidence-Man*. Of the Oakum Pickers, Delano asks 'have you appointed them shepherds to your flock of black sheep?' (BC 60). Delano's reference to black sheep is an obvious reference to black slaves. Likewise, the Black Guinea is referred to as 'a half-frozen black sheep' (CM 11). This is not similar, but it is the same imagery that Melville uses in *Benito Cereno*. Both the dog and sheep analogy are continued through the Black Guinea. However, the Black Guinea exceeds this comparison because the narrator suggests that he lives out these analogies. The narrator manipulates the 'negro cripple' by implying that his movement around the deck of the *Fidèle* is animal-like. When he is given money, they throw the pennies at him as if a dog eating food. It is as if the Black Guinea is literally performing the racist allusion that is being made.

Next, the Black Guinea is also a derivative of *Moby-Dick's* Pip, as Melville gives him Pip's tambourine. As I extensively discussed in Chapter Two, the tambourine became an iconographic symbol of blackface when Mr. Tambo became a stock figure in the genre. In *The Confidence-Man*, this symbol returns. From the outset, we are told that the Black Guinea holds 'an old coal-sifter of a tambourine in his hand [...] making music, such as it was, and raising a smile even from the gravest' (CM 10). The tambourine is an extension of himself. He does not let go of it. When he is asked questions at the beginning of the chapter, he uses the tambourine to point to things. In *Moby-Dick*, when Pip loses his tambourine, he is forced to get it, thus illustrating the importance of him having it. The Black Guinea never lets it go. He uses it to make

onlookers laugh, to point, and, when his audience throws coins at him, to catch with a ‘cracked bravura from his tambourine’ (CM 11).

However, besides the connections that exist between the Black Guinea and Melville’s earlier works, there is no character or scene in Melville’s works that endorses and captures minstrelsy more than the Black Guinea scene in *The Confidence-Man*. Most obviously, the audience’s reaction to him as having blacked-up for decoy is the most explicit connection made. This ties back to the point made earlier about the mystery of The Confidence-Man’s race. He could very well be a white man who has blacked up. If so, the scene is an explicit minstrel performance that features a white man portraying stereotypical blackness. His constant reference to himself as being an ‘ol’darky’ is evidence enough. Equally as important though, as the passengers throw money at him, we are reminded of the financial success that minstrel shows attained after Thomas D. Rice’s performance, as was mentioned in the introduction of this thesis. Even if the Black Guinea is a black man, the scene still reinforces blackface, as after the 1840s black people, males predominantly, were included in minstrel shows. With this point in mind, regardless of his true racial identity, the Black Guinea can still be read as a character who has minstrel-like qualities.

Moreover, the Black Guinea’s disability does not hinder his performance as a blackface performer. Rather, it strengthens it for two reasons. Firstly, Rice had claimed that he had stolen a dance called ‘Jump Jim Crow’ from a black stableman who had a disability. Thus, the chorus and dance, ‘Weel about and turn about and do jis so, Eb’ry time I weel about I jump Jim Crow’, was intended to mimic the stableman’s distinctive movements (Lhamon 243). As Rice is generally considered to be the father of minstrelsy, this dance is considered to be central to the minstrel tradition the Black Guinea’s disability alludes to the stableman who taught Rice the dance.

Secondly, the Black Guinea's performance is suggestive of one of the most iconographic pieces of blackface memorabilia created in the nineteenth century. The 'Jolly Nigger Bank' (Fig.1), or 'minstrel head' as it is referred to, was a small money box that was based on a Sambo-like minstrel figure (JCM). It had no legs and would receive coins through its mouth. The 'Jolly Nigger Bank' has surfaced in literature time and time again. In Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), the bank emerges while the protagonist is staying at Mary's house.

Then near the door I saw something which I'd never noticed there before: the cast-iron figure of a very black, redlipped and wide-mouthed Negro, whose white eyes stared up at me from the floor, his face an enormous grin, his single large black hand held palm up before his chest. It was a bank, a piece of early Americana, the kind of bank which, if a coin is placed in the hand and a lever pressed upon the back, will raise its arm and flip the coin into the grinning mouth. For a second I stopped, feeling hate charging within me, then dashed over and grabbed it, suddenly as enraged by the tolerance or lack of discrimination, or whatever, that allowed Mary to keep such a self-mocking image around, as by the knocking [...] In my hand its expression seemed more of a strangulation than a grin. It was choking, filled to the throat with coins [...] How the hell did it get here, I wondered dashing over and striking the pipe a blow with the kinky iron head. 'Shut up!' I screamed. (319)

The bank pesters the *Invisible Man* during the narrative. In Spike Lee's film *Bamboozled* (2000), Lee duplicates the scene from Ellison's novel and his protagonist, Pierre Delacroix, throws the bank across the room when it starts moving on its own. While Melville's Black Guinea came before both of these texts, the bank was created during the nineteenth century and bears a startling resemblance to the Black Guinea.

Primarily, the Black Guinea has lost the use of his legs: hence he shuffles at the crowd's feet. However, more crucial, he begs for pennies, and the passengers throw those pennies into his mouth. The narrator explains:

[opening] his mouth like an elephant for tossed apples at a menagerie; when, making a space before him, people would have a bout at a strange sort of pitch-penny game, the cripple's mouth being at once target and purse, and he hailing each expertly-caught copper with a cracked bravura from his tambourine. To be the subject of alms-giving is trying, and to feel in duty bound to appear cheerfully grateful under the trial, must be still more so; but whatever his secret emotions, he swallowed them, while still retaining each copper this side of the œsophagus. And nearly always he grinned, and only once or twice did he wince, which was when certain coins, tossed by more playful almoners, came inconveniently nigh to his teeth, an accident whose unwelcomeness was not unedged by the circumstance that the pennies thus thrown proved buttons. (CM11)

This game of throwing the coins into the 'cripple negro's' mouth bears a haunting resemblance to 'The Jolly Nigger Bank', and has a minstrel-like tonality.

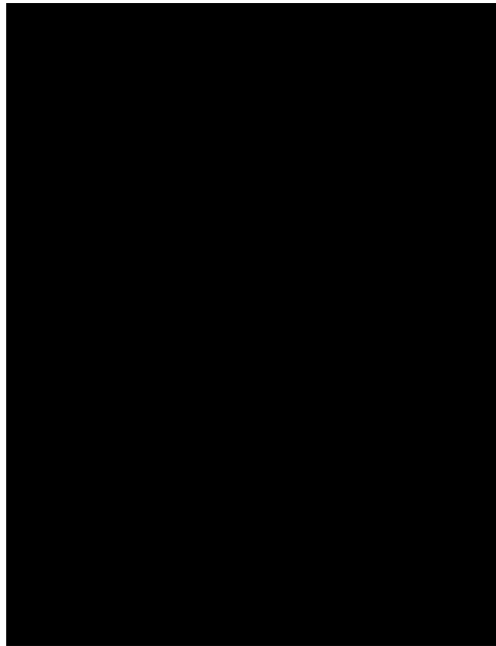


Figure 12. *Jolly Nigger Bank* (Courtesy of the Jim Crow Museum, Michigan)

Besides these connections, the dialogue that the Black Guinea uses is suggestive of minstrelsy. Once Pip goes mad, he uses a similar dialogue in *Moby-Dick*. However, I explored this form of dialogue more in chapter three during my discussion of Stowe's *Topsy*. However, here, Melville perfects it. The Black Guinea clearly uses language that endorses minstrelsy. Additionally, he undermines the onlookers as if he is an Endmen, as if Mr. Tambo or Mr. Bones were making fun of the interlocutor. From the offset, this is evident.

‘What is your name, old boy?’ said a purple-faced drover, putting his large purple hand on the cripple's bushy wool, as if it were the curled forehead of a black steer.

‘Der Black Guinea dey calls me, sar.’

‘And who is your master, Guinea?’

‘Oh sar, I am der dog widout massa.’

A free dog, eh? Well, on your account, I'm sorry for that, Guinea. Dogs without masters fare hard.’

‘So dey do, sar; so dey do. But you see, sar, dese here legs? What ge'mman want to own dese here legs?’

‘But where do you live?’

‘All 'long shore, sar; dough now. I'se going to see brodder at der landing; but chiefly I libs in dey city.’

‘St. Louis, ah? Where do you sleep there of nights?’

‘On der floor of der good baker's oven, sar.’

‘In an oven? whose, pray? What baker, I should like to know, bakes such black bread in his oven, alongside of his nice white rolls, too. Who is that too charitable baker, pray?’

‘Dar he be,’ with a broad grin lifting his tambourine high over his head.

‘The sun is the baker, eh?’

‘Yes sar, in der city dat good baker warms der stones for dis ole darkie when he sleeps out on der pabements o' nights.’

‘But that must be in the summer only, old boy. How about winter, when the cold Cossacks come clattering and jingling? How about winter, old boy?’

‘Den dis poor old darkie shakes werry bad, I tell you, sar. Oh sar, oh! don't speak ob der winter,’ he added. (CM 11)

In this initial exchange, the playful nature of the Black Guinea is evident. However, this exchange is also redolent of conventional minstrel dialogue between the Endmen and the interlocutor. These exchanges primarily would take place with one character using standard formal English whilst the other would use a broken form. Yet, the one who uses the broken form would often undermine or poke fun at the character speaking formally. This is evident here as the Black Guinea plays with the onlooker, as he does throughout the chapter.

For these reasons, the Black Guinea scenes evoke minstrelsy more than any other scene in Melville's work. It also is the marker of where both forms of minstrelsy meet, both on-stage and off-stage. If The Confidence-Man is white then this is an undeniable minstrel scene, reinforcing a very staged theatrical performance. If he is black however, the Black Guinea endures a form of racial masquerade – same-racial passing. He plays the ‘ol-darky’ like Babo does to outsmart those around him. Thus, in the Black Guinea, Melville gives us the most complex version of racial performance in his 1850s works. It can be read as both theatrical and social. By theatrical, I mean a

staged form of racial performance, such as blackface minstrelsy, and by social, I refer to forms of racial performance that take place in society, such as racial masquerade discussed in chapter three.

Published only four years before the Civil War, I perceive *The Confidence-Man* as the height of racial performance in Melville's work. Melville's career as a Magazinish certainly helped him develop his form, and the Black Guinea's depth is unmatched. Furthermore, it is also evident that the Black Guinea is a by-product of Melville's earlier handling of race. We can see Pip in the beat of Black Guinea's tambourine and Babo in the Black Guinea's endorsement of Sambo. We can also see the Black Guinea in the racist imagery that Melville uses to amplify issues of race. However, the Black Guinea takes this imagery and becomes one with it. In a society, where even some Abolitionists perceived blacks to be animals or 3/5 human, the Black Guinea perversely and provocatively promotes this perception. His act is seamless.

CONDITIONAL CHARITY

As well as the Black Guinea working as a marker where both social and theatrical racial performance meet, in the Black Guinea, Melville gives us his last and strongest critique of the 1850s. This critique is not without its ambiguity. However, when the Black Guinea is read within the context of slavery and a country on the brink of Civil War, the Black Guinea confronts two of the most significant racial issues that were widespread in America during the decade before the Civil War: charity and slavery.

One of the racial issues that the Black Guinea works to oppose is what I shall refer to as conditional charity. Charity is a theme that runs throughout the narrative. As mentioned in the previous section, *The Confidence-Man* writes several messages about charity after seeing the reward for the mysterious man. Nonetheless, by conditional

charity, I mean generosity that hinges upon particular circumstances. Applied to the Black Guinea, the charity that he receives rests upon certain conditions. More clearly, the passengers are only prepared to demonstrate charity once the Black Guinea performs a certain way. While he performs for his audience, he is eventually accused of deceit. The narrator expounds:

While this game of charity was yet at its height, a limping, gimlet-eyed, sour-faced person—it may be some discharged custom-house officer, who, suddenly stripped of convenient means of support, had concluded to be avenged on government and humanity by making himself miserable for life, either by hating or suspecting everything and everybody—this shallow unfortunate, after sundry sorry observations of the negro, began to croak out something about his deformity being a sham, got up for financial purposes, which immediately threw a damp upon the frolic benignities of the pitch-penny players. (CM 12)

This matter continues throughout the chapter. Again and again, the Black Guinea is charged with pretending to be disabled. This, like his true identity, is unclear. We the reader, as well as the passengers, do not know if he is indeed crippled. The passengers require ocular proof and ask the Black Guinea to provide documents proving his disability. As a result of this tension, charity becomes a central theme in the chapter. The Black Guinea is described as saddened by their ‘frozen charity’ (CM 13). Contrastingly, the Methodist asks the Black Guinea ‘Have you no charity?’ (CM 14). This lasts throughout the chapter.

Read in the context of slavery, the scene has provocative connotations that reflect how many individuals in the 1850s viewed slaves and disregarded the consequences of enslavement. Many onlookers refuse to acknowledge the ‘cripple Negro’. The narrator describes the impact the crowd has upon him:

Meantime, the negro's countenance, before marked with even more than patient good-nature, drooped into a heavy-hearted expression, full of the most painful distress. So far abased beneath its proper physical level, that Newfoundland-dog face turned in passively hopeless appeal, as if instinct told it that the right or the wrong might not have overmuch to do with whatever wayward mood superior intelligences might yield to. (CM 12)

Similarly, many refused to see the physical and mental harm that was sustained as a result of slavery. Additionally, many were initially blind to the impact that slavery would have on the country as it would eventually lead to a Civil War. As John Jay Chapman put it, 'There was never any moment in our history when slavery was not a sleeping serpent. It lay coiled up under the table during the deliberations of the Constitutional Convention. Owing to the cotton gin it was more than half awake. Thereafter, it was on everyone's mind though not always on his tongue' (Ward 8). The *Fidèle* passenger's hostility towards the Black Guinea and their refusal of charity reflect the way that many American's refused to take responsibility for slavery.

This blindness is similar to that of Delano, who is described as charitable and yet unable to see the harmful effects of slavery. Instead, he only sees a troubled slave capturer. Delano's hubris is striking and perverse, and we witness similar perversion in the passengers. Particularly, the Methodist preacher demonstrates comparable hubris. Although he is referred to as a Methodist preacher, the narrator states that the Methodist is 'a tall, muscular, martial-looking man, a Tennessean by birth, who in the Mexican war had been volunteer chaplain to a volunteer rifle-regiment' (CM 14). Here, we see Delano in him. The pious Methodist who also did his part for Manifest Destiny. Moreover, he eventually becomes so frustrated with the Black Guinea that he attacks him. The Narrator details:

‘Yea, and teach you charity on the spot,’ cried the goaded Methodist, suddenly catching this exasperating opponent by his shabby coat-collar, and shaking him till his timber-toe clattered on the deck like a nine-pin. ‘You took me for a non-combatant did you?—thought, seedy coward that you are, that you could abuse a Christian with impunity. You find your mistake’—with another hearty shake.
(CM 15)

Ironically, his actions are far from charitable towards the Black Guinea and yet he questions the Guinea’s charity. The paradoxical nature of those who surround the Black Guinea is evocative of reactions towards slavery in the 1850s. The passenger’s refusal to pay the Black Guinea is suggestive of America’s refusal to pay for slavery. In a figurative way, the physical payments they make to the Black Guinea represent the paying, in the sense of responsibility, which Melville’s America avoided. It represents the refusal to pay for and also provide assistance for socioeconomic mobility. In comparison to other characters in the text, the Black Guinea’s request is minimal. He is only asking for pennies. Yet, his audience refuse to pay him.

Despite the vast amount of passengers who refuse to show charity towards the Black Guinea, not all of the passengers refuse to give him money. Towards the end of the chapter the merchant comes forward and pays the Black Guinea.

Yes, my poor fellow *I* have confidence in you,’ now exclaimed the country merchant before named, whom the negro’s appeal, coming so piteously on the heel of pitilessness, seemed at last humanely to have decided in his favor. ‘And here, here is some proof of my trust’, with which, tucking his umbrella under his arm, and diving down his hand into his pocket, he fished forth a purse, and, accidentally, along with it, his business card, which, unobserved, dropped to the

deck. 'Here, here, my poor fellow', he continued, extending a half dollar. (CM 17)

However, this charity only comes after the Black Guinea has humiliated himself. The merchant's charity comes at the end of the Black Guinea's performance. He has given the passengers the entire 'ole darkie' performance, humiliating and degrading himself. The narrator explains that the 'negro' wails and is overcome with a sense of despair. Although the Methodist has openly rejected and denounced the Black Guinea, the narrator also explains that he catches the Methodist by his coat as he gives one last plea. Then, as the Black Guinea finally lets go of the Merchant's coat, he lets out one last wail and says, 'No confidence in dis poor ole darkie' (CM 17). Thus, though the merchant demonstrates charity, it only comes after Black Guinea disgraces himself and demonstrates that he is inferior to those who surround him.

Nonetheless, despite the Merchant's charity, many remain distrustful of the Black Guinea, and the Merchant's charity is met with opposition. Immediately following, the reader is informed:

Done in despite of the general sentiment, the good deed of the merchant was not, perhaps, without its unwelcome return from the crowd, since that good deed seemed somehow to convey to them a sort of reproach. Still again, and more pertinaciously than ever, the cry arose against the negro, and still again he wailed forth his lament and appeal among other things, repeating that the friends, of whom already he had partially run off the list, would freely speak for him, would anybody go find them. (CM 17)

Thus, these mixed reactions do reflect a society at odds with itself, and the Black Guinea represents the slave question. By the time the captain calls the crowd, nothing seems to have been resolved.

The subject of slavery is also intensified by Melville's inclusion of disturbing conflicts in America's past. He does it subtly through his mention of the Methodist being involved in the Mexican War. However, this seems more extensive in his discussion of 'Indian-Hating'. The chapters that deal with Indian hating are based on America's disturbing past. To accentuate this, he constructs the narrative within the narrative of *The Confidence-Man*. The story is told by a confidence man in the text who initially refers to himself as an acquaintance then as Charlie. It is as if Hall becomes an 'acquaintance' to the overall narrative as Melville borrows 'directly from Hall's wording' (Levine 129). Elizabeth Renker points out that 'Hall's text describes Indian-Hating as an animosity that springs from stories about the Indian's nature rather than from Indian's nature itself' (Levine 129). Here, Melville illustrates how the reality of Indian life is portrayed inaccurately through an 'impression'. This later discussion also serves to underscore the issues of slavery that are connoted as a result of the Black Guinea's performance as he is enacting the racial fiction that Melville discloses in the chapters that deal with 'Indian Hating'.

Similarly, several chapters later, *The Confidence-Man* plays on the passengers' charity within the context of race. In 'A Charitable Lady', *The Confidence-Man* deceives a woman into giving him twenty-dollars by playing on racial stereotypes. It is only when the Black Guinea performs racial, minstrel-like, stereotypes that merchant shows him charity. Similarly, in 'A Charitable Lady', it is only when *The Confidence-Man* plays on stereotypes associated with American Indians that he receives any money. As *The Confidence-Man* approaches the woman in the chapter, the narrator informs us

that she is in reverie and has her finger ‘inserted at the thirteenth of 1st Corinthians’ (CM 43). This biblical chapter deals with the concept of love. Immediately The Confidence-Man attempts to appeal to her Christian sensibilities by asking her about her faith and explaining to her that he only feels comfortable with Christians and not ‘people of the world’ (CM 44). The Confidence-Man then asks her whether she has confidence in him, and he asks her to prove it by giving him twenty-dollars. When she shows hesitancy, he then says ‘There, I told you, madam, you had no confidence’ (CM 44). After feeling somewhat guilty, she asks The Confidence-Man what he needs the money for, and he explains that he is a ‘travelling agent of the Widow and Orphan Asylum, recently founded among the Seminoles’ (CM 45) She then replies ‘And why did you not tell me your object before? As not a little relieved. ‘Poor Souls – Indians, too – those cruelly-used Indians. Here, here; how could I hesitate? I am so sorry it is no more’’ (CM 45). Thus, similar to the Black Guinea, the passenger only shows pity once the racial stereotype is played upon. She is more than happy to give money to The Confidence-Man for the ‘cruelly-used Indian’. Thus, her charity is conditional.

Nonetheless, this charity is dependent upon enduring racial stereotypes, enduring stereotypes that have significant implications within the context of the 1850s and in particular, slavery. For example, Abolitionists displayed charity that rested upon slaves performing in a particular way. The most significant illustration of this is evident in the tension that ensued between Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison during the 1850s. Garrison, a key figure in the Abolitionist movement and founder of the Abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator*, was Douglass’ mentor. However, their relationship became strained when, as Waldo E Martin Jr. puts it, ‘Douglass outgrew the Garrisonian ‘school of reformers’ which he had discovered to be too narrow in its philosophy and too bigoted in spirit to do justice to any venture to differ from it’ (Martin

Jr. 45). During the 1850s, Douglass had detected racism amongst white Abolitionists, and in particular Garrison. Douglass pointed out that ‘When Garrison ‘the great champion of the Negro’s rights,’ branded Negroes with a ‘want of apprehension and moral capacity,’ he conceded Negro inferiority’ (Martin Jr. 44). Moreover, Douglass ‘maintained that the primary reason for coldness of blacks toward the American Anti-Slavery Society was its racism, not Unitarianism’ (Martin Jr. 44). Ultimately, by the mid-1850s, Douglass no longer fitted the role that Garrison and his followers wanted him to play.

Perhaps most significantly, Douglass opposed some of Garrison’s radical views. In particular, Douglass believed that the Constitution could be used to establish freedom for slaves. Moreover, by the 1850s, Douglass, inspired by Garrison’s newspaper, had started his newspaper *The North Star*, which became competitive with *The National Anti-Slavery Standard* and *The Liberator*. This competition caused tension. However, tension was also caused by Douglass’ relationship with white women. During Douglass’ trip to England, he was criticized for being in the company of white women, and he was even accused by the Garrisonian movement of having an adulterous relationship with Julia Griffiths, a white British woman who helped publish and edit Douglass’ work (Martin Jr. 42-44). The Garrisonians demonstrated their disapproval of those relationships and publicized their accusations against Douglass. Thus, this revealed that although white Abolitionists were fighting for equality for slaves, they still maintained racist and demeaning views of black people. Their charity was conditional, and in the context of Douglass’ and Garrison’s relationship, it is evident that the Garrisonians support of Douglass was dependent on how willing Douglass was to comply with Garrison’s views. Starting his own newspaper, opposing aspects of Garrison’s radicalism, and being seen with white women was not the role that they

wanted Douglass to play. This type of charity is evident in both Delano and the Merchant who gives the Black Guinea money. Delano is cordial with black people as long as they are docile and the Merchant gives the Black Guinea money after he demonstrates that he is inferior.

COMMIDIFYING THE BLACK CORPOREAL BODY IN A CHANGING LITERARY MARKETPLACE

Not only does the scene reflect the ways that abolitionists expressed charity, but the scene also critiques as well as allegorizes the ways in which the black body was commodified. This was explicit especially during a period that practiced slavery. However, commodifying the black subject was also taking place in the literary marketplace. Melville was no stranger to commodification and the importance of writing for an audience and a publisher. From the outset, Melville had to deal with satisfying an audience, as several issues arose during the publication of *Typee*.

Firstly, it was difficult for Melville to get the book in print in America. Harper refused *Typee* on the grounds that an audience would never believe that the events were true. Consequently, Gansevoort, Melville's older brother, decided to try and get it published in England, where he had been appointed as the new Secretary of the American Legation. After his arrival in England, he managed to find a publisher named John Murray. Despite agreeing to publish the book, Murray had several issues with the book that he wanted to settle, before it went into print. Murray exclaimed that the narrative had the 'taint of fiction', a blemish that would have a negative effect on book sales (Log 200). Additionally, he – like Harper – was dubious about the text's authenticity. Murray felt that the narrative's polished writing style marred its veracity.

He felt that the standard was far too high for an ordinary seaman to have written. Murray's reaction exemplifies the impact that the audience had on Melville's *Typee*. Murray's anxieties, also, derived from an English point of view. In Britain, it was unusual for young men to go on voyages like the one Melville had taken, therefore, Murray perceived that it would be difficult for a British audience to believe. Additionally, many sailors in the British naval force were illiterate, therefore, to claim that a sailor wrote an entire book did seem farfetched. Nonetheless, Melville's elder brother attempted to reassure Murray of the text's veracity, and in spite of Murray's issues, Melville did not put up a great deal of resistance, and agreed to make the necessary changes necessary.

Secondly, similar tension was prevalent during its eventual publication with Wiley and Putnam, an American publisher. Being sensitive to American public opinion, Wiley felt that many would find the text offensive, and he insisted that changes were to be made. In spite of Murray's previous efforts to bowdlerise the text, Mr. Wiley was still very concerned. He felt that the narrative had to undergo further amendments. In this case, to satisfy Wiley and Putnam, Melville had to make changes to the text on two separate occasions. The first set of amendments was not as drastic as those that took place for the wholesale revisions in July, 1846. During the second, most of the text's critique on Missionaries and views on political events were omitted. There were, also, references to sex that were expurgated. For example, 'I made a dress for this lovely girl' was changed to 'a lovely dress was made' (T 290). These changes are quite significant because they offer some of the expectations placed on an American literary writer. Melville's American publishers were disturbed by the condemnation that Melville offered in *Typee* and took drastic measures to eliminate it. Here, the two striking examples are Murray's concern with the book's veracity, and Wiley and Putnam, with

its decency. Murray employed Henry Milton to edit *Typee* and paid him just over half of what was paid to Melville for the entire manuscript, illustrating the level of editing that went into the early edition narrative. Furthermore, Wiley and Putnam made additional edits to the text.

Thirdly, along with the criticism of his publishers, Melville had to bear the disapproval of literary critics. Before the revised edition was published, several critics attacked the narrative's sense of morality. Numerous Protestant denominational magazines seemed to arrive at the conclusion that Melville's sense of decency had been polluted during his stay in the Marquesas (T 294). Nonetheless, even when the changes were made, groups still contested the narrative. Paradoxically, some factions longed for the earlier edition back. Catholic publications such as *United States Catholic Magazine and Monthly Review*, wanted the older version of the text that condemned Protestant missionaries. Contrastingly, some Protestant publications, such as the *Biblical Repository and Classical Review* praised Melville for the change. On the whole, after the changes had been made, *Typee* was well received (Stern 7).

Even those in Melville's immediate circle arguably had an impact on his work. As John Bryant points out in *Melville and Repose: The Rhetoric of Humor in the American Renaissance* (1993):

The young sailor returning from four years at sea had his eye on his future bride even as he was writing and editing *Typee* for the revised American edition. In short, a decided first among equals in Melville's general audience was the Shaw family-father Lemuel Shaw and daughter Elizabeth. Given these associations and the tension they bear, Melville's handling of his sexual theme had to be particularly delicate. He had to present himself to the father as sufficiently

experienced and emotionally stable and to the daughter as sexually attractive. Not only does the blushing but sexually active Tommo come across as a capable mate, but in later chapters he is scornful of extramarital practices. He has sown his oats and has loved the ladies, but he is ready for marriage, and proper Boston one at that. (182)

Adding to Bryant's observations, Melville eventually decided to dedicate the American version of the narrative to Shaw, writing 'To Lemuel Shaw, Chief Justice of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, This Little Work is Affectionately Inscribed by the Author' (T 1846). His message evokes the value that he placed on his relationship with Shaw. However, it also gives credibility to Bryant's observations that his intention to please, the man who would eventually be his father-in-law, influenced the way that he wrote *Typee*.

Nonetheless, on both sides of the Atlantic Melville shows a compliance with either publisher. It does not appear as though he shows any resistance to their demands. His elder brother's involvement in *Typee's* publication did reduce Melville's participation in the publication process, but even in the communication between Melville and Ganservoort there is not a significant amount of resentment on Melville's part.

In fact, an argument could be posited that illustrates Melville's approval of the changes made to *Typee* as they did not appear to have had a negative impact on him. His letter to Evert Duyckinck expressing that 'expurgate' was too 'odious' a word for the corrections he was making suggests that he may not have taken Wiley's amendments too seriously. Moreover, Melville did use the American 'Revised' edition as an opportunity to add to the text. Despite the heavy expurgation that took place,

Melville added, along with new words, ‘The story of Toby’ to buttress the text’s authenticity. As well as his letter to Duyckinck and the changes Melville made, Melville’s endorsement of the ‘revised’ edition also seems apparent in his request to the British publisher, Murray, to make identical changes to the British version of *Typee*. He supported his request with the notion that the polemical digressions ‘not only date the work but impede the narrative’ (Bryant 23). At this juncture, it is also important to point out that Melville’s decision to publish *Typee*, near the end of his life, without all the expurgations restored also indicates Melville’s contentment with the changes. Dennis Marnon asserts that there was only a single expurgation – chapter 24’s preacher parody – requested to be restored. Therefore, by taking all these things into account, it seems probable that he endorsed the changes made to *Typee*, and even with years to deliberate on the changes, he and his literary executor, Arthur Stedman, made only one restoration.

Nonetheless, at this point in his career Melville’s reaction to his publishers and readership does not seem one of frustration. The editors of the Northwestern-Newberry edition (NN) of *Typee* suggest that Melville was somehow driven into cooperating with his publishers. For that reason, Hershel Parker, G. Thomas and Harrison Hayford, editors of the NN, decided to use the unrevised British edition as the basis for their version. Additionally, they point out that Melville’s rationale behind wanting Murray to edit *Typee* is unmerited and perceive his request to Murray as something that he had been ‘forced’ to make (T 315). However, the editors did include some of the changes Melville had made to the American edition. But only those that they felt demonstrated Melville’s ‘artistic integrity of the book, apart from any considerations involving public response, sales, or the editorial policy of the publisher’ (T 316).

Melville also initially delayed sending Murray the revised edition before publication, a move that Stern perceives as his way of opposing the changes made to the American 'Revised' edition. Subtly, this suggests that Melville could have been showing resistance and implicitly expressing his disapproval of the Wiley's changes. Once the other changes are considered, his suggestion to Murray to include those changes in the British version and his seemingly light-hearted approach in his letter to Evert Duyckinck – along with the obvious problem of explicating the author's intentions – make it difficult to side with one view or the other.

However, by *The Confidence-Man*, Melville's views on appeasing his audience had changed. In less than six years after publishing *Typee*, in a letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne, he wrote 'What I feel most moved to write, that is banned, -- it will not pay. Yet, altogether, write the *other* way I cannot. So the product is a final hash, and all my books are botches' (L 191). His frustration stemmed from the way that a changing market place was impacting the quality of writing. The commercialization of literature had a significant impact upon Melville's work. After his success as a travel writer, he struggled to repeat that success, and after *Moby-Dick* his readership drastically declined. This was in part the result of a changing market place; publishers were looking for texts that were very formulaic and would bring sizable profits, and they became forceful about the works that they wanted Melville to write. After the commercial failure of *Pierre*, publishers dissuaded Melville from producing works that were too ambiguous. Thus, there was a growing tension between Melville and his publishers that can be traced as far back as 1851. In the same letter to Hawthorne, Melville also expressed, 'Dollars damn me; and the malicious Devil is forever grinning in upon me, holding the door ajar. My dear Sir, a presentiment is on me, – I shall at last be worn out and perish, like an old nutmeg-grater, grated to pieces by the constant attrition of the

wood, that is, the nutmeg' (L 191). Industrialization meant that America would move from agrarian trade to more of an industrialized market place. Thus, Melville was wrestling with the changing market culture and after the criticism of *Pierre*, Melville became frustrated. By 1851, his willingness to please his audience and publisher lessened.

Before producing *The Confidence-Man*, he worked as a magazinist primarily because it offered steady work as publishers were reluctant to publish a work that did not produce considerable profit. Critics have pointed out that Melville's frustrations with publishers are symbolized through Ahab's embrace of ambiguity and Bartleby's refusal to comply with his bosses demands as a copywriter. Some have read these characters as Melville's attempt to disclose his frustrations with a publishing industry that strictly confines writers to rules and parameters. By *The Confidence-Man*, these frustrations are evident in the text, and Melville returns to a more ambiguous style that is evident in *Pierre*. However, more importantly, his frustrations are also evident in his treatment of race as what will pay at the time Melville writes *The Confidence-Man* is sentimental depictions of slavery. Thus, Melville's illustration of conditional charity towards the Black Guinea works to counter and reflect the conditional charity shown by Abolitionists. However, it also reflects and critiques a growing economy that has still managed to commodify the black subject. This is particularly evident in popular culture.

Race was no exception and the commodification of the black subject was as true for physical labour as it was for the publishing industry. As, I suggest in Chapter Three, by the 1850s, slave narratives had become a profitable industry, and Melville was impacted by the popularity of this genre – his writing did not include any specific slave narratives, but the topic and its attendant politics influenced his depictions of both Babo

and the Black Guinea. Certainly, the popularity and production of slave narratives is a form by which black people were commodified not solely for the fact that slave narratives were modified to retain a certain form. The narratives also illustrate commodification because of their mass production and the very small amount of black authors who profited from the form. The genre did more to help abolitionists than it did to help black authors financially. Onley goes as far as to write ‘in one sense the narrative lives of the ex-slaves were as much possessed and used by the abolitionists as their actual lives had been by slaveholders’ (51). Very little profit was being made but white abolitionists were using ex slaves’ stories to support their agenda. This is evident in the relationship between Garrison and Douglass, a relationship that Onley draws our attention to. When Douglass ceased being the loyal Moor, more clearly when he ‘insisted on going his own way’, Garrison was angered that Douglass’ voice could no longer be used the way that Garrison wanted it to. Hence, between them, commodification is a fundamental part of their relationship. Moreover, Stowe’s adaptation of slave narrative is no exception. She profited more than any slave had done before her. Slave narratives’ popularity did not necessarily equate to sizable profits for slaves. As Joanna Brooks points out, early black authors’ success was limited (50). It was only those such as Douglass and Box Brown who managed to make larger profits. However, both Douglass and Brown were ‘subsidized or supported by the distributional networks of ‘The American Anti-Slavery Society’’ (Goddu 153). In Brown’s case, he continuously reinvented himself to meet his audience’s need (Goddu 153).

Ultimately, the way that the Black Guinea is commodified speaks both to slavery and the shift in the literary market place. The Black Guinea receives very little for his performances and yet other confidence tricks receive more. Melville was, in many ways, impacted by the change in market place, and *The Confidence Man* would

be the last full-length book that Melville would see published during his lifetime. As Gilroy points out, slavery had moved America into the modern world. He writes ‘the concentrated intensity of the slave experience is something that marked out blacks as the first truly modern people, handling in the nineteenth century dilemmas and difficulties which would only become the substance of everyday life in Europe a century later’ (Gilroy 221). Furthermore, once in the United States, black people were still being used as commodities. Nonetheless, even in a changing economy black people were still being used, and this as evident in publishing as it was elsewhere. The success of Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* revealed the popularity of slave narratives, and the obvious profit made from the vast amount of books sold caused writers and publishers to turn to slave narratives not only as a way to highlight the tragedy inherent in chattel slavery but also because they could potentially make money. This desire to make a profit from slave narratives is particularly evident in the rise of ‘Tom Shows’ discussed in Chapter Three. After the success of Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, many produced theatrical adaptations her novel both seriously dramatizing and mimicking the sentimentalism in, as mentioned in the previous chapter. However, one of the most significant reasons that so many were produced was their profitability. Thus, the black body was being used to make a profit in literary circles as well as on plantations. Moreover, many who edited and published slave narratives were white. The black body was being used by white people to make a profit. Like the charity shown in *The Confidence-Man*, this commodification was dependent upon a specific image of black people that was ultimately subversive.

THE CRISIS OF INTERPRETATION

The crowd's interaction with the Black Guinea also allegorizes America's need to define itself in terms of race. The race of the Black Guinea is extremely important for the crowd as it is the first aspect of the 'negro cripple' that they point out. Additionally, the views are reflected in the Black Guinea's responses. He has internalised the need to define himself within the confines of white hegemonic culture, and refers to himself as 'Ol darkie' and really takes on and enacts enduring racist stereotypes that were evident in minstrelsy. Interestingly, prior to this scene, we are informed that the ship is a 'piebald parliament'. However, within this supposed parliament of diversity, there is a structure of racial hierarchy, and this hierarchy is hindered by the crowd's inability to establish who the Black Guinea is.

There is a racial crisis evident in the Black Guinea scene because the passengers cannot decide on the Black Guinea's racial identification. The passengers speculate about the Black Guinea's race. However, they never establish what his race is, and this causes conflict throughout the chapter. They accuse him of painting up for decoy, thus implying that he is really a white man posing as black. Though this charge seems warranted, and they might be correct, their interaction with him fails to move their understanding of him forward. Rather, the passenger's interaction with the Black Guinea illustrate a racial crisis taking place because the passengers cannot establish his racial identity.

Also adding to the racial crisis, the passengers show the Black Guinea a lack of trust and are racist towards him, despite not establishing his race. The passengers demonstrate a need to interpret the Black Guinea, but while they cannot, they treat him as if he is black. Additionally, they distrust him in the face of their own contradictions and identity shortcomings. As a 'Piebald Parliament', there are many groups that stand in direct contrast with one another, and there are also those who deal with paradoxes

within themselves. The Methodist has already been mentioned. However, the deformed gentleman who instigates the charge on the Black Guinea also bears these contradictions. He also has a wooden leg and yet he is the first to question the Black Guinea. The man's accusations seem to become an obsession. The narrator informs us:

Yes, they began to scrutinize the negro curiously enough; when, emboldened by this evidence of the efficacy of his words, the wooden-legged man hobbled up to the negro, and, with the air of a beadle, would, to prove his alleged imposture on the spot, have stripped him and then driven him away, but was prevented by the crowd's clamor, now taking part with the poor fellow, against one who had just before turned nearly all minds the other way. So he with the wooden leg was forced to retire; when the rest, finding themselves left sole judges in the case, could not resist the opportunity of acting the part: not because it is a human weakness to take pleasure in sitting in judgment upon one in a box, as surely this unfortunate negro now was, but that it strangely sharpens human perceptions, when, instead of standing by and having their fellow-feelings touched by the sight of an alleged culprit severely handled by some one justiciary, a crowd suddenly come to be all justiciaries in the same case themselves; as in Arkansas once, a man proved guilty, by law, of murder, but whose condemnation was deemed unjust by the people, so that they rescued him to try him themselves; whereupon, they, as it turned out, found him even guiltier than the court had done, and forthwith proceeded to execution; so that the gallows presented the truly warning spectacle of a man hanged by his friends.

(CM 12-13)

The audience becomes obsessed with indicting the Black Guinea, and their flaws and contradictions become overlooked. The narrator speculates that the 'limping, gimlet-

eyed, sour-faced' man's sentiment towards the Black Guinea could be a result of being a 'discharged custom-house officer' (CM 13). Yet, this gets overlooked by the passengers.

Moreover, the ambiguity of racial interpretation runs throughout Melville's text. This ambiguity is evident in Ishmael's provocative question that implies we are all slaves to something or someone. However, the ambiguity of race can also be found in Pip's madness. Additionally, it is evident in Ahab's relentless pursuit of Moby-Dick. It is also evident in the ambiguity of Moby-Dick's whiteness. We witness this ambiguity in Babo's silence and Cereno's unrest. However, by the Black Guinea, the crisis of interpretation is amplified. The passengers are left unable to decipher who the Black Guinea truly is. Hence, the Black Guinea marks the place where both performance and minstrelsy meet, but it also demonstrates a crisis of racial interpretation as the passengers cannot identify the Black Guinea racially. Though this is the case, the passengers still treat him as if he is inferior, ultimately treating him as if he is black. This ambiguity reflects the ambiguity of racial interpretation during the 1850s that significantly contributed to the Civil War.

The Black Guinea's performance marks the height of racial performance in Melville's work. Moreover, his performance both allegorizes and critiques some of the racial issues during the period, and the audience's reaction to him are as fundamental as the performance itself. The crisis of interpretation was not only applicable to race, but in many ways, it impacted various parts of American life, like the publishing industry. However, as well as racial performance, the Black Guinea also marks the height of Melville's cognitive paralytic state towards abolition and race. After the Civil War, Melville becomes sympathetic to the South, and, in his work, he deals less with issues relating to slavery or race.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have explored the effects of the Black Guinea's performance in Herman Melville's *The Confidence-Man*. In addition to detailing the Black Guinea's performance, I began the chapter by arguing that the Black Guinea marks the height of racial performance in Melville's work. Moreover, in the second section, I suggested that the conditional charity of the Black Guinea scene works to illustrate the conditional charity shown by the abolitionist movement. In the third section, I pointed out that the Black Guinea also works to allegorize the ways that the black subject was commodified both in society and the American literary marketplace. In the fourth section, I suggest that the Black Guinea scene is also evocative of America's racial identity crisis, suggesting that the reactions to the Black Guinea's performance demonstrate this crisis.

Whereas this chapter has investigated Melville's final publication of the 1850s, the conclusion of this study shall focus on the importance of the development racial performance in Melville's work. However, more importantly, I examine the significance of this study in contemporary society. In the light of recent shootings in Charleston South Carolina, what can we learn from a study on Melville? In a country that is still debating the relevance and importance of the Confederate flag, what can we learn from a study on Melville within the context of the Civil War? In a country where a white woman managed to 'pass' as black, what can we learn from a study that focuses on episodes of racial performance throughout Melville's work? To close, I will suggest how this study contributes to the larger scholarship of Melville and race. Additionally, I propose how this thesis moves conversations of Melville forward.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis has been to examine racial performance in Melville's 1850s works. Chapter One examined Melville's first publication of the 1850s: *White-Jacket*. Moreover, the chapter marked the beginning of the trajectory of racial performance in Melville's work by arguing that Melville uses an actual theatrical production to challenge violations of the white sailor's liberty. Whereas the first chapter focused on an actual theatrical performance, the second chapter dealt with Melville's *Moby-Dick* and explored race through Melville's use of theatrically presented themes. Specifically, the chapter focused on Pip's performance of race before the backdrop of Ahab's monomania. In contrast to the emphasis of the second chapter, the third chapter focused on the ways that race is constituted by shipboard interactions in *Benito Cereno*. Considered to be the quintessential episode of racial performance in Melville's work, this chapter demonstrates Melville's sensitivity to portrayals of race. I argued that Melville gives us examples of social performances of race which were a prevalent topic during the 1850s. The chapter demonstrated Melville's sensitivity by highlighting how the text reflects not only cross-racial passing but also same-racial passing. Cross-racial passing is the conventional view of passing. More clearly, it is the act by which one poses as being from another race. For example, many black slaves who had lighter skin

managed to pass across racial lines to gain their freedom. These slaves pretended to be white and fled to the North. However, same-racial passing is a form of racial masquerade in which an individual performs stereotypical racial markers associated with their own racial group to be recognized from that particular race. The ultimate examples of these two types of passing are Ellen and William Craft, detailed in chapter three. William, who appears dark, performs as the dim-witted slave to pass and flee to the North. This is an example of same-racial passing. Contrastingly, Ellen performs as if she is white, and she poses as William's master. This, I pointed out, is an example of cross-racial passing. I argued that Melville's *Benito Cereno* demonstrated his sensitivity to race and racial performance during the 1850s because the narrative clearly deals with same-racial passing. The slaves same-racial pass because they perform the stereotypical and racist markers that are associated with being black. Likewise, Cereno and Delano perform racial markers that are associated with being white. Furthermore, although the novella was based on Delano's *Narrative of Voyages and Travels*, Melville amplified the extent of racial performance in the narrative. While the third chapter focused on shipboard life constituted through performance, the final chapter focused on racial performance's impact on the audience. Specifically, I examined the Black Guinea's impact upon the audience and reader in *The Confidence-Man*. Additionally, I suggested that the Black Guinea is the location where racial performance, both theatrical and off-stage, meet, making the Black Guinea's performance obscure.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RACIAL PERFORMANCE IN MELVILLE'S 1850S TEXTS

The significance of this study lays in the mounting relationship between instances of racial performance across Melville's 1850s texts. Critics have not previously traced racial performance in this way in Melville's work. Predominantly, critics have dealt

with the performative nature of race in Melville's individual works, and *Benito Cereno* has often been the focus. By looking at racial performance chronologically and collectively, studies of racial performance in Melville's work are moved forward. To highlight the trajectory of racial performance, I decided to look at *White-Jacket*, *Moby-Dick*, *Benito Cereno*, and *The Confidence-Man*. These examples illustrate different forms and dynamics of racial performance.

What is more, this study is significant because it expands the range of theory that is associated with Melville and racial performance. I expand it theatrically by viewing Melville's work alongside the minstrel show, and socially by viewing his work alongside racial masquerade. In Chapter Two, I examine the ways that Pip's performance in 'Midnight, Forecastle' endorses the minstrel tradition. Through his performance, we see the act of a stock minstrel figure, and even through dialogue, I demonstrate the ways that Pip mirrors minstrelsy. Then, in Chapter Three, I develop the theory further by illustrating the ways that racial masquerade is evident in *Benito Cereno*. In doing so, I introduced two key concepts cross-racial passing and same-racial passing. Moreover, I used these terms to highlight the depth of racial performance in *Benito Cereno*, suggesting that the novella is a passing narrative. Thus, the theory used in this thesis expands the theories previously applied to Melville's work.

LIMITATIONS

This study has been limited in several ways. My focus on the 1850s required a structured approach with fixed boundaries in terms of the material that I drew from. There are certainly other eras that I could have studied that also deal with racial performance. For example, after the Civil War, there was an increase in literary works that dealt with racial performance, such as Frances Harper's *lola LeRoy* (1892) Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894), James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-*

Coloured Man (1912), Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* (1928), and John Howard Griffen's *Black Like Me* (1960). Thus, studying later periods or drawing from a larger scope of works could also provide interesting research.

This thesis was restricted by my focus on Melville. He was a part of an intellectual milieu that included other authors, such as Hawthorne and Poe, whose work could also provide thought-provoking scholarship when comparing forms of entertainment, such as minstrelsy, and genres, such as passing narratives. Hawthorne's emphasis on symbolism and the ambiguity evident in his narratives is comparable to aspects of Melville's work. Furthermore, Hawthorne's and Melville's positions on race were in many ways different, and this difference could provide the foundation for a fascinating project.

Nonetheless, despite these limitations, this thesis has provided a distinctive study of Melville and racial performance, and it is a distinct contribution to the sizable amount of scholarship dealing with Melville and race. Melville's patriarchal ties to both the Revolution and the Civil War generate a stimulating backdrop for Melville during the 1850s. What is more, this period was the time when Melville published most of his work, and it was also the period in which Melville had to deal with the decline of his readership. Despite the limits that are evident in this diachronic study, the limitations are overcome by the impact of the argument and the findings that I have put forward.

CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE

This study is significant because not only does it deal with one of America's most canonical writers, but it also deals with one of the most central and important moments in American history. To truly understand American history, it is imperative to revisit the Civil War because, in many ways, it stands as the litmus test for the American's

definition of freedom and liberty. Since the American Revolution, America had been haunted by slavery. The war underscored a perverse paradox that would haunt America because it would become a country that fought for its independence and individual liberties, yet practiced slavery. Therefore, as slavery was such a central part of the Civil War, the conflict that ensued between 1861 and 1865 would redefine how equality would be viewed in America.

Although the Civil War altered the ways that equality was defined nationally, this did not mean that America had removed all aspects of inequality in society. Crucially, it may have ended slavery but did not eradicate racial prejudice from society. As evidenced in the examples of people in the Northern Free States still maintaining racist views, racism was still widespread in the South. Racism was very much a part of the Reconstruction Era. This period had the highest rates of public lynching in American history. Also, there was the issue of segregation, especially in America's education system. Moreover, America was still wrestling with its policies about Manifest Destiny.

Moreover, remnants from the Civil War are still relevant today. Recently, during the Charleston Shooting in South Carolina in the summer of 2015, in which a white man gunned down nine black people, the white suspect was seen in photographs holding the Confederate Flag. He held the flag to resurrect its meaning as a symbol that condones slavery as well as racial separation and supremacy. As a result, the incident led to an intense debate about whether the Confederate flag ought to be removed from the State Capitol building in Charleston. Although some consider the flag to be an icon of Southern pride, it is undisputable that some Americans still consider the flag to be an emblem of racism because of its relationship with slavery. The South Carolina incident reminds us of how significant the Civil War still proves to be, and despite the

Union's victory and the Reconstruction Era, the conflict that ensued during the Civil War is still an issue.

The South Carolina shooting not only shows a division in the ways that residents in the South respond to Southern history. The incident also demonstrates some Americans' disavowal of slavery. As well as perceiving the Confederate flag as a mark of Southern pride, some supporters of the flag exhibited an ignorance of the history and institution of slavery. When asked about slavery's relationship with the Confederacy and its symbol, supporters tended to disregard their sense of public and social responsibility. The willingness to dismiss slavery in contemporary society is one of the very issues that makes this study relevant now. Melville was also surrounded by this disavowal because many of his contemporaries refused to accept the presence of slavery or take responsibility for it, especially in Southern States. In the current debate that surrounded the Confederate flag there was also a similar dismissal.

Examining and understanding racial performance also makes this study relevant, because racial enactments are still being perpetrated today. Recently, in the summer of 2015, the Rachael Dolezal case has highlighted the significance of racial performance in contemporary society. Dolezal managed to cross-racial pass as black; she attended Howard University, a historically black college, and secured a senior management position with the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). Dolezal's transition from white to black can be traced back to her teenage years. She started applying toner to her skin, as well as changing her hair. Dolezal immersed herself in black culture. In an interview with NBC's Matt Lauer, when asked about her decision to make such a transition, she explained:

I definitely am not white [...] It's a little more complex than me identifying as black or answering a question of, are you black or white? [...] I did feel that, at some point, I would need to address the complexity of my identity [...] I identify as black. (Dolezal *Today Show* Interview)

Interestingly, both white and black people considered her to be black. More crucially, Dolezal was chosen to be a local representative for the NAACP. During a recent CNN interview television broadcast two social commentators, Marc Lamont Hill and Michaela Davis, questioned Dolezal's mental health and explained that she had said some very strange things as a result of trying to masquerade as black. Hill explained that, in a meeting with Dolezal, Dolezal had expressed that the Black Lives Matter movement should be led by black people and that outsiders should not be there (Hill). Hill perceived this as strange because Dolezal is white. Similarly, Davis added to Hill's account by saying that Dolezal would lead seminars posing as black and said, in reference to hair, that she was 'going natural'. Ultimately, both Hill and Davis believed that Dolezal was suffering from some sort of racial pathology, but perhaps the Dolezal incident indicates more than that

The central questions that have been posed in review of the Dolezal incident are not so much how she managed pass as black, but why she would want to pass as black and lose her white privilege in the process. Davis remarked that Dolezal could have achieved what she did as a white woman rather than as a white woman posing as a black woman. However, questions surrounding Dolezal's motives can perhaps be easier answered than anticipated. Despite being a benefactor of white privilege, Dolezal must also deal with the guilt of identifying with a group of people who are historically associated with endorsing slavery. This falls in direct contrast with some of the nineteenth-century examples of cross-racial passing in which blacks attempted to pass

as white so that they could be free. In Dolezal's example, it is quite possible that her passing episodes were complex. For example, her racial passing could have been an attempt to rid herself of this form of guilt over slavery.

There are also other reasons that Dolezal could have been drawn to black culture. As many cultural critics have pointed out, there are numerous examples of whites appropriating black culture for aesthetic pleasure. As mentioned in this thesis, this has been the recent argument of critics who try to suggest that the minstrel show was only a location for racism. Some critics have gone on to suggest that minstrel performances were cathartic for some white actors. Jazz musicians have also been described as doing the same thing. Thus, Dolezal's example may have been more than an attempt to side with the oppressed rather than the oppressor.

Her reasons for racial passing fall in direct contrast with the passing that we witness in *Benito Cereno*. In *Benito Cereno*, the characters same-racial pass and reinforce the racial markers that are associated with their racial group. However, Melville's work is still important, especially in light of Dolezal's racial passing. Many were disgusted by the Dolezal incident. Nonetheless, Dolezal managed to fool the world, both black and white, and one must ask whether we make too much of these racial markers. Like those whom Dolezal fooled, Delano was also fooled. Thus, anyone who is interested in race ought to consider what the incidents mean.

Dolezal's performance and the performances studied in this thesis both revealed American racial anxiety as well as the instability of racial markers. Particularly in *Benito Cereno* and *The Confidence-Man*, Melville manipulates race and demonstrates how unstable race can be. Both Delano and the audience who crowd the Black Guinea wrestle with racial identity while also being deceived by the concept of fixed racial

identity. Dolezal's episode, though offensive, also demonstrates how race can be manipulated and how onlookers can be deceived by portrayals of race. The nineteenth century is distinctively different to life in the twenty-first century. However, race is still significant, and racial identity is something that can be manipulated and performed in both orthodox and subversive ways.

This aspect of race is evident in society and, like Melville does in several of his 1850s texts, writers have produced narratives and films that deal with racial performance both on stage and off-stage. Spike Lee's *Bamboozled* (2000) tells the story a modern day minstrel show, and Lee draws parallels with nineteenth century blackface and contemporary Hip Hop. One of the most provocative aspects of Lee's production is that it discloses the existence of a prior form of racist entertainment in a contemporary forms. *Bamboozled* reveals that minstrelsy's enduring legacy is still very much alive in forms of black popular culture.

As well as *Bamboozled*, there have been other artistic forms that have dealt with racial performance. For example, Jewish performance artist, Eleanor Antin created and performed Eleanora Antinova, a black ballerina from Russian ballet company Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (1989). Antin performed as Antinova during her three week performance of 'The Last Night of Rasputin', blurring the racial barriers and, in a very literal way, demonstrating the ways that race can be performed and manipulated. Her performance as a Jewish woman playing a black ballerina made her performance one of the most significant performances of cross-racial passing in recent decades.

Conceptual and feminist artist Adrian Piper has also produced thought-provoking artwork dealing with racial performance. In 1988, Piper produced *Cornered*, a piece that interrogated and provoked its viewers. Displayed in the corner of a gallery,

the piece featured a monitor with footage of Piper between two birth certificates of a white and black male. As Piper is light, she could be mistaken for white. However, on the monitor wedged between two, she informs her viewers that she is black. Although some of the ground-breaking works that were produced on racial passing were created during the nineteenth century, Piper reminds us of racial passing in more recent times. Crucially, her artwork illustrates how individuals can be ‘cornered’ by racial delineations and also how individuals might be forced to pass.

In addition to these artistic explorations of racial passing, Nikki S. Lee’s *Projects* manipulates racial ideology. In this series of photography, Lee, a Korean photographer, transcends racial boundaries by masquerading as different characters in each photograph. In *The Hip Hop Project* (2001), Lee blacks up and poses as if she is a black woman from the Hip Hop scene. Likewise, in *The Hispanic Project* (1998), she poses as a Hispanic woman, a character that she also changes her skin pigment for. Nonetheless, Lee does not only masquerade as characters who are black or Hispanic, but she also assumes white characters. In *The Ohio Project* (1999), she masquerades as if she is a blonde, white woman. Lee’s artwork aggressively pushes ideas of race through her photographs of characters with different racial boundaries. Her use of posture and clothing also contribute to the ways that race is enacted in each photograph. Like earlier writers who produced passing narratives, some artists continue to address racial passing in contemporary society.

Scholars have also given attention to racial performance. Works mentioned in this thesis such as Foster’s *Performing Whiteness*, Mary F. Brewer’s *Staging Whiteness*, McAllister’s *Whiting Up*, and Strausbaugh’s *Black Like You*, and Yancy’s *Look A White* are all works that underscore the present significance of racial performance. In recent years, there has been more of an interest in racial performance, and also in the

performance whiteness. In Devon W. Carbado and Mitu Gulati's *Acting White?: Rethinking Race in 'Post Racial America'*, the authors examine the ways in which ethnic minorities act white. They pose a term called 'working identity' that refers 'both to the perceived choices people make about their self-presentation (the racially associated ways of being listed above) and to the perceived identity that emerges from those choices (how we determine a person to be. In light of this definition, the authors then explore the ways that this identity can be manipulated to signify whiteness. Equally as provocative, George Lipsitz's *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* explores the ways that performing whiteness can be profitable for white people. We witness this in *Benito Cereno* as Cereno attempts to profit from his performance of whiteness. These studies on whiteness illustrate the relevance and importance of identifying and exploring forms of racial performance in contemporary society.

Nonetheless, perhaps more crucially, there have been recent works that underscore Melville's relevance in society. In the introduction, I commented on the importance of both Greg Grandin's and Toni Morrison's observations. They have drawn our attention to the relevance of Melville's work in today's world, especially in terms of race. As Grandin so aptly points out, both post 9/11 and Obama's presidency have signalled that Melville's *Benito Cereno* is still an important text to consider in the context of American race relations. However, the implications of Donald Pease's overall contention in *The New American Exceptionalism* (2009) also illuminate the pertinence of Melville's fictional prose. Living in a time of Manifest Destiny, Melville's context was shaped by a form of exceptionalism that is comparable to contemporary America forms of exceptionalism that Pease draws our attention to. More importantly, however, Pease's observations on American memory and the need and practice for some of America's political leaders, such as Bush and Clinton, to reshape

America's national narrative, during periods when American fantasies are ruptured, reflects the actions of political leaders during the decade before the Civil War. For example, narratives were also reframed and created to organize American's and gain support for political agendas. This is certainly evident in the rift that occurred between apologists and abolitionists. Moreover, racial performance fed into and reinforced these narratives. Thus, interesting discussions and connections can be made between the relevance of exceptionalism and American memory in Melville's work and Pease's recent, influential argument in *The New American Exceptionalism*.

As well as Pease, William Spanos also draws our attention to the relevance of Melville's work within the context of contemporary events. His thought provoking trilogy has allowed us to see events such as the Cold War and 9/11 in Melville's work. Spanos' *Herman Melville and the American Calling: The Fiction after Moby-Dick 1851-1857* (2009) draws our attention to ways that Melville fictions that followed *Moby-Dick* worked to challenge the 'polyvalent imperialism that inheres in the myth of American exceptionalism' (Spanos 17). Like Pease, Spanos makes a convincing argument for the importance of this collection of works presently. Melville had to deal with America's obsession with exception, and Spanos draws parallels to the prevalence of American exception now, particularly in the 'war on terror'. Following this work, Spanos' more recent *The Exceptionalist State and the State of Exception* (2011), similarly highlights Melville relevance. However, this time he uses Melville's unpublished *Billy Budd* and notes the micrological and macrological dynamic of the narrative. Certainly, Spanos' and Pease's scholarship have sparked my interest and have given me ideas on how I can develop and build on my research.

Ultimately, this study of race is important because race still remains a significant subject in American culture. Given this study's focus on the Civil War and racial

performance, this thesis deals with a moment in American history that was critical to America's development, and the impact of this historical moment is still evident today. In thinking about Obama's presidency, when considering racial violence on the nightly news, or American exceptionalism, we are reminded of the importance of race in America. Additionally, we are also reminded of the racial anxiety that still remains present in America, and we are also reminded of the fragility of racial identity. Babo's performance is still relevant. Therefore, this study, though it concentrates on an earlier period, is significant primarily because race is significant.

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Adioyned. In the Second, Is Set out His Second Voyage ... In the Thirde, Is Declared the Strange Fortunes Which Hapned in the Third Voyage ... VWith a Particular Card Therevnto Adioyned of Meta Incognita ... At London: Imprinted by Henry Bynnyman, Seruant to the Right Honourable Sir Christopher Hatton Vizchamberlaine, 1578. Print.

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