# *Melville's Markings in Shakespeare's Plays*

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I OFFER HERE a summary of Melville's 491 markings in the seven-volume Hilliard & Grey edition of the plays that he acquired in 1849 and studied extensively just before and during the composition of *Moby-Dick* in 1850–1851. My purpose is to exhibit the range and variety of Melville's markings more fully than has yet been done, to challenge the prevailing impression that he was inspired chiefly by Shakespeare's intimations of a godless or demonic universe, and to delineate what seems to me the actual configuration made by the whole set of markings taken as an aggregate.[1] In trying to assemble

[1] The edition which Melville announced acquiring in a letter to Evert Duyckinck dated February 24, 1849, is now in the Houghton Library, where it has been studied excitedly by Harvard students sitting alongside three generations of Melville scholars. Jay Leyda published fifteen extracts in *The Melville Log* (2 vols., New York, 1951), I, 289–297, and Roma Rosen classified descriptively the whole set of markings in her unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, *Melville's Use of Shakespeare's Plays* (Northwestern Univerity, 1962). Dr. Rosen suggests "three broad objectives of Melville's study of the dramatist: (1) information of all kinds of topics; (2) Shakespeare's art as a poet; (3) Shakespeare's knowledge of man, his nature, and the world he lives in" (p. 51). My analysis here is focused mainly on her final category.

The two pioneering studies of Melville's entire debt to Shakespeare are Charles Olson, *"Lear* and *Moby-Dick," Twice a Year,* I (1938), 165–189—later amplified in *Call Me Ishmael* (New York, 1947)—and F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance* (New York, 1941), especially pp. 386, 413–435, 445–460, 477–482. A more comprehensive and finely discriminating account than theirs is William Ellery Sedgwick's in *Herman Melville, The Tragedy of Mind* (Cambridge, Mass., 1944). Other useful studies include Raymond J. Hughes, "Melville and Shakespeare," *The Shakespeare Association Bulletin,* VII, (April, 1932), 108–112; Edward J. Rosenberry, *Melville and the Comic Spirit* (Cambridge, 1955); and Robert Shulman, "Shakespeare and the Drama of Melville's Fiction," in Waldo F. McNeir and Thelma P. Greenfield, eds., *Pacific Coast Studies in Shakespeare* (Eugene, Oregon, 1966), 280–302.

Melville himself gave the cue for the "demonic" interpretation of his debt to Shakespeare by writing in "Hawthorne and His Mosses" that "Through the mouths of the dark characters of Hamlet, Timon, Lear, and Iago, he craftily says, or sometimes insinuates the things we feel to be so terrifically true, that it were all but madness for any good man, in his own proper character, to utter, or even hint of them." Most critics interested in the Shakespearean influence have explored the parallelism of Lear to Ahab or *Hamlet* to *Pierre,* and many have reproduced in their criticism what is even for Melville the exaggerated intensity of his remarks on Shakespeare in the Hawthorne essay. But the image of Shakespeare that emerges from Melville's markings in the plays—and from his fiction—is very different from the one that emerges in the Hawthorne essay, and only a few critics like Sedgwick and Richard Chase have explored, say, the parallelism of *The Winter's Tale,* which Melville marked more heavily than either *Hamlet* or *Timon,* with *Billy Budd.*

a representative list, I have omitted some examples already too familiar; I have included others that seem to me equally important although regularly ignored; and I have been eager to present passages from the comedies and romances, which are marked no less impressively than the tragedies.[2] The totality of his markings in their several degrees of emphasis suggests that in reading the plays Melville was excited not only by Shakespeare's depiction of ingratitude and malice, the conflict of appearance and reality, and the possibility of cosmic demonism, but also by Shakespeare's depiction of loyalty and trust rewarded, the identity of appearance and reality, and the possibility of cosmic harmony.[3]

[2] The plays are marked as follows in the order of frequency, with the number of separate markings in parentheses: *Antony and Cleopatra* (76); *King Lear* (40); *Measure for Measure* (37); *Henry VIII* (31); *The Winter's Tale* (29); *Twelfth Night* (28); *Julius Caesar* (26); *Timon of Athens* (25); *Hamlet* (25); *Much Ado About Nothing* (22); *Cymbeline* (20); *All's Well That Ends Well* (17); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (15); *Love's Labour's Lost* (14); *Henry V* (11); *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (9); *Pericles* (9); *The Tempest* (8); *As You Like It* (8); *Coriolanus* (8); *Richard II* (6); *Troilus and Cressida* (6); *The Taming of the Shrew* (5); *The Merchant of Venice* (4); *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (3); *Romeo and Juliet* (3); *Othello* (2); *1 Henry IV* (1); *Titus Andronicus* (1). The following plays are unmarked: *The Comedy of Errors, Macbeth, 2 Henry IV,* all three parts of *Henry VI,* and *Richard III* (by far the most frequently performed Shakespearean play on the American stage during Melville's lifetime).

I am not sure how to explain the discrepancy between my count of 491 markings and annotations and Dr. Rosen's count of 365, and at least I want to report my method of counting. Sometimes Melville marked a single passage several ways, for example by underlining the text, side-lining the passage in one margin, and check-marking it in the other margin. I have construed all such markings as one, on the ground that only a single passage is designated by them. On the other hand, when Melville marked two different parts of a single speech, leaving intermediate lines clearly unmarked, I have counted two, and I hope this might explain the difference between my total and Dr. Rosen's.

At two places in *1 Henry VI* (vol. IV, p. 230, I.i. 19, and p. 274, III.ii. 44) there are pencil lines so thin as to leave me in doubt whether they represent Melville's intention. The total absence of markings in the second and third parts of *Henry VI* enlarges my doubt; and I have not counted them. On the other hand Melville's obviously intentional markings in *Henry VIII* are made with a similarly thin pencil line.

[3] There is of course serious difficulty in arriving at confident inferences about the meaning of Melville's markings, and the more finely one tries to discriminate among them the less authoritative one can hope to be. Melville made very few annotations that might serve to gloss the side-lines and check marks. There is no significant correlation between the frequency or intensity with which he marked a play and the frequency, context, or impact of his allusions to that play in his fiction. Nor is there any way to know whether some plays are marked more heavily than others not because they meant more to him but because they were newer to him. From the Shakespearean allusions in Melville's first five novels and from other biographical evidence, I would guess, for example, that he left a play like *Macbeth* completely unmarked in The Hilliard & Grey edition not because he was less excited by it than by some others but because he was deeply familiar with it already.

Nevertheless the attempt to discriminate among the markings finely enough to constitute a general interpretation seems to me worth making in view of the many fragmentary interpretations hinted at by critics, sometimes unwittingly. I can only hope that my immersion in Shakespeare's plays and in Melville's fiction, biography, and cultural history has educated my ears to qualify me for the attempt.

## I

A number of markings are not primarily thematic but contextual —directed, that is, at the local meaning or the poetic beauty of a passage without concern for its thematic relevance. Sometimes Melville marked purely expository material, as when he checked and side-lined the passage in Hamlet's letter to Horatio telling how he got aboard the pirate ship. Sometimes he briefly marked successive passages as he followed a line of dialogue, for example at the beginning of Act II, scene i of *Antony and Cleopatra,* where he made four separate check marks in the first twenty-five lines. And sometimes he marked passages that simply characterize the speaker or situation, such as Brutus's "Into what dangers would you lead me, Cassius, / That you would have me seek into myself / For that which is not in me?" (*Julius Caesar,* I.ii. 63–65).[4]

Another group of markings exhibits an artificial solemnity in the presence of noble thoughts, and in these Melville exhibits the same Jacksonian sententiousness that moved his contemporaries to anthologize Shakespearean excerpts in handbooks of elocution and potpourris of poetical beauties. Sometimes he marked familiar aphoristic or high-flown speeches like Sir Toby's "cakes and ale" or Hamlet's "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio . . ." or Edgar's "Ripeness is all," and sometimes portentous utterances like these:

> A jest's prosperity lies in the ear
> Of him that hears it, never in the tongue
> Of him that makes it. . . .
> (*Love's Labour's Lost,* V.ii. 871–873)

> The ample proposition that hope makes
> In all designs begun on earth below
> Fails in the promised largeness.
> (*Troilus and Cressida,* I.iii. 3–5)

> By heaven, it is as proper to our age
> To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions
> As it is common for the younger sort
> To lack discretion.
> (*Hamlet,* II.ii. 114–116)

[4] All Shakespearean line numberings refer to the Globe text.

On the other hand Melville marked many passages evidently just because they are funny. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he side-lined the comic byplay among Lysander, Hermia, and Helena at III.ii. 277–305, and in *Much Ado* he side-lined Benedick's long speech at II.iii 5–38 berating Claudio for falling in love and announcing himself immune to that disaster. In *Twelfth Night* he marked the antics of Sir Toby Belch, and Malvolio's fatuous succumbing to the plot against him. And in *Antony and Cleopatra,* when Charmian teases her mistress about a former lover with "That brave Caesar!," Melville "X" 'd Cleopatra's reply, "Be choked with such another emphasis!/ Say the brave Antony" (I.v. 68–69).

Then there are passages side-lined where Melville seems to have been moved simply by the beauty of Shakespeare's poetry:

> The city cast
> Her people out upon her; and Antony,
> Enthroned i' the market-place, did sit alone,
> Whistling to the air; which, but for vacancy,
> Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too
> And made a gap in nature.
> (*Antony and Cleopatra,* II.ii. 218–223)

> Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
> Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will hum about mine ears, and sometimes voices
> That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
> Will make me sleep again. . . .
> (*The Tempest,* III.ii. 144–149)

These sententious, humorous, and poetic markings, which comprise a large part of the whole, show Melville in the posture of a very ordinary reader—attentive but unexcited, sometimes amused, sometimes awed by The Bard into the platitudinous responses of his provincial culture, and sometimes awed by the poet into aesthetic pleasure.

## II

With the markings that reveal the incipient author of *Moby-Dick* we come immediately to Melville's intense excitement at Shakespeare's testimony to the power of blackness. He was to write in

*Israel Potter* (1857) that man "succeeds better in life's tragedy than comedy," and beyond question Melville's most frequent markings in the plays single out passages depicting human weakness, duplicity, malice, and waste. Yet even here, despite some ambiguity in the evidence, it seems clear that Melville's apprehension of the Shakespearean blackness has in it too many gradations to allow the inference that he was fixated narrowly on a single vision.

Shakespearean comedy is more accepting than tragedy in its perception of human frailty, and often in marking the comedies Melville was intensely receptive to the evidence of our frailty and oblivious to Shakespeare's amused expressions of confidence in our nature. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* when Lysander says, "The will of man is by his reason sway'd" (II.ii. 115) in the midst of changing his mind back and forth whether he loves Hermia or Helena, Melville double-checked his remark and grimly wrote in the margin, "The unconscious irony." But the irony of Lysander's line is wholly conscious and playful, and this is only one of many passages in the comedies to which Melville's markings attribute a darker meaning than the context warrants. To read from *As You Like It* only those passages Melville marked, such as "Thus do all traitors:/ If their purgation did consist in words,/ They are as innocent as grace itself:/ Let it suffice that I trust thee not." (I.iii. 55–58), you might almost think the play were *Timon of Athens.*

But in many passages Melville's markings can be misleading on this score, and the following example can illustrate simultaneously the difficulty of interpreting the markings, the complexity of response they often indicate, and the thesis of my own interpretation. In the low comedy scene in *Measure for Measure* where Pompey and Abhorson wake up the hung-over Barnardine to be hanged (IV.iii), Melville first side-lined a passage of dialogue (11.21–40) that includes "You must be so good, sir, to rise and be put to death," and "Pray, Master Barnardine, awake till you are executed, and sleep afterward." A few lines later, when Barnardine says he cannot be hanged now because he has been drinking all night and is unfit to say his prayers, Melville side-lined Pompey's reply:

> O, the better, sir; for he that drinks all night, and
> is hanged betimes in the morning, may sleep the sounder
> all the next day. (11.49–50)

And of this Melville wrote at the bottom of his page, "Take this, and other texts, with the one comprehensive one in The Tempest, I think, 'Our little life is rounded with a sleep.' "

Now this clowning in *Measure for Measure* is grossly incongruous with the whole context and meaning of Prospero's marvelous lines on death in *The Tempest,* and again we seem to have an instance where Melville compulsively reads tragic meaning into comic fun. But earlier in *Measure for Measure* he had marked vigorously several parts of the Duke's great speech beginning "Be absolute for death" (III.i. 5–41). He side-lined a passage that includes the lines, "Thou has nor youth nor age, / But, as it were, an after-dinner's sleep, / Dreaming on both" (11.32–34), and he double side-lined the following:

> Thy best of rest is sleep,
> And that thou oft provokest; yet grossly fear'st
> Thy death, which is no more. (11.17–19)

In addition he underlined the last line, "X" 'd it in the margin, and wrote at the bottom of his page, " 'Our little life is rounded by a sleep.' Tempest." Here the markings converge to make visible a pattern of associations in which the Duke's solemn words are among the "other texts" of which Melville was reminded a few pages later while reading the Barnardine scene. And in all likelihood Shakespeare was deliberately parodying the Duke in the Barnardine material, just as it was typical of him to echo the Duke's speech a decade later in Prospero's lines which Melville quotes. Thus while we must still be aware of a strained seriousness in Melville's marking of the Barnardine scene, we must perceive also the broad spectrum of his response to Shakespeare's many permutations of the theme of death and sleep. What may seem at first to reflect in Melville a compulsively solemn or tragic outlook turns out to reflect in him as in Shakespeare the interpenetration of tragic and comic outlooks.

## III

Usually the possible pattern of associations behind a particular marking is not so visible as this, and we can only beware of assuming that Melville consistently darkened Shakespeare's meaning. In *Much Ado* he underlined, checked, and side-lined Benedick's remark near the end of the play, "man is a giddy thing . . ." (V.iv. 109).

On the one hand his animated marking may reflect an intensity of response disproportionate to the occasion—Beatrice and Benedick having just put a limit to giddiness by kissing and deciding to marry—as if Melville were again reading a tragic meaning into a comic context. On the other hand there is a crucial difference in conception between man as a giddy thing and as a corrupted or depraved thing, and either conception might have served Melville's growing dissent from the benevolent optimism of his cultural upbringing.

In any event, he frequently marked passages that reveal our mere giddiness. Also in *Much Ado,* he side-lined the Friar's words,

> for it so falls out
> That what we have we prize not to the worth
> Whiles we enjoy it, but being lack'd and lost,
> Why, then we rack the value, then we find
> The virtue that possession would not show us
> Whiles it was ours. (IV.i. 218–223)

and his pencil was regularly activated by variations on this idea in other plays, for example *As You Like It,* IV.i. 21–24, and *Antony and Cleopatra,* I.ii. 127–131, I.ii. 192–194, and I.iv. 44–44.

In a more somber focus on human frailty, Melville side-lined in *Twelfth Night* Olivia's speech at III.ii. 137–141 that includes the line, "O world, how apt the poor are to be proud"; in *As You Like It* he side-lined three times Orlando's statement, "O, how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes" (V.ii. 47ff.); and in *Timon of Athens* he checked Flavius's remark, "O, the fierce wretchedness that glory brings us" (V.ii. 30). In context all these remarks are in fact reassuring: they take for granted society's continuing capacity to function justly despite the marginal pain that provokes such chilling comments. One can even say there is something positively anti-demonic in Shakespeare's ability to create such nicely graduated contexts and in Melville's sustained response to that workmanship.

Moving closer to the dark vision Melville found in the plays, we may note another gradation where he marked vehemently passages that depict our self-serving opportunism. In *Hamlet* he double side-lined the speech at V.ii. 195–202 in which Hamlet says that Osric has "only got the tune of the time," and then underlined

those words in particular. In *King Lear* he side-lined the Fool's words, "Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill, lest it break thy neck with following it; but the great one that goes up the hills, let him draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better counsel, give me mine again . . ." (II.iv. 74 ff.). In *The Tempest* he side-lined three times Antonio's assurance to Sebastian that they can enlist their companions in the plan to kill Alonso and make Sebastian King of Naples:

> For all the rest,
> They'll take suggestion as a cat laps milk;
> They'll tell the clock to any business that
> We say befits the hour. (II.i. 287–290)

And in *Henry VIII* he double side-lined Buckingham's words,

> This from a dying man receive as certain:
> Where you are liberal of your loves and counsels
> Be sure you be not loose; for those you make friends
> And give your hearts to, when they once perceive
> The least rub in your fortunes, fall away
> Like water from ye, never found again
> But where they mean to sink ye. (II.i. 125–131)

The inconsistency described by such lines is infinitely more dark than mere giddiness, and Melville's marking of these passages shades off swiftly into his marking passages that dramatize unmistakably the evil in man and the corruption in society.

In *Twelfth Night* Melville side-lined three passages (III.iv. 381–386, 388–391, 400–403) in an episode that nearly shatters its comic context, where Antonio is betrayed to the officers by the disguised Viola, whom he takes for an ingrate Sebastian, and where Viola speaks her abhorrence for "any taint of vice whose strong corruption / Inhabits our frail blood." In *Measure for Measure* he side-lined the Duke's words,

> . . . in Vienna,
> Where I have seen corruption boil and bubble
> Till it o'er-run the stew; laws for all faults,
> But faults so countenanced, that the strong statutes
> Stand like the forfeits in a barber's shop,
> As much in mock as mark. (V.i. 319–324)

In *Hamlet* he side-lined the following section of Claudius's soliliquy:

> In the corrupted currents of this world
> Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
> And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
> Buys out the law . . . . (III.iii. 57–60)

In *Cymbeline* he side-lined Cloten's words,

> . . . and 'tis gold
> Which makes the true man kill'd and saves the thief;
> Nay, sometimes hangs both thief and true man; what
> Can it not do and undo? (II.iii. 75–78)

And in *Timon of Athens* he side-lined Timon's words,

> The sun's a thief, and with his great attraction
> Robs the vast sea: the moon's an arrant thief,
> And her pale fire snatches from the sun:
> The sea's a thief, whose liquid surge resolves
> The moon into salt tears: the earth's a thief
> That feeds and breeds by a composture stolen
> From general excrement: each thing's a thief;
> The laws, your curb and whip, in their rough power
> Have uncheck'd theft. (IV.iii. 439–447)

In all these passages personal and social corruption reflect each other and are part of what Melville was to call in an 1851 letter to Hawthorne "the absolute condition of present things." In the passage from *Timon* these "present things"—particular evil acts sanctioned by society's law—begin to invade all of space, time, and nature; and in his most bitter markings Melville similarly singled out passages in which evil is abstracted from its social matrix and universalized into the power of blackness.

In *As You Like It* Melville side-lined Adam's words to Orlando,

> Know you not, master, to some kind of men
> Their graces serve them but as enemies?
> No more do yours: your virtues, gentle master,
> Are sanctified and holy traitors to you.
> O, what a world this is, when what is comely
> Envenoms him that bears it? (II.iii. 10–15)

He made a parallel marking near the end of *King Lear,* when

Edmund answers the disguised Edgar's challenge to a duel by saying, "I will maintain / My truth and honor firmly" (V.iii. 100–101). Melville "X" 'd Edmund's words in the margin and wrote at the top of his page, "The infernal nature has a valor often denied to innocence." And a world in which virtue envenoms and valor accrues to villainy is indeed a world over which to quarrel with God.

In some further markings I think Melville did go out of his way to pick that quarrel. A conspicuous example is in *The Tempest,* when Miranda praises "beauteous mankind" in her famous speech about the "brave new world" (IV.i. 181–184). Melville side-lined her entire speech, circled Prospero's biting reply—" 'Tis new to thee"—and wrote at the top of his page, "Consider the character of the persons concerning whom Miranda says this—then Prospero's quiet words in comment—how terrible! In 'Timon' itself there is nothing like it." In that comment I think there is something exaggerated, a Melvillean terror superimposed on the Shakespearean meaning, and here is one of the rare but eloquent occasions when we can see Melville fixated on what he conceived to be the Shakespearean blackness. The irony of Prospero's " 'Tis new to thee" is unmistakable, yet in context it is subordinated to an earned confidence in humanity—in what Melville was to call in *Moby-Dick* our "immaculate manliness"—conveyed by Miranda's speech. Prospero's words balance Miranda's with a true but partial appraisal of mankind, and in emphasizing Prospero's irony while ignoring Miranda's wonder Melville unquietly wrenches the Shakespearean context. For the moment he is aroused to that obsession with evil which has sometimes been mistaken for his entire response to Shakespeare.

## IV

One spectrum of Melville's markings runs from Shakespeare's perception of human giddiness to his intimations of universal corruption. Another runs from Shakespeare's perception of a fatal deceptiveness at the heart of things to his intimations of harmony at the circumference. When Melville immersed himself in the plays in 1849 his fiction was already preoccupied with the conflict between appearance and reality; but his attention to this theme throughout the plays is as many-sided as Shakespeare's and irreducible to any

single focus. *Measure for Measure* is virtually a handbook on one aspect of the theme, and in that play Melville side-lined passages like the following:

> O place, O form,
> How often doest thou with the case, thy habit,
> Wrench awe from fools and tie the wiser souls
> To thy false seeming! (II.iv. 12–15)
>
> O, what may man within him hide,
> Though angel on the outward side! (III.ii. 285–286)

He marked similar passages in *Much Ado* (IV.i. 32–43), *Twelfth Night* (IV.ii 6–7), and *Hamlet* (III.iii. 57–59); and in *King Lear* he underlined Albany's description of Goneril as "This gilded serpent" (V.iii. 84).

But other markings show Melville equally impressed by Shakespeare's image of congruence between appearance and reality. In *Antony and Cleopatra* he both checked in the margin and bracketed in the text Enobarbus's words,

> and things outward
> Do draw the inward quality after them,
> To suffer all alike. (III.xiii. 32–34)

Earlier in that play he had checked Menas's "All men's faces are true, whatsome'er their hands are" (II.vi. 102), and in *The Winter's Tale* he checked Polixenes's remark to Camillo about the anger appearing in Leontes's face, "I do believe thee: / I saw his heart in 's face. Give me thy hand" (I.ii. 447–448). All these passages occur in dramatic situations fraught with deceit or evil, so that the identity observed between appearance and reality is in itself no grounds for confidence in good will among men or justice in heaven. But it is evidence against reducing Melville's attitude to a conviction of cosmic demonism. Polixenes, after all, takes timely warning from the angry heart appearing in Leontes's face and thereby reverses the situation from one in which a man may smile and yet be a villain. Melville's response to the variety of Shakespearean relations between appearance and reality is highly flexible and anticipates his further responsiveness to Shakespeare's hints of cosmic beneficence, mystery, and light.

Melville also marked passages in which the identity of appearance

and reality accompanies the display of mutual trust among people. In *Twelfth Night* he marked Viola's speech to the captain just after the shipwreck which she believes has left her alone in the world:

> There is a fair behaviour in thee, captain;
> And though that nature with a beauteous wall
> Doth oft close in pollution, yet of thee
> I will believe thou has a mind that suits
> With this thy fair and outward character. (I.ii. 47–51)

And in *The Winter's Tale,* when Florizel's love for Perdita is revealed to his outraged father and Perdita reminds her lover once again that "my dignity would last / But till 'twere known," Melville side-lined Florizel's reply:

> It cannot fail but by
> The violation of my faith; and then
> Let nature crush the sides o' the earth together
> And mar the seeds within! (IV.iv. 486–489)

The captain's fair appearance evokes Viola's faith; Florizel's faith validates Perdita's appearance; and the passage Melville marked in *The Winter's Tale* claims even a source in nature for the faith that harmonizes appearance and reality.

In a speech near the beginning of *Much Ado* the identity of appearance and reality hints at the golden world. A messenger has informed Leonato of young Claudio's accomplishments in the war, "doing, in the figure of a lamb, the feats of a lion" (I.i. 14–15); when the messenger adds that Claudio's uncle already knows this good news, Leonato asks whether the uncle wept and is assured that his weeping was copious. Then Melville checked in the margin Leonato's reply:

> A kind overflow of kindness: there are no faces
> truer than those that are so washed. How much
> better it is to weep at joy than to joy at
> weeping! (I.i. 24–26)

The complex meaning and musical resonance of that language could not be more different from the harsh linearity of something like "Truth's a dog must to kennel," the words of Lear's fool that Melville underlined and surely had in mind when he wrote in "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (1850) of Shakespeare's "short, quick

probings at the very axis of reality." But the other reality toward which Leonato's language points and toward which Melville was at times to point in *Moby-Dick* and *Billy Budd*—the reality of human kindness, trust, and candor sustained by a glimmering cosmic harmony—is also what made Shakespeare for Melville really Shakespeare. Another example is in *The Winter's Tale,* where Melville's attention was drawn to one of those brief Shakespearean episodes that seem to be composed for their own sake. In III.i. Cleomenes and Dion are returning to Leontes from the oracle at Delphos, rehearsing what they have seen in order to prepare their report. Cleomenes begins by praising the climate, the fertile soil, and the temple of the oracle. Then Melville side-lined Dion's rejoinder:

> I shall report,
> For most it caught me, the celestial habits,
> Methinks I should so term them, and the reverence
> Of the grave wearers. O, the sacrifice!
> How ceremonious, solemn and unearthly
> It was i' the offering. (III.i. 3–8)

Here is a brave new world impervious to the irony of Prospero's " 'Tis new to thee," a world in which the true face of kindness in Claudio's uncle parallels the celestial appearance of the worshipers at Delphos. In marking as he did plays like *Much Ado* and *The Winter's Tale* along with plays like *Measure for Measure* and *King Lear,* Melville spanned the gradations and saw the variety in Shakespeare's picture of life. And in his equal alertness to both the good and the evil revealed in the plays, to the sublime alongside the demonic, the power of light sometimes circumnavigating the power of blackness, Melville exhibits that unity of tragic and comic sensibilities which Socrates long ago said is natural to the poet, which is exhibited often in Melville's letters and fiction as well, and which is represented in our literature perhaps only by Shakespeare and Dostoevsky besides Melville.

## V

We can speculate finally whether that unified sensibility accounts for a few markings in which Melville was drawn to Shakespeare's balancing of opposites in a manner to moot man's fiercest questions and still his beating mind. Melville marked several passages very

different from each other but passages that imply in common a measure of divine healing for the self-division in our lives. At the beginning of Act V of *The Winter's Tale,* when Leontes has repented his mistake but before the living Hermione has been revealed, Melville marked emphatically the following exchange between Cleomenes and Leontes:

> Cleo. Sir, you have done enough, and have perform'd
> A saint-like sorrow: no fault could you make,
> Which you have not redeem'd; indeed, paid down
> More penitence than done trespass: at the last
> Do as the heavens have done, forget your evil;
> With them forgive yourself.
>
> Leon. Whilst I remember
> Her and her virtues, I cannot forget
> My blemishes in them, and so still think of
> The wrong I did myself; which was so much,
> That heirless it hath made my kingdom and
> Destroy'd the sweet'st companion that e'er man
> Bred his hopes out of. (V.i. 1–12)

Here Melville's first side-line covers the last three lines of Cleomenes's speech and runs down through the first three lines of Leontes's speech. A second side-line, drawn inside the first, covers the whole of Leontes's speech. Then in addition Melville underlined Cleomenes's words, "Do as the heavens have done." These markings can be interpreted with naive facility as an instance of Melville's quarrel with God: fatuous Cleomenes offers the cheap comfort of conventional piety while Leontes insists on the bitter truth that makes a mockery of heaven's forgiveness. But even if we did not know from markings already summarized that Melville respects Cleomenes's judgment, the present context makes it impossible that he could have intended ironically his underlining of "Do as the heavens have done." Cleomenes does not mitigate his master's fault; he only claims that Leontes has repented enough and that his actual sorrow warrants divine forgiveness. At the same time, Leontes's refusal to forget his evil because he now sees how it hurt himself as well as Hermione is just what heals him and makes forgiveness possible. In side-lining Leontes's account of his wrongdoing, Melville recognizes with Shakespeare that heaven's forgiveness, while absolving Leontes's guilt, also depends on it.

The discrepancy that Melville might have noticed in this passage is not between Cleomones's advice and Leontes's response but rather between heaven's readiness to forgive and Leontes's self-condemnation: a discrepancy that embodies not the irony of estrangement but the mystery of reconciliation. And in *As You Like It* Melville side-lined a playful passage that points I think to the same mystery. These are Touchstone's reflections upon a shepherd's life:

> . . . in respect of itself, it is a good life; but in respect that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught. In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is private, it is a very vile life. Now, in respect it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious. As it is a spare life, look you, it fits my humour well; but as there is no more plenty to it, it goes much against my stomach. Hast any philosophy in thee, shepherd? (III. ii. 12–23)

I think that last question is Touchstone's comic equivalent for the solemn passage between Cleomenes and Leontes. He knows that the competing attractions of court and country are beyond the power of philosophy to adjudicate; they are conditions of each other, like heaven's forgiveness and Leontes's sense of guilt. In attending to Touchstone as in attending to the drunken Barnardine, Melville sees with Shakespeare something beyond human giddiness, and beyond villainy or virtue, appearance or reality, tragedy or comedy. Beyond philosophy he still sees life, and that perception entails the acceptance of all life's suffering, humor, restlessness, and mystery. Also in *As You Like It,* when the melancholy Jaques is told that the Duke has been looking for him and replies that for his part he has been avoiding the Duke, Melville side-lined Jaques's explanation: "He is too disputable for my company: I think of as many matters as he, but I give heaven thanks and make no boast of them. Come, warble, come" (II.v. 37–38). And at the bottom of his page the budding author of *Moby-Dick* wrote, "There are 75 folio volumes in that."