THE IDEA OF NATURAL GOODNESS IN THE WRITINGS
OF HERMAN MELVILLE

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Introduction

In the following pages it is intended to set forth, in general outline, the history of the idea of natural goodness, with emphasis upon the primitivistic elements in the writings of Herman Melville. To do this in the time and space available, it will be necessary to desist from going into the details that an exhaustive treatment of the subject would warrant. For purposes here we hope it only necessary to show the development of the subject up to the time of Melville, when our author incorporated the theme into his work. I have examined with some care the works of admittedly important writers on the subject, and I trust that I have presented enough objective facts to support my interpretation of the theme.

The mature Melville sounds in Moby Dick a note of plaintive hope for the heroic possibilities of the common man. This plea is one of the most recurrent themes in Melville, echoing from Jack Chase to Billy Budd. The present study was largely motivated by a desire to glimpse any connection between this hope and the natural goodness of man in the state of nature.

Melville was pessimistic to a high degree, but in his early life at least he believed in progress because he saw in the simplicity of primitive civilization an ideal of living which the common man might reach.

Herman Melville is seen in the primitivist's role as an apologist for man in his untouched primitive state and as an attacker of civilization. His primitivism is best seen in Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life (1846), and in Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas (1847). These are the only novels that present an idealization of savage life against a critical picture of civilization. Although Mardi and White Jacket could be included in Melville's brief against civilization, they have been omitted from this
study because they fail to evince any genuine interest in primitive man in the state of nature.

The Noble Savage of the South Seas had his first able defender in Herman Melville. Up to the publication of *Typee*, numerous accounts had been written of the South Seas by travellers, explorers, and missionaries, but in Melville, the first competent literary treatment of the subject is found. Yet in the midst of his eulogies on the natives we find significant signs of his growing disillusionment, for he admits:

I will frankly declare, that after passing a few weeks in this valley of the Marquesas, I formed a higher estimate of human nature than I had ever before entertained. But alas! since then I have been one of the crew of a man-of-war, and the pent-up wickedness of five hundred men has nearly over-taken all of my previous theories.

Here we see our author getting ready to don the philosopher's cloak. Yet students of Melville will point out that he never realized full artistic development; that his masterpiece, *Moby Dick*, is not within the canons of the novel; and that his greatest value lies in his literary discovery of the South Seas.
CHAPTER I

The Idea of Natural Goodness or Primitivism

Throughout the history of civilization man has been known to nourish from time to time a feeling of discontent with his time, and to wish for a better existence in an earlier society or a present life among simpler, less sophisticated men. This desire for a sweeter life was thought to be best realized by man in the perfect state of nature, unencumbered by the evils of civilization, where natural goodness, one of nature's universal and immutable truths, was felt to be in the hearts of men. This blast at civilization and urge for a simpler existence, known as primitivism, is present in the works of ancient writers, such as Virgil, Ovid, and Homer; and occasionally crops up down to the great Renaissance scholar, Montaigne, who draws the first full length portrait of the figure that was to epitomize natural goodness and man in a model state.

Primitivism is bracketed by contemporary scholarship into two classes, chronological and cultural. Both classes, at the danger of oversimplification, must risk definition here. Chronological primitivism is man's evaluation of his own society in the light of an earlier society; cultural primitivism is man's look at a society simpler and happier than his own. Our study will fuse the two ideas, as is very commonly done, with emphasis perhaps on the latter phase. Professor Lovejoy finds the two tempers, when combined, best summed up as: "God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many devides." ¹

Perhaps the cultural primitivist's most significant feeling is his search for a model of human excellence and happiness in the present. That this is a perennial urge is asserted by Lovejoy:

To men living in any phase of cultural development it is always possible to conceive of some simpler one, and usually possible to point to other men, past and present, in whose life it is exemplified. Cultural primitivism has thus had enduring roots in human nature ever since the civilizing process began. It is not improbable conjecture that the feeling that humanity was becoming overcivilized, that life was getting too complicated and over-refined, dates from the time when the cave-man first became such.¹

This search for happiness in the present has definite romantic connotations. Usually, the peoples who are set up for emulation live in remote, strange places, made fascinating to the imagination by the charm of the remote and the strange. The unfamiliarity of an ideal is a challenge to the imagination of the seekers. Consistent with cultural primitivism is the love of the strange and the revolt against the familiar, a tendency which we shall have a chance to note later. The fusion of one idea, looking back on the past, and on the other side, the love of the new and novel, is realized by primitivism in the form where the two ideas coexist—in which the ideal simple life is not seen exclusively in the past, but also in present savage peoples who may be living replicas of bygone days.

Lovejoy has imposed another distinctive aspect upon the study by what he calls "hard" and "soft" primitivism.²

² Page 10.

In his "hard" primitivism he finds throughout history traces of a marked
tendency among the preachers "of an ethics of renunciation, of austerity, of self discipline." \(^1\)


This "hard" primitivism is further characterized by physical hardships, pain, and poverty. The Germani of Tacitus were of this school—hardy, rough fellows, who were forced to defend themselves against the rigors of nature. On the other side is the "soft" primitivism of those who sat under the "yum-yum" trees and let their food fall in their laps. This school is of the indolent, careless, languorous life, with less restrictions, regulations, and conventions. The "hard" is called so because it is often harder than civilized life, and the "soft" gains its name from the same principle.

A perhaps peculiar and even paradoxical aspect in the history of primitivism was the seemingly natural connection between primitivism and progress. That this was a prevalent thought process, particularly in the eighteenth-century, has been shown by Miss Lois Whitney. \(^2\)


Miss Whitney defines primitivism as a search for a model of excellence in the early dawn of society when man was uncorrupted by civilization. She classifies progress as a look forward to a possible perfection in the future. Miss Whitney further declares necessary to primitivism an aspect of simplicity, while progress characterizes increasing complexity based on intellectual grounds. That these two ideas should fit hand in glove seem on the surface to be inexplicable, but Miss Whitney finds an abundance of these two ideas
on the same page of eighteenth-century novels. That this should cause confusion is very obvious, and we shall see later evidences of writers extolling the virtues of primitive society in one breath and yearning for perfectability through progress in the next instant. Miss Whitney found that this confusion of ideas was of common occurrence in eighteenth-century popular writings, and that there was a current attempt to popularize these ideas, that by logical processes should have annihilated each other.

Back of the study of primitivism is the feeling that nature and natural goodness are interchangeable terms. Lovejoy, dealing with nature as a norm, declares:

The history of primitivism is in great part a phase of a larger historic tendency which is one of the strangest, most potent and most persistent factors, in western thought—the use of the term 'nature' to express the standard of human values, the identification of the good with that which is 'natural' or 'according to nature.'


This association of "nature" with "good" explains man's desire to emulate primitive traits, in that primitive societies are supposed to constitute a state of nature and as such, are good. As pointed out, this seems a natural tendency. If one accepts the theory that the world when created was good and that man has degenerated from a state of good, it easily follows that man should evidence a desire to get back to that original state.
CHAPTER II

Some Sources of the Idea of Natural Goodness

Sources of primitivistic ideas are excellently discussed in Professor Fairchild's *The Noble Savage* and Miss Whitney's "English Primitivistic Theories of Epic Origins."  


Fairchild develops a three-fold theme: tradition, explorers and travellers tales, and a philosophic fusion of the first two. Traditions, pagan and learned, form the first link in Fairchild's picture of the conception of the Noble Savage as he points to a fusion of ideas about the Golden Age with contemporary ideas of primitive peoples. He makes references to legends of the Golden Age concerning an island of peace and plenty hidden afar in western waters. This locality he finds originally pagan, later becoming confusedly connected with the ideal of an earthly paradise. With the discovery of America, tradition, both pagan and learned, was reconciled. This was indeed thought to be the land of peace and plenty. America was the earthly paradise for which both pagan and learned tradition had sung.

Taking a direct look at the explorers, Columbus is pointed to as the first of a long series who praised the good will and generosity of the savages. The Caribs are pointed out as mild, beautiful people, evidencing a natural intelligence, living innocently together, sharing all in common. The kindness shown by Columbus to the savages was not always emulated by
his successors. The later cruelty of Spain was especially conspicuous. English explorers showed a definite lack of enthusiasm for the gentility and attractiveness of the savage life, pointing a marked contrast to the enthusiasm of the French and Spanish. Professor Bissell\(^1\) declares this due to climatic conditions; that the English saw the cold, bleak coasts of New England, whereas the French and Spanish enjoyed the beauty and warmth of tropic zones.

\[\text{1. Benjamin Bissell, The American Indian in English Literature of the Eighteenth Century, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1925), p. 4.}\]

However, the accounts are colorful enough to form excellent source material for literary treatment, and to cause thought on the savage life to form traditional literary conventions—marking a basis for the Noble Savage idea. A blending of contemporary observation with traditional concepts, is the key for Fairchild's final link. He points to Montaigne's "Of the Caniballes." Here Montaigne's contribution is a picture of savage life as told to him by an explorer. It clearly points to one thing: Montaigne's ideal state is built upon Natural Goodness—taking direct issue with Plato's state built on acquired wisdom. Montaigne's essay is pointed to by Fairchild as the illustration of the final stage of the Noble Savage's development:

By fusing the more or less objective and irreflective narrations of the explorers with various long-current traditions, the philosophers arrive at important generalizations about the virtue of savage man and the deteriorating effects of civilization.\(^2\)

\[\text{2. Fairchild, p. 21.}\]

Miss Whitney's main sources of eighteenth-century theories on
primitive man are classical literature and learning and the books of travel
which appeared abundantly in the eighteenth century. At the outset Miss
Whitney states a commonly accepted precept; that is, that the interest in
and idealization of primitive man is perennial, being emphasized more in
some eras than other, but constantly reappearing:

The eighteenth century had all the resources of the
preceding centuries to draw on. That it made full use of
both classical authority and the authority of the travel-
lers from the earliest of them to the latest, there is
abundant proof, and acknowledgement in the treatises of
the primitivist. The statements of classical writers are
constantly substantiated by those of the travellers, and
vice versa. Some of the primitivists lean more to one
source than the other, but in general the use of both is
almost equally common.¹

¹. Whitney, Primitivistic Theories, p. 368.

Current in classical literature from the beginning was a strain of
idealization of primitive man, although he was also pictured at times as
savage and brutal. Feeling that man was progressively degenerate, through
the influence of civilized life, man in his primitive state was glorified
by his lack of contact with civilization. As in classical literature the
same ideals were espoused in the travel books. Described by travellers as
faithful, just, and kind, the savages were examined in the light of the
Golden Age tradition and promptly proclaimed as primitive and thereby good—
necessarily so because the taints of civilization had not touched them.
Miss Whitney finds this point of view in travel books, both late and early.
She refers to Montaigne, as an early espouser of primitivism through pic-
tures drawn by travellers. However, all that was written of the primitive
life didnot come as eulogies:

The praise of the savage, as I have said, permeates
much of travel literature in varying degrees of enthusiasm.
There are, to be sure, many descriptions of the opposite nature, which picture the savage as a brute beast, cruel, treacherous, and blood-thirsty, but such pictures curiously failed to leave much impression except possibly on Hobbes and his followers. Most of the eighteenth-century writers quite evidently preferred to believe the eulogies.¹

1. Page 375.

The facts presented by Miss Whitney and Dr. Fairchild adequately show the main sources of primitivistic ideas. It is significant in an analysis of the two treatments, to notice the emphasis put on identical facts. Miss Whitney is interested in primitivistic sources as a phase in the history of ideas. Dr. Fairchild is showing the background of ideas that led to the literary figure that is his Noble Savage.
CHAPTER III

The Noble Savage as a Popular Literary Figure

Our regard at this point will focus on the literary aspects of the idea of natural goodness, keeping in mind its historical development. As a corollary to the development of primitivism was the growth of a literary figure which we shall refer to as the Noble Savage. Our future interest will center upon this Noble Savage, with the philosophic ideas that form his back-
ground. There are three main groups of Noble Savages: The Indian, the South Sea Islander, and the Negro. The type is usually defined as any wild, free being—a living example of natural goodness in man—one who brings to life doubts to the merits of civilization.

Montaigne is accredited with sketching the first Noble Savage, and in doing so, realized a feeling that was conventional with his time, as in earlier and later periods. This was the beginning of a figure that was to enjoy full development in the eighteenth-century. The union of tradition, current travel-
tales and rational philosophy was of sufficient weight to carry the Noble Savage safely through a period that was fraught with tendencies which appear antithetic to the primitive ideal. Seventeenth-century rationalism would hardly propose beliefs in the natural goodness of the unlearned. Hobbes, and his school, chose to be impressed by the less attractive side of the picture, as related by returning travellers. The lack of organized laws in primitive existence was unappealing to this school of thought. The same lack of arts, letters, society, culture and government that appealed to Montaigne was repulsive to Hobbes. He concludes that the state of nature was lawless and therefore bad. On the other hand, there was Locke, whose view Fairchild
finds "much more primitivist than anything in the Contrat Social. ... to Locke's belief that reason is a gift impartially granted mankind by nature, the essential goodness of man is a corollary." ¹

1. Fairchild, p. 78.

This belief in the innate goodness of man, of nature as a norm of simplicity and naturalness, persisted to some extent during the age of rationalism. In our consideration of the Noble Savage as a literary figure in the period we first turn to Dryden, where Fairchild discovers the earliest mention of the Noble Savage as such. It occurs in Part One of Dryden's Conquest of Grenada:

I am as free as Nature first made man,
Ere the base laws of servitude began,
When wild in woods the Noble Savage ran.

However, Fairchild finds here more of a "noble barbarian" than a Noble Savage—one who seems to step out of an Elizabethan drama. Not totally lacking, however, are the elements of noble savagery in their yearnings for simplicity. Fairchild sees in the Incas a look back at the time when they were noble savages rather than noble barbarians. ²

2. Fairchild, p. 82.

Plainly discernible is a note of naturalistic feeling. Such feelings led to the ideas found in Mrs. Behn's Oroonoko. ³


Her Royal Slave has many of the characteristics of the Noble Savage. He represented the initial state of innocence, the natural goodness of man in his
natural habitat. There is some question as to the true realism in this work. Oroonoko is not truly a child of nature. He seems to represent qualities that he does not possess. He is of noble origin, and evidences nobility throughout, so much so that his simplicity suffers for it. He is a handsome figure, fashioned after a European pattern, although he is a Negro. He is also embellished with European talents—a quick wit, a ready tongue, and the civility of the well-bred. This is hardly nature in the raw. Further, he is not typical of his fellow natives. Not only is he looked upon as an object of admiration and wonder by the visiting Europeans, but he is regarded as unique even by his brother savages. For his mate, Mrs. Behn assigns one Imoinda who, too, deviates from the norm, and is very unusual in appearance and manner. Fortunately she talks much less than the Royal Slave and the gentle reader is able to perceive much readier the qualities of natural goodness in her. The work is not without attraction as a heroic romance, and was quite popular in its day. The rantings of Oroonoko can well be imagined as the conventional mode of expression. Mrs. Behn’s work is significant to the Noble Savage tradition in that it did contain humanitarian tendencies that anticipated the feelings of a later century.

For another aspect of this same problem, Dr. Bissell’s detailed study of the Indian as a literary subject might well be injected into the picture here. His attempt is to observe the Indian as a figure in fiction, drama, and poetry. He reports a conspicuous lack of significance of the sentimental savage, whether Indian or Negro, in fiction. Bissell marks the coming of the Noble Savage into fiction with Mrs. Behn’s Oroonoko. His analysis of this work warrants discussion. He finds Mrs. Behn’s efforts motivated by a desire for striking effects, for novelty. Her humanitarianism is found tepid, for a lack of realism. Despite Oroonoko’s lack of restraint, remoteness from
reality, and other qualities resembling the later romantic school, Bissell warns against reading into it the characteristics of a later type of Romanticism.

The drama is assigned as a better vehicle for Oroonoko, and as a play becomes an important link in the stage tradition of the Noble Savage. The Indian is also featured in other types of novels. In The Voyage of Captain Richard Falconer, the Indian appears as a picturesque figure, featured in thrilling melodrama. The History of The Life and Adventures of Mr. Anderson exploits the theme of Indian warfare and captivity, playing these items up as sources of local color. Other tales feature the Indian as a highly romantic figure—distinguished for his swiftness in the chase, his skill with the bow, his grace in the dance, and other "Indian" accomplishments. In this type his superior virtues are often played up against the baser motives of the whites. He is never induced to treachery or ingratitude toward his friends. In John Shebbeares' Lydia, the Oroonoko theme is developed. Patriotism, heroism, sentiment and generosity are the virtues of its characters. Fully exploited against the background of primitive innocence, are the wrongs of civilized man. Typical are the broken promises, deceptions, and ingratitudes, shown by the civilized to the uncivilized. Other novels played up the atrocities and cruelties practiced by the Indian. He is not always regarded as the harmless, friendly savage, but sometimes as the savage, brutal, inhuman warrior.

In the Indian Queen, 1664, usually accredited to Dryden, Bissell notes an attempt to secure novel effects in the drama by the use of strange people from faraway lands. Bissell finds in it the idealization of the Indian in fanciful sentiments rather than in any praise of natural goodness. In Dryden's Indian Emperor, a sequel to the Queen, the sentiments are even more extravagant. In these two, Dryden places in a favorable light the simplicity
of the Indians. *Polly*, written in 1728, is an early eighteenth-century attempt to depict the Noble Indian in drama. Virtues of honor, gratitude, and trustworthiness are exemplified through the play. The white lover of Polly is not as noble, and when killed, is replaced in the affections of Polly by the noble Indian. Bissell thinks the light, playful tone of the opera forbids any interpretation of idealization of the savage. Later the drama combined the elements noted in the novel. There was the conventional praise for primitive simplicity and naturalness, with the idealization of the savage's happiness before the whites came. On the other side he was shown in all of his fierceness and cruelty especially in scenes of vengeance against the whites. Quite popular, along with *Oroonoko*, was *Inkle and Yarico*. Probably the most striking evidence of interest in the Noble Savage is illustrated through the "Inkle and Yarico" theme. Produced and published in 1787 by George Colman, the story was mentioned as early as 1657 in Richard Ligon's *True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes*. A synopsis of the play reveals that Inkle, an Englishman, lands at an American spot and is saved from cannibals by Yarico, a beautiful native girl. It is love at first sight. They live a happy life in the woods for sometime. The scene shifts to a point in civilization, where Yarico is taken by Inkle. Here he is tempted to sell her. She pleads for his love of days gone by—he points out, in vain, the commercial sides of civilization, for she believes that if they were back in the woods, away from the vileness of civilization, his love for her would be revived. Finally he repents and decides not to sell her. There were many variations on this theme. In some the story opens with Yarico already a slave, sold by her white lover. In all versions the ingratitude of civilized man is sharply accentuated by the naive, trusting goodness of the primitive heart.
A common practice in the latter quarter of the century was the bringing in of Indians as a touch of local color to any drama with its setting in America. Bissell finds that this practice, although giving the Noble Indian a place of prominence in the drama, was also influential in robbing him of his identity. His picturesqueness was his greatest appeal, and his character, customs, and beliefs, were not taken seriously. The philosophic ran subordinate to the bizarre. The dramatist, ever practical, found it more advantageous to paint the Indian, crown him with feathers, and stand him mutely on the state.

The entrance of the Indian in poetry is not a particularly happy occasion, for it deals with injustices imposed upon him by the white man. William Richardson’s "The Indians" is a protest of the barbarities practiced by the Spanish in America, as is Joseph Wharton’s "The Dying Indian." In each of these the stoicism and endurance of the Indians are featured. Rather typical is the theme of the Dying Indian. A popular conception was that of the Indian as a heroic figure. This aspect is best seen in poems depicting his stoical endurance under torture. Here, with a calm face, he undergoes excruciating agonies, and merely chants his death song, defying his captors with vicious taunts. The death song, along with the Dying Indian theme, is included in an extended discussion by Prof. Farley.¹


The Indian's failure to conceive of the civilized ideas on religion is often featured in poems—usually amusingly discomforting to the white converters. His preference of cider to religion is a subject of a poem called the "Indian Convert." The love poems in which the Indian is the center of attraction, show the qualities of Noble savagery. Yarico is accounted by
far the most popular theme. The wrongs she suffered at the hands of her white lover make a fitting theme. Her pitiable story is recounted in a large number of poems of varying length all depicting sympathy for the poor wronged savage girl.

Interest in noble savages other than Indians, particularly the South Sea Islanders, was kept alive by constant reference to yet prevalent legends, and by the tales of explorers and travellers of beautiful distant lands. Eighteenth-century readers were naturally attracted by the novelties offered in these stories. A work of special significance is Jonathan Carver's Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America (1778-1779). It is chiefly noteworthy because of the origin of its sources. It is not now regarded as authentic, but as a mixture of materials, drawn from many explorers, with a vivid touch of imagination provided by the author. Fairchild calls it "a sort of distilled essence of American exploration, made no doubt with a view to satisfying the public tastes in such matters."\(^1\)

\(^1\) Fairchild, p. 98.

In this same vein is an earlier work by John Hawkesworth, known as Hawkesworth's Voyages, published in 1773. His compilation of the works of the journals of Captains Cook and Banks produced a strong attraction to the Noble Savage. However, when compared to the original journals, the work was not a true account of the explorer's reports. Hawkesworth was highly enthusiastic where Cook and Banks were coldly factual. Totally lacking was any of the aversion shown in the journals to the sexual habits practiced by the natives. Where the journals were critical, Hawkesworth is philosophical on the elements of shame and natural innocence.

Hawkesworth's journal was in a popular pattern, for it can be safely
said that the majority of reports on the South Seas were highly enthusiastic toward the life found there. Native characteristics were not always put in a good light. Scarcely any reports failed to mention the native's habit of stealing. In conjunction with this, a defense used by apologists of the Noble Savage is that before civilized man introduced inexpendable items, there was no stealing. This is but another blow at civilization. Some reports emphasized the lack of equality on the islands, pointing out that their governments had distinctions in rank—that all was not on a common basis.

A note sounded in unison by all reports was on the physical beauty of the natives, and of the islands themselves. The islands were depicted as earthly paradises where all was beautiful and serene. With the frequent influx of such reports, the reading public became as familiar with the islands as though they were nearby countries. With increased familiarity came increased interest. Since the great body of the reports were primitivistic, in them the Noble Savage received an ample boost.

It would seem that such accounts would find support in the popular novels, but in an analysis of the fiction of the eighteenth-century, Fairchild finds little contribution to the history of the Noble Savage. Goldsmith is analyzed as a non-partisan to the Noble Savage idea. Richardson's contribution was very small—most noteworthy was his influence on Rousseau's concept of the alliance of virtue and stupidity, intelligence and vice, and this could be called anti-primitivistic. Fielding fits in slightly, with his reaction to the artificiality of his day, and appears as an espouser of the cause of nature—but his nature is found to be "human nature" and not the ideal state of nature. Sterne and Mackenzie are found lacking in sympathy for the Noble Savage, although in keeping with the conventional trend, some mention is made of the Noble Savage.
Probably the outstanding prominence gained by the Noble Savage was through the idealization of him against a critical picture of civilization. There were many conjectures as to the evils of civilization as against the state of nature. Often associated with the goodness of the primitive life is the urge to live among savages. Many instances are known of traders and others marrying Indians and after living with them for a few years, refusing any further association with civilization. The superiority of the primitive way is given additional weight by accounts of savages having seen civilization and never desiring a permanent place in it—while on the other side, civilized man is usually attracted to the charms of the primitive existence. Bissell cites the experiment of one Priber, who after several attempts to establish a communistic republic in France and England, had come to America and tried his Utopian ideas on the Indians.¹

¹ Bissell, pp. 39-40.

He quickly mastered their tongue, and was soon of great influence among them. His ideal state would be governed by nature's laws—no marriages or obligations, with complete equality for all. Priber was advancing well toward his goal, when the white settlers intervened, sensing coming economic competition, and after several unsuccessful attempts, arrested Priber. He died in jail. Bissell finds the experiment "highly significant in its relations to the whole eighteenth-century current of philosophic exoticism and social idealism."²

² Page 40.

This experiment of Priber's is given in partial answer to those who ask if any attempts were made by civilized man to return to the state of
nature. Concurrent with this was much speculation as to the savage's ideas on civilization. This speculation on the ideas of primitive man on civilization caused an able weapon of satire to be formed in the person of the Noble Savage. There is considerable doubt about the sincerity behind this speculation. It is suspected that few really cared what the savage thought—it was merely a wonderful opportunity to jab at the vices of civilization through the point of view of the uncorrupted man of nature.

The first notable use of this was by Steele and Addison. The famous "four kings" were brought to London, feted and honored, and their accounts of civilization revealed through the "Tatler." A typical feature of this type of satire was the use of the Noble Savage to depict corrupt civilization, yet evidencing no admiration for the Noble Savage. Swift's use of the Houyhnhnms is a perfect example of this usage. He sets up the land of the Houyhnhnms as ideal and in contrast to the sordidness of civilization. There were no wars there, no politicians nor nobility—everything is lacking that is valued in civilized society. The people of this land are noble savages. They derive from nature a natural goodness that knows no evil. Yet there is a marked lack of enthusiasm for these natural men. Swift is merely using them to accentuate the evils of civilization. His inclinations were not primitivistic. This type of usage did have a saving feature—it acted as a preserving influence for the Noble Savage in an era that was not too much in harmony with its ideas, and a carry-over to an era that was more in sympathy with noble savage ideals.

Eighteenth-century poetry was sympathetic to the Noble Savage but did not find him deeply significant. The Noble Savage was given consideration, but with few exceptions, the accounts of him are never serious. Collins, Cowper, and Goldsmith evidenced typical attitudes in rejecting intellectually what was acceptable emotionally. They disliked the vices of their world yet
they could not visualize a synthesis of ignorance and virtue—in their hearts admirers of the Noble Savage, but finding it impossible to embrace him in public. A notable exception to this type was Thomas Gray. He contributed notably to the Noble Savage idea. The idealization of primitive man and the idealization of primitive poetry can be safely called concurrent themes. Consistent with the faith in the goodness of natural man is the admiration of his poetry. As the Noble Savage is natural and simple, it follows that his artistry is of identical elements. Belief in the goodness of natural, primitive man leads to expectations of the best in his poetry for it must be like its creator—simple, natural, and spontaneous. Gray was an important figure in the cultivation of this idea. He found one of the merits of the Noble Savage in his poetic ability. Not only did Gray investigate primitive poetry but he tried to produce the spirit of it in some of his poems, notably "The Bard." By making known the admirable qualities of primitive art, Gray contributed to the Noble Savage's popularity. "With the dissatisfaction with civilization, came a like feeling for the arts and poetry. As man looked back into history for a better existence, so he searched for an idealistic artistry in history's early dawn.

The Noble Savage did not move steadily forward through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries without opposition. We have noticed lack of enthusiasm, and attack on some grounds, and now we shall examine a frontal attack, directed by a literary giant of his day, Dr. Samuel Johnson. Unlike some of his contemporaries, Johnson found it impossible to accept the theory of the Noble Savage intellectually or emotionally. This his civilization had its faults, he would admit, but not to the extent of admiration for less cultured civilizations. When a current native favorite, Omai, is brought to Johnson's attention, he points out that Omai is not genteel because of natural superiority,
but because of the present company he was keeping. Distinctly distasteful to
Johnson was the sentimentalism embodied in the idea of natural goodness. He
vehemently denied the advantages of a primitive existence over his civiliza-
tion. He fully appreciated the refinements and luxuries enjoyed by the civi-
lized, and could see no advantages in a simpler mode of life. Johnson simply
liked things as they were, and objected strenuously to ideals that pointed to
a superior existence. Fairchild cites an instance of Johnson's denial of the
superiority of the bread-fruit of primitive lands over baked bread.¹

1. Fairchild, op. cit., p. 337.

Even more illuminating was his rejection of Hume's dictum that "all who are
happy are equally happy." Johnson declares that a peasant couldn't be as
happy as a philosopher because he hasn't the same capacity for enjoying equal
happiness.

Particularly offensive to Johnson were the espousers of Rousseau's
doctrines. Rousseau represented all that he detested. When Rousseau's ideas
were enjoying popularity in English parlors, Johnson seriously considered
Rousseau a menace to society. Less considerate was his attitude toward Monboddo,
a Scottish follower of Rousseau. He was simply contemptuous of the extreme
primitivism of Monboddo.²

2. James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, was the Scotch jurist and philosopher, who
advanced the theory that the orang-utan is a primitive form of man, and
wrote several treatises on men who had been found to possess tails. Cf.
Bissell, op. cit., pp. 44-46.

The lover of form, decorum, and the niceties of life could see few
advantages in an admittedly less social, less intelligent existence. His
attitude toward the Noble Savage may best be summed up in a quotation cited by Fairchild: "No, no; let me smile with the wise, and feed with the rich."¹

¹. Ibid., p. 335.

Fairchild marks 1810 as the year in which the Noble Savage lost its philosophical significance in English Literature, and 1820 is pointed to as the time in which his popularity as a literary fad had subsided.²

². Ibid., p. 363.

The death of both aspects of the Noble Savage was like the growth, almost simultaneous. Its purpose was served, however, in providing in its passing, an escape from reality, an imaginary sojourn in beautiful, fascinating lands, among simple, natural people.

Before the end of the eighteenth-century the Noble Savage had spread his influence to America for in Philip Freneau some evidences of primitivism are noticeable. Perhaps the next important figure in the chain up to Melville, is James Fenimore Cooper. In his depiction of the nobility of the Indian, he is touching on a Noble Savage theme. His idealization of the Indian and his sympathy for a passing race, points definitely to primitivistic tendencies. However, in turning to Herman Melville, the "literary discoverer of the South Seas," we find one who is a true espouser of the Noble Savage.
CHAPTER IV

Rousseau

Our look at primitivism would be incomplete without reference to Rousseau. He is customarily held responsible for most of the interest in the Noble Savage in the latter half of the eighteenth-century. His was a considerable part in the formulation of romantic ideas about a relatively primitive state of society. It is admittedly difficult to present an adequate analysis of his works. There are very little grounds on which critics will agree as to what Rousseau meant. Pertinent to our study is Lovejoy's denial of the Second Discourse as a pro-primitivistic piece of philosophy. We shall return to Professor Lovejoy later. As a matter of historical fact we might well turn to the researches of Miss Whitney, on Rousseau's standing as a primitivist among his contemporaries—a subject that warrants discussion here. The subject is a part of her "English Primitivistic Theories of Epic Origin." She points out that Rousseau was very closely connected with the authors of primitivistic theory, through his friendship with Hume. However, his influence was very slight during the formative period of these ideas in England, compared to the work of Montesquieu. His Second Discourse was published in 1755 and the discussions of primitive man and the accompanying problems had already been prevalent for a decade. She continues that contemporary opinion of Rousseau was not too flattering to his abilities as a scholar. He was regarded as a man of feeling rather than a man of accuracy. Miss Whitney's efforts are directed to obliterate the notion that Rousseau was directly responsible for the origin of ideas regarding man in his primitive state. She concludes:

Primitive theories in England and in France, also, were well under way before he made any notable contribution to
the subject, and even when he did contribute to it in his "Essai sur L'origin de L'inégalité," he did not make as great an impression on English thinkers as has often been supposed.

1. Page 353.

Even if Rousseau is denied the responsibility of originating the ideas on primitive man, of all the eighteenth-century writers who used the Noble Savage in their studies on man and society, he is the most influential. The degree of his primitivistic feeling would be difficult to decide—upon this there has been much speculation with very little concurrence. That he was interested in man in his natural state, all would admit, but few will agree on conclusions drawn from this premise.

From the angle of primitivism we might first take a look at Dr. Lovejoy's study of Rousseau's Second Discourse. 2


In his discussion of Rousseau Dr. Lovejoy commences quite pointedly:

The notion that Rousseau's Discourse on Inequality was essentially a glorification of the state of nature and that its influence tended wholly or chiefly to promote 'primitivism' is one of the most persistent of historical errors. 3


Lovejoy continues with a look at Rousseau's use of the phrase "state of nature." Lovejoy points to three distinctive states of nature—the juristic, chronological, and cultural. He continues that Rousseau's interest is with the juristic—the period before man was subject to laws or government—that
it is divided by Rousseau into four distinct cultural stages, all of which have long life. Further, his usage of the state of nature does not refer to the juristic state as a whole but to the first of its cultural stages. According to Lovejoy, the third of the four stages is the one most admired by Rousseau. He did not admire the first—the state of nature, but emphasized that the third was the one in which he wished man could have remained. Rousseau identified his state of nature with the state of the brute. This is primary. Man is only separated from the animals by his yet undeveloped potentialities. Rousseau maintains that man in this first stage was happier than civilized man, but does not desire for happiness if other qualities must suffer. That man was good in his primitive state, Rousseau admits, but as he was good so was he unintelligent, unsocial, and non-moral. This is hardly idyllic. Lovejoy insists that Rousseau could not have wanted this for himself or for the rest of the world. We heartily agree. Lovejoy points to Rousseau's culmination of this state of nature as an index to the very unattractiveness of it. Rousseau maintains that as the species increased in number, there arose between it and other species a stricter struggle for survival. This struggle may have ended in annihilation of all, if tooth and claw had been utilized. But here man began to manifest his intelligence—that which distinguished him from beast—enabling him to fashion tools, to make fire and to adapt himself to new climates and new environments. Thus when man first manifested the latent quality that classified him over all other animals, his emergence from the state of nature began. From the picture of the first stage alone, Lovejoy contends that the Discourse weakened, rather than strengthened the primitivistic illusions. He accounts the Discourse as chiefly notable in the history of ideas as an early contribution to the formulation of an evolutionary conception of human history. Lovejoy
also notes an influence of Hobbes in Rousseau's thinking on man after he leaves the state of nature. When man becomes differentiated from other animals his general disposition becomes bad. He becomes victim of the pride that is the same instinct that is known as self-love in the first stage. Lovejoy's conception of the second state is one of a long transitional period in which man by degrees perfected the arts and instincts that brought about the end of the first stage. In this second stage man invented languages, developed the gregarious instinct, adopted the family, and recognized a bit of the institution of property. The culmination of this period is Rousseau's third period. Of it Lovejoy says:

It is the patriarchal stage of human society; the only government was that of the family. Men lived in loose, unorganized village groups, gaining their subsistence by hunting or fishing and from the natural fruits of the earth, and finding their amusement in spontaneous gatherings for song and dance.1

1. Page 179.

Lovejoy expresses amazement that so many historians of literature and of political thought have failed to point to this third stage, and not the state of nature, as the most desirable to Rousseau. He goes on to say that this stage, allegedly corresponding to conditions in contemporary savage tribes was what a number of Rousseau's predecessors had meant by "a state of nature." But even in his singing of an old song, which all admirers of the Noble Savage had sung, Rousseau specifically points to this stage as being non-primitive, and not "of nature," but the product of art, a conscious effort of man for progress.

The fourth stage was ushered in with the introduction of agriculture and metallurgy which led to the establishment of private property. Lovejoy
finds it essentially the same as that state of nature of Hobbes. The only
distinction was that this stage was not primitive in Rousseau. The fourth
stage is definitely not good. It is one where the evil in man dominates.

The third stage, most ideal to Rousseau, represents a reconciliation
between savage man—healthy, placid, stupid, good-natured, non-social, and
non-moral. Civilized man, on the other side, is intelligent, moral, but
insincere, restless, unhappy, and bad. Lovejoy points out that neither could
be accepted as ideal. The third stage is thereby a mixture of the two. Man
is here less good-natured, but also less stupid and unsocial. In this mixture
Rousseau varied profoundly from his primitivistic predecessors.

Lacking both space and knowledge for an adequate discussion of Rousseau's
full philosophy, we shall adopt a point of view as espoused by Ernest Wright's
The Meaning of Rousseau.¹

¹. Ernest Hunter Wright, The Meaning of Rousseau, (London, Oxford University
Press, 1929).

It is an interpretation of the philosopher after years of study, and is one
well worthy of adoption. Wright's book is an effort to glimpse the light
through the clouds of doubt that shade Rousseau's meaning. His point of at-
tack is a plea to disregard the sentences and phrases coined by Rousseau,
sometimes deliberately paradoxical, and to view his work as a unity. Rousseau's
"dubious gift of epigram" and use of a kind of paradox is so striking as to
stand out in the text as his essential meaning. Wright lists other failings
in the philosopher that might well point to the ambiguity that permeates his
work: failure to use the same term in precisely the same sense—failure to
admit discrepancies and to show a reason for them; and most notably, his
failure to draw up a brief of his first principles.
Wright's first effort in dealing with Rousseau's natural man is to remove him from the place to which he has been erroneously assigned—that of chief of the apostles to the Noble Savage. He contends that Rousseau was not a partisan of the Noble Savage—a point of view already held by Lovejoy. Wright points out that Rousseau's natural man is right because nature, being right, has set man apart from brutes and stones. This does not mean that man must return to the savage life. There is no link between savagery and nature. For Rousseau's man to be natural he must not veer from his own nature, for his own nature is right. This being difficult, almost impossible, the man who does stay true to his nature will not be a savage but the best of philosophers. Rousseau's defense of his first assertion that nature is right and thereby good, is based upon his look at man. The first thing is self-love, or self-preservation. It must have been natural or man would have perished without it, and it must have been good for the same reasons. The second instinct of sympathy or pity is also natural and good. The first derivative of these two instincts is conscience, which keeps a constant compromise between the two. Conscience is natural to man as it is the offspring of two natural instincts and is thereby good. However, conscience is sentiment and is born blind, and reason is assigned as a guide to conscience—reason pointing out the right and wrong. Wright's analysis here is in defense of the "return to nature" phrase by which Rousseau has been branded a primitivist. Wright continues that Rousseau maintains that man is born good, with two instincts—with a conscience to check them, and with reason to guide the conscience. The question then is how did man become bad? Rousseau would reply that by letting self-love swell into pride. When self-love goes beyond satisfying our needs it settles into pride and pride is the mother of all evil. For man to be good he must give up pride, he must, in a phrase, return
to nature. This explanation of a dominant phase of Rousseau's doctrine certainly sounds plausible. If acceptable, it is readily evident that he was not an espouser of primitivism. Further, Rousseau's natural man would be one who, with centuries of culture behind him, had inherited the good spirit of that culture. Then in place of going back for our ideal, we should look forward to a return to nature. Wright points out that this may be called perfectibility—thereby making it farther yet from primitivistic cries.

Fundamental with Rousseau is the natural man; he is his one ideal, and his full development can come only with the right education, as depicted in *Emile* and only in the right society—the *Contrat Social* being a picture of such a society. His ideas in these two works are too well known to warrant repetition here, or an attempt at analysis. They are significant to us here only as a criteria for the development of his natural man. Combined with his education and his life in a civil state, is Rousseau's ideal religion for his natural man. It, too, like the others is explained as one gained at the findings of previous religious cultures, and is the end and heir of all religions, such as only fitting for the natural man. Here is the composite picture. The natural man is given the right education, lives in the ideal civil state, and cherishes a religion compatible to his education and his government. Wright warns that this man is an ideal; that he is impossible in any but an ideal state, with an ideal education, and an ideal religion, the same being ideals, and equally impossible. He points out that Rousseau recognized this and was merely setting these ideals up for his world to follow and thereby become better. We can glimpse a tinge of primitivistic thinking here. He was dissatisfied with his civilization, seeing his countrymen on the brink of revolution, and as countless others before him, attempted to set up an ideal for his world to adopt and emulate. Lacking is a plea for a return to a primitive life, but rather a look higher to a better state in
the future. We can easily see his ideas of progress being misconstrued into primitivism, a tendency which was natural, to say the least.

Lacking insight into his deeper meaning, we can only safely affirm that Rousseau influenced and was influenced by the Noble Savage tradition. This is evident from his account of the pre-social period, especially in the period of the community when man was in his most attractive and admirable stage. That he was familiar with the Noble Savage theme is shown by Fairchild with evidence that he knew Tacitus, and, of course, Montaigne.¹


Fairchild also declares that Rousseau was quite familiar with the actual narratives of explorers—citing references to the Caribs, Indians and American savages.²

² Page 132.

However, this is merely the early Rousseau. Fairchild insists that the mature Rousseau was even closer to the Noble Savage. His ideal boy, Emile, must have a body like a savage's, and like his body, a strong mind—a keen, subtle, flexible mind. The savage referred to now is not the simple, contented savage of the Second Discourse, but his mind has developed. Fairchild holds this development akin to the idea of noble savagery—that the developed savage is the Noble Savage. Here is a much more optimistic view than the one of the Discourse. Further, both types of savages are good. The innate, natural good that was present in the simple savage is also present in the developed savage. It is the goodness of innocence—stupid innocence, but good nevertheless. The Noble Savage, along with mental development, has
retained this natural good, so will Rousseau's natural man in his ideal state. The later Rousseau, speaking of his natural man, refers to the perfected natural man of the future. Fairchild points out that "since this perfected natural man never existed, Rousseau derives some support for his prophetic vision from the natural man of the past as partially exemplified by the Noble Savage."

1. Page 136.

It is perhaps ironical that Rousseau was named an apostle to the Noble Savage by virtue of his Second Discourse. It was there that he was least flattering to the Noble Savage. But however paradoxical, this notion is at least consistent with other notions that have persisted about Rousseau. It is difficult to conceive of Rousseau being sentimentally enthusiastic about the Noble Savage, but we cannot but admit his influence upon the Noble Savage tradition, and his use of it in the conveyance of his ideas.
CHAPTER V

Some Sources of Melville's *Typee* and *Omoo*

The years 1841-1845 mark an especially dark period for biographers of Herman Melville. It is this span of years that concerns us here, for it was in January 1841, that our author sailed on the *Achusnet* for the South Seas and it was during the following four years that he participated in adventures that were to form the materials for all or portions of *Typee* and *Omoo*. This period of Melville's life has been usually regarded through his novels—the assumption being that they were autobiographical. A recent work by Charles Anderson,¹ examining the official records of Melville's stay in


the American Navy, throws some new light on Melville, pointing to his method of composition and to the autobiographical character of his early romances.

What Melville read, up to and during these four years, is yet a matter of speculation. He quotes some authorities, in *Typee*, to establish the data he had recorded as fact. In his preface to *Omoo*, he also deemed it advisable "to quote previous voyagers, in corroboration of what is offered as the fruit of the author's own observations."² The two authorities mentioned in the


first portion of *Typee* were Captain David Porter's *Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean* and C. S. Stewart's *A Visit to the South Seas*. Anderson
adds a third probable source: G. H. von Langsdorff's *Voyages and Travels*. Melville fails to acknowledge Porter and Langsdorff at all, stating that he knows of Porter's work, but had never read it, and mentioning Langsdorff not at all. Anderson points to an allusion made by Melville in *Typee* to an author who had written of the Marquesas, but by his own word, knew little of the islands—pointing to Stewart.¹

¹ Anderson, p. 18.

Melville also refers to William Ellis's *Polynesian Researches*, a work which may have proved helpful in the preparation of *Typee* and *Omoo*. A portion of *Typee* is devoted to a general disparagement of travel-books, suggesting that writers of travel-books are usually raconteurs who delight in astounding their naive readers with outlandish accounts of strange peoples—accounts which have no accurate foundations since the writers seldom stayed on the islands long enough to know the customs of the people.²

² *Typee*, pp. 228-229.

It has been suggested that Melville deliberately intends here to mislead the reader into thinking that he himself used no such books for his sources. Russell Thomas, in attempting to trace Melville's technique of composition, shows at length the amazing similarity between passages in Stewart and Melville. However, Thomas fails to note any significant borrowings from Porter.³


It is highly probable that our author read everything available on the
South Seas—reports of voyagers, traveller's descriptions and missionary reports. That he utilized these accounts is definitely shown by Anderson, in a break from the conventional analysis of Typee and Omoo as autobiography. Anderson says:

His South Sea experiences, stripped of their romantic trappings, are still bright with high-hearted adventure. The books that embody them are here set forward less as masterpieces of creative imagination than as deliberately manufactured travel records—on the whole joyous—partly fictionized autobiography embellished and pointed for the sake of propaganda.¹


Thus Typee and Omoo are best analyzed as semi-fictitious and semi-autobiographical. Despite the scarcity of information about Melville, it is known that he did spend some time in the South Seas. It is evident here that the danger of overstating the case rests on either end. Typee and Omoo cannot be regarded as pure fiction nor gospel truth. That Melville actually lived on the islands is pointed to by his intimate knowledge of food preparation—knowledge available only to an eye-witness.²


The actual amount of time that our author spent on the islands brings up another question. In his prefaces to Typee and Omoo, our author admits a certain degree of inaccuracy in the time scheme. In Typee's preface he says:

In very many published narratives no little degree of attention is bestowed upon dates; but as the author lost all knowledge of the days of the week, during the occurrence of the scenes herein related, he hopes that the reader will charitably pass over his shortcomings in this particular.³

3. Typee, p. viii.
In the preface to *Omoo* he adds:

No journal was kept by the author during his wanderings in the South Seas; so that, in preparing the ensuing chapters for the press, precision with respect to dates would have been impossible; and every occurrence has been put down from simple recollection.¹

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This lack of accuracy in regard to time was perhaps convenient for our author. Robert Forsythe, in a recent paper, reveals the faultiness of Melville's chronology.²

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He declares that Melville's "four months' residence" in Polynesia was a mere four weeks at the most. Forsythe also advances the theory that his inconsistency in dates was of innocent origin, declaring that Melville believed himself to be truthful, and "innocently extended the term of his stay among the Typees in order to make his account more effective."³

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Less kind is Anderson's suggestion that Melville deliberately sought to confuse the reader and add plausibility to his narrative.⁴

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In connection with this is the possibility that his avid use of other sources was due to his lack of details on Polynesian scenes. It is certainly plausible
that the young author, in needing to fill out scenes with details which he had not time to note, would turn to sources where the details were conveniently available.

It is generally accepted, however, despite inconsistencies that exist in regard to dates, that Melville's account of island life is authentic. It is established that he was there, and that his information was derived from first-hand sources. His accounts are endorsed not only by corroboration in detail with reports of contemporary travellers, but by reference to Melville by subsequent writers upon the islands.

It might be well to establish these facts at the outset, as some contemporary reviewers were doubtful of the authenticity of Melville's travel-romances, and even modern readers, unfamiliar with Melville, may be likely to regard them as pure fiction. On the score of Melville's contemporary reviewers, Anderson seeks to correct a persistent fallacy. He points out that the authenticity of Typee and Omoo was not questioned by a "multitude of critics" as supposed, but that the majority of the critics were well satisfied with the truthfulness of the author. He adds that Typee is accepted even now by ethnologists as reliable.¹

³ Anderson, p. 179.

In Typee, Melville points to Stewart as his chief source. In his entrance scene to the bay of Nukahiva, a marked similarity is noted between Melville's and Stewart's description. So noticeable is the likeness that if Stewart's description did not furnish a source, it at least confirms the accuracy of Melville's description.²

² Anderson, pp. 71-72.
A strikingly similar account of the boat's reception in the bay is also found in Langsdorff's account.

A proof of Melville's immediate acquaintance with Porter's Journal, is his accurate version of Porter's invasion of Typee Valley.¹

¹. Ibid., p. 96.

From the same source, Anderson points to the identical misspelling of Polynesian words. In addition, Porter's notes are accounted more extensive on the social, religious, and political customs of the Typees than those of any others except Stewart's. Porter's accounts accentuated the ferocious aspects of the Typees, whereas in Stewart's volumes, an able defense for the South Sea Islanders was found.

In describing the beauties of Typee Valley, Melville had many sources to draw from. All previous commentators had been lavish in their praise of the native beauties. From Stewart, Melville draws his explanation of the comparative fairness of complexion of the natives.²

². Anderson, p. 126.

Melville's accounts of the dress and attention given to personal appearance by the natives can also be traced to contemporary travel books. Such accounts may point to Ellis's Polynesian Research, an acknowledged source, whose lavishness exceeds even Melville's.

That Melville borrowed from Langsdorff is revealed by his accounts of the art of tattooing. Anderson points to the mass of incorrect information gathered by our author, strikingly similar to an account of tattooing, particularly misinformative, found in the pages of Langsdorff. Anderson comments:
"No better proof could be found of borrowing by one author from another than such a similarity of erroneous matter."  

1. Ibid., p. 155.

All of this points to our author's use of many more sources than he felt obliged to acknowledge. Numerous instances are cited by Anderson to show obvious connections with other works. However, it is possible that in some instances the likeness between Melville's account and earlier reports is only coincidental. The fact that Melville sometimes admits that he is puzzled by the certain customs when plausible explanations were at hand indicates a certain degree of self-reliance. Anderson concludes that Melville "preferred to work from the description of previous authors, which he found ready to hand, merely recasting this material to secure greater unity and artistic effect."  


Typee and Omoo are best realized as "manufactured" travel-romances. This is not to say that Melville's own powers of observation were totally unemployed—but merely a combination of sources, imagination, and actual eye-witnessed accounts.

In pointing to the amount of truth and fiction in these travel-romances, Omoo is admittedly more autobiographical than Typee, for the course chartered by Melville there can be substantiated by various contemporary records. The mutiny described actually occurred, as did other incidents of a highly-romantic nature, that may seem overdrawn. Anderson has adequately shown that the same sources were made use of in Omoo as in Typee, these sources being particularly
used in descriptions of customs and foodstuffs. To the general sources there is but one notable exception—the possible influence of Rousseau on Typee. There are sections of Typee that definitely echo the ideas of Rousseau's Second Discourse. Melville's debt to Rousseau, if any, is hard to estimate, for Typee makes but one reference to him and biographical facts show no acquaintance with Rousseau prior to 1846. The explicit reference that our author makes to Rousseau seems to point to the Confessions rather than to the Second Discourse. Anderson refers to Melville's admitted acquaintance with Rousseau's Confessions and adds: "Although there is no external proof of any earlier acquaintance with the great apologist of the Noble Savage, the internal evidence of Typee suggests a long and ardent discipleship."¹

¹ Anderson, p. 178.

We have seen that our author's discipleship was not limited to Rousseau. Undoubtedly, Melville had a penchant for working from literary sources in preference to his own observation. There are many possible reasons for this. He may have thought it wise for a young writer to follow this pattern; a yet simpler explanation is that he may not have had the time to see all of the objects that he used to give his narrative substance. Nevertheless, the results were certainly worth the effort, for many students of Melville find his literary discovery of the South Seas his chief claim to distinction.
CHAPTER VI

Herman Melville’s Noble Savages

In Herman Melville the Noble Savage had an able defendant. In contrast to the evil and ugliness of civilization he presented the charm and beauty of the South Sea Islands. Like primitivists of all ages, he was not content with the characteristic features of his time, particularly when viewed against the background of primitive goodness. Man in his primitive state—the Noble Savage—was idealized against a critical picture of civilization. Melville’s idealization, however, was limited to man in the unspoiled primitivistic state. Civilization, with its evils, was much better than a mixture of cultures. It is here that the quality of Melville’s primitivism is evidenced. His admiration of the unspoiled state of nature is unbounded, just as is his abhorrence of a state of blended cultures. The coming of the white man had imposed upon the primitives a culture that was neither native nor foreign but a blending of the vices of both traditions. His attack upon civilization is embodied in a protest against the effects of attempts to civilize a happy and contented people. Underneath all of his blasts at civilization is the feeling that primitive life, much as he admires it, must be confined to the South Seas, for he never implies that he would like to live in the primitive state that he admires.

His idealization of the Noble Savage is seen in Typee—and it is chiefly a defense of the Noble Savage and an eulogy of his perfect existence, his physical beauty, and his natural goodness. Omoo, on the other hand, is a positive attack on civilization—for in Tahiti Melville saw an example of the evil effect of missionary and commercial contacts. The picture of the
primitive man in an untouched state is given in *Typee*, and in *Omoo* a sermon is advanced on the evil effects of civilizing the Noble Savage. It will be seen that Melville did not believe the natives of the South Seas capable of being civilized, and could see no advantages to them in accepting civilization.

There is little question that Melville was influenced by the primitivist ideal, for many direct statements point to his feelings about the Noble Savage. The first direct indictment of civilized man is given when he points to the debauchery that the natives were led into by the sailors:

Unsophisticated and confiding, they are easily led into every vice, and humanity weeps over the ruin thus remorselessly inflicted upon them by their European civilizers. Thrice happy are they who, inhabiting some yet undiscovered island in the midst of the ocean, have never been brought into contaminating contact with the white man.


An attitude was evidenced here that was in keeping with previous and contemporary thought on the subject. Even missionary reports had included mention of the general depravity of the savage heart. Melville is saying that such depravity was the result of intercourse with the white man, for the savages are naturally good. The evil enters when the white man takes advantage of their natural innocence. Civilized man is damned with natural propensities for evil and is therefore inferior to the "unsophisticated" and "confiding" savage heart:

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

Similar disparagements of civilization are evident in Melville's look at the natural, luxurious existence enjoyed by the Polynesians. He declares:

As I extended my wanderings in the valley and grew more familiar with the habits of its inmates, I was fain to confess that, despite the disadvantages of his condition, the Polynesian savage, surrounded by all the luxurious provisions of nature, enjoyed an infinitely happier, though certainly a less intellectual existence, than the self-complacent European.¹

1. Typee, p. 165.

The "less intellectual existence" pointed to here is amended later to show that the savage can enjoy a like measure of happiness as the cultured European.

In answer to Dr. Johnson's dictum that the savage and the philosopher cannot equally enjoy happiness, Melville replies:

The minds of these simple savages, unoccupied by matters of graver moment, were capable of deriving the utmost delight from circumstances which would have passed unnoticed in more intelligent communities.²


The luxuries of civilization when contrasted with the natural benefits of the primitive state are sadly wanting, as Melville asserts:

In a primitive state of society, the enjoyments of life, though few and simple, are spread over a great extent, and are unalloyed; but civilization, for every advantage she imparts, holds a hundred evils in reserve;—the heartburnings, the jealousies, the social rivalries, the family dissensions, and the thousand self-inflicted discomforts of refined life, which make up in units the swelling aggregate of human misery, are unknown among these unsophisticated people.³

3. Typee, p. 166.
He continues here in a decidedly Rousseauvistic manner, pointing to the pure freedom from care in the unspoiled state of nature:

There were none of those thousand sources of irritation that the ingenuity of civilized man has created to mar his own felicity. There were no foreclosurers of mortgages, no protested notes, no bills payable, no debts of honour in Typee; no unreasonable tailors and shoemakers, perversely bent on being paid; no duns of any description; no assault and battery attorneys, to foment discord, backing their clients up to a quarrel, and then knocking their heads together; no poor relations everlastingly occupying the spare bed-chamber, and diminishing the elbow-room at the family table; no destitute widows with their children starving on the cold charities of the world; no beggers; no debtors' prisons; no proud and hard-hearted nabobs in Typee; or, to sum up all in one word—no Money! That 'root of all evil' was not to be found in the valley.¹


It would be well to keep in mind that this is the untouched primitive state. No missionaries have come, breaking the way for economic interests, and the people in this state have had relatively little intercourse with the white man. When pointing to the horrors of a mixed cultural state, Melville questions the wisdom of attempting to civilize the islanders. They were content with their way of life—for what had they to ask of civilization?

Let the once similing and populous Hawaiian Islands, with their now diseased, starving, and dying natives, answer the question. The missionaries may seek to disguise the matter as they will, but the facts are incontrovertible; and the devoutest Christian who visits that group with an unbiased mind, must go away mournfully asking—'Are these, alas! the fruits of twenty-five years of enlightening?'²

2. Typee, p. 166.

In the midst of his eulogy of his Noble Savage, Melville admits the presence of cannibalism in their society. He admits that the trait is bad,
and regrettable, but points out that they only practice it on their enemies. He continues that the practice is not much worse than some of the heinous punishments meted out by civilization in the name of justice:

The fiend-like skill we display in the invention of all manner of death-dealing engines, the vindictiveness with which we carry on our wars, and the misery and desolation that follow in their train, are enough of themselves to distinguish the white civilized man as the most ferocious animal on the face of the earth.¹

¹. Typee, p. 167.

This is admittedly a weak defense for so strong a charge as cannibalism, but it sharply points to the intensity with which Melville defends his Noble Savage. He admires his Noble Savage despite this stigma, and he humorously reaffirms the native's humane characteristics to Toby:

"Why, they are cannibals!" said Toby on one occasion when I eulogized the tribe. "Granted," I replied, "but a more humane, gentlemanly, and amiable set of epicures do not probably exist in the Pacific."²

². Typee, p. 130.

At another point, yet more seriously, he reaffirms his admiration of the primitive, despite this appalling habit:

But here, Truth, who loves to be centrally located, is again found between the two extremes; for cannibalism to a certain extent is practiced among several of the primitive tribes in the Pacific, but it is upon the bodies of slain enemies alone; and horrible and fearful as the custom is, immeasurably as it is to be abhorred and condemned, still I assert that those who indulge in it are in other respects humane and virtuous.³

³. Typee, p. 277.
It can be readily seen why Melville was inclined to condone his Noble Savage's cannibalistic traits, for our author was firmly convinced of the natural goodness of his Noble Savage. Following a pattern set by all of his predecessors to the South Seas, Melville is unrestrained in his praise of the beauty of the islanders. All of his Noble Savages are physically perfect, living models of the epitome of physical beauty. Unlike some of his predecessors, Melville found the same perfection in their moral qualities. Upon first encountering these qualities in the heathenish, savage islanders, Melville is amazed, and then concludes that they must be embodied with natural goodness:

It may reasonably be inquired, how were these people governed? How were their passions controlled in their everyday transactions? It must have been by an inherent principle of honesty and charity toward each other. They seemed to be governed by that sort of tacit common-sense law which, say what they will of the inborn lawlessness of the human race, has its precepts graven on every breast. The grand principles of virtue and honour, however they may be distorted by arbitrary codes, are the same all the world over; and where these principles are concerned, the right or wrong of any action appears the same to the uncultivated as to the enlightened mind.¹

¹ Typee, p. 270.

Melville's Noble Savage was well drawn. He was a superb physical specimen endowed with a natural instinct for good. Melville also shows familiarity with contemporary travel reports, for in defense of his Noble Savage's natural goodness, he varies from contemporary reports on the native's habit of stealing. Melville's Noble Savage is no thief—on the other hand, he is inherently honest. He describes the native custom of never locking up any of their valuables—he continues in a footnote:

The strict honest which the inhabitants of nearly all the Polynesian islands manifest toward each other, is in
striking contrast with the thieving propensities some of them evince in their intercourse with foreigners. This consideration, while it serves to reconcile an apparent contradiction in the moral character of the islanders, should in some measure alter that low opinion of it which the reader of South Sea voyages is too apt to form.1

1. Typee, p. 271.

Since the majority of traveller's reports contained accounts of native thievery, Melville felt it necessary to provide some defense in this quarter for his Noble Savage. On this same subject, it is noticeable that in Typee, his picture of the unspoiled primitive state, there is no stealing; but in Omoo, his attack on civilization, Dr. Long Ghost's boots are stolen by a native.2

2. Omoo, p. 325.

It is noticeable that in Typee, despite the general disparagement of civilization, Melville admits that civilization is shown in its poorer aspects in the attempted conversion of the islanders to civilized standards, for when subjected to the dictates of the civilized standard, the natives are made victims of the vices and evils of civilized life. Melville is also explicit in his acknowledgement of the good intentions of the missionaries, although he deplores the results:

Lest the slightest misconception should arise from anything thrown out in this chapter, or indeed in any other part of the volume, let me here observe, that against the cause of missions in the abstract no Christian can possibly be opposed; it is in truth a just and holy cause.3

3. Typee, p. 266.
However just and holy the cause, Melville insists that it can be productive of evil:

In short, missionary undertaking, however it may be blessed of Heaven, is in itself but human; and subject, like everything else, to errors and abuses.

1. Typee, p. 266.

Continuing in this vein, Melville declares:

In justice to the missionaries, however, I will willingly admit, that whatever evils may have resulted from their collective mismanagement of the business of the mission, and from the want of vital piety evinced by some of their number, still the present deplorable condition of the Sandwich Islands is by no means wholly chargeable against them.


We will have the occasion later to see a less sympathetic attitude toward missionaries. In Omoo, a frontal attack is made against the bearers of a "just and holy cause."

Melville's comparison of conditions of the unspoiled existence against that of semicivilization again points to the superiority of the former. In Typee, the following eulogy is found:

In beauty of form they surpassed anything I had ever seen. Not a single instance of natural deformity was observable in all the throng attending the revels.

3. Ibid., p. 242.

In Omoo, Melville makes this observation:

All this gave us a fine opportunity of making observations. I was painfully struck by the considerable number of sickly or
deformed persons; undoubtedly made so by a virulent complaint which, under native treatment, almost invariably affects, in the end, the muscles and bones of the body.\footnote{1}


Along with our author's idealization of the primitive life, the beauty of the Noble Savage and his innate goodness, he is keenly aware of the temperamental characteristics of the primitive man. His setting is the key to his temperament, for he lives in the midst of luxuries provided by a benevolent providence. One of Melville's main contentions is that his Noble Savage is temperamentally unfit for physical exertion, and carrying this further, since industry is a principal feature of civilization, the Noble Savage is not able to live the civilized life. Our author implies that providence, knowing the primitive temperament, had not made it necessary for him to exert himself:

But to no fine gentleman born to hereditary opulence does manual labour come more unkindly than to the luxurious Indian when thus robbed of the bounty of Heaven. Habituated to a life of indolence, he cannot and will not exert himself; and want, disease, and vice, all evils of foreign growth, soon terminate his miserable existence.


In this manner, Melville concludes his defense of the untainted primitive existence. The beauty of the Noble Savage, his natural goodness, and his admirable social condition, are sharply accentuated by the ugliness and sordidness of the state of semicivilization. The last plea is given in the hope that his unspoiled savage will be allowed to remain in the state for which he was endowed by nature. He is unfit for civilization and if attempts are made to civilize him, he will but degenerate into the same hapless creature that is seen on "civilized" islands. Evil indeed is the civilization that would turn
such a noble figure into a miserable specimen of mankind, in the name of an unsought and unwanted ideal.

However, this is merely Act I in our author's brief against civilization. The scene shifts to the Sandwich Islands, Tahiti in particular, where living examples exist of the evil effects of civilization. In Omo, Melville carries the attack into the enemy camp, pointing an accusing finger at the missionaries. His first step is to show that the native temperament is unsuited to missionary purposes:

The Tahitians can hardly ever be said to reflect: They are all impulse; in fact, there is perhaps no race upon earth less disposed by nature to the monitions of Christianity than the people of the South Seas. An air of softness in their manners, great apparent ingenuousness and docility, at first misled; but these were the mere accompaniments of an indolence, bodily and mental; a constitutional voluptuousness; and an aversion to the least restraint; which, however fitted for the luxurious state of nature, in the tropics, are the greatest possible hindrances to the strict moralities of Christianity.¹

¹ Omo, p. 206.

Melville continues this attack by a farcical account of a native sermon. Many pious voices were raised in protest against this "missionary sermon."

The sermon, related to Melville, through an interpreter, includes a warning to the general public against French Catholicism and a warning to the native girls about the sailors from the whaling ships. But particularly offensive to the missionary societies was Melville's suggestion that the missionaries were motivated by economic as well as Christian impulses:

'Good friends, little to eat left at my house. Schooner from Sydney no bring bag of flour: and kannaka no bring pig and fruit enough. Miconaree do great deal for kannaka; kannaka do little for miconaree. So, good friends, weave plenty of cocalnut baskets, fill 'em, and bring 'em tomorrow.'²

² Omo, p. 205.
In his attack, our author avows no intention to deliberately malign the missionaries, but merely to describe existing conditions. For his purposes, sufficient damaging evidence existed to prevent need for subterfuge. He points to the typical missionary as conscientious, but ignorant, and "in many cases, deplorably bigoted; such traits have, in some degree, characterized the pioneers of all faiths."  

1. Ibid., p. 219.

Melville admits that "in their own way" the missionaries have striven to Christianize the islanders. In his examination of the results, some good changes have been effected. For instance, the entire system of idolatry has been abolished; but this is attributed not so much to zealous missionary efforts, as to the effects of a long contact with whites. There is one achievement that is admittedly the work of the missionaries: The translation of the Bible into the native tongue. But even this has its limitations, for the character of the natives prohibits any wholehearted acceptance of Christianity. The schools that were set up by the missionaries seldom enjoyed full attendance. There was a lamentable lack of genuine improvement in morals or religion. When finding himself puzzled by the character of the native religious ideas, Melville investigates and finds the natives acting a lie in their semblance to devotion. He relates at length an anecdote pointing to the existing hypocrisy in religious matters: When visiting a group of girls that he had recently seen at church, he questioned their attitude toward religion. One immodest young lady, by unmistakable signs, let it be known that she was a Christian only in the presence of the missionaries—that otherwise, she gave free rein to the voluptuousness of her nature. To describe
this hypocrisy, Melville cites Pope:

'A sad good Christian at the heart
A very heathen in the carnal part.'

1. Omoo, p. 211.

Clearly the native population had no true concept of Christianity. An appalling feature of this forced religion was the employment of native police, called kannakippers, to insure full church attendance:

On Sunday mornings, when the prospect is rather small for a full house in the monor churches, a parcel of fellows are actually sent out with ratans into the highways and byways as whippers-in of the congregation. This is a sober fact.

2. Ibid., p. 211.

The kannakippers did not limit their vigilance to religious matters, for:

These gentry are indefatigable. At the dead of night prowling round the houses, and in the daytime hunting amorous couples in the groves.

3. Ibid., p. 212.

This use of policemen to foster Christian ideals assured our author that civilization and Christianity were but contributorsto native degeneracy. The morals of the natives were decidedly on the decline. In creating the need for subterfuge for actions that were perfectly natural to native temperaments, the missionaries were contributing considerably to moral decline. Continuing in his attack, Melville is quite emphatic in denunciation of the low opinion held by the missionaries on the state of Christianity and morals among the islanders. He points to the practice of social discrimination, in the schools
and otherwise. The young whites, children of the missionaries, were denied contact of any kind with the native children, to prevent "moral contamination."

To this desired end, every effort is made to prevent the white children from learning the native tongue. He points to a specific instance of this type of segregation:

They went even further at the Sandwich Islands; where, a few years ago, a playground for the children of the missionaries was enclosed with a fence many feet high, the more effectually to exclude the wicked little Hawaiians.

1. *Omo*, p. 223.

We can agree with our author's righteous indignation at this deviation from the Christian ideal. On the whole, Melville's picture of religious and moral conditions, was decidedly unflattering to the missionaries. The bearers of the banner of Christ were doing more harm than good. Through their rigorous enforcement of laws in the name of Christianity, the immorality of the islanders had increased. The religious and moral picture was decidedly bad.

His next step was to examine the economic and social status of the partly civilized islanders. Unfortunately, civilization had again proved ineffectual, for no improvements are noted in this quarter:

It has been said that the only way to civilize a people is to form in them habits of industry. Judged by this principle, the Tahitians are less civilized now than formerly. True, their constitutional indolence is excessive; but surely, if the spirit of Christianity is among them, so unchristian a vice ought to be, at least, partially remedied. But the reverse is the fact. Instead of acquiring new occupations, old ones have been discontinued.


Plainly the natives have suffered economically from contact with Christian civilization. They were little inclined toward any industries, but before
the white man came they were inclined to make "tappa," but since the intro-
duction of European fashions, even this has been discontinued. Repeated
failure had marked the attempts of the whites to industrialize the natives:

The fact is, that the mechanical and agricultural em-
ployments of civilized life require a kind of exertion al-
together too steady and sustained to agree with an indolent
people like the Polynesians. Calculated for a state of
nature, in a climate providentially adapted to it, they are
unfit for any other. Nay, as a race, they cannot otherwise
long exist.¹

Socially, also, the Polynesian has suffered from semicivilization. Most of
their former pleasures have been condemned by the missionaries and are for-
bidden by law. Athletic games, flute-playing, dancing, kite-flying, and
the singing of traditional ballads, are all punishable offenses. Melville
finds this very deplorable:

Doubtless, in thus denationalizing the Tahitians, as
it were, the missionaries were prompted by a sincere desire
for good; but the effect has been lamentable. Supplied with
no amusements in place of those forbidden, the Tahitians, who
require more recreation than other people, have sunk into a
listlessness, or indulge in sensualities, a hundred times
more pernicious than all the games ever celebrated in the
Temple of Tanee.²

The natives suffered more in another respect, for with civilization came a
particular brand of foreign vice and disease:

These evils, of course, are solely of foreign origin.
To say nothing of the effects of drunkenness, the occasional
inroads of the small-pox, and other things which might be
mentioned, it is sufficient to allude to a virulent disease
which now taints the blood of at least two-thirds of the
common people of the island; and, in some form or other, is transmitted from father to son.¹

1. Ibid., p. 228.

This is the evidence that our author presents in his case against civilization. The facts are set forth to prove that the natives have suffered from Christian civilization. If any good has been realized, it is only through a great deal of evil. The final indictment is that this destruction of body and soul has been advanced in the name of Christ, whereas, the basic motivation for the Christianization of the islands was economic. Taking up the history of the Christianization of Tahiti, Melville finds that Pomare II had embraced Christianity from economic rather than religious motives.²

2. Ibid., pp. 358-359.

Melville's picture of semicivilization is deliberately unattractive. When the unspoiled beauty of the Marquesas is compared with the disease-ridden Tahiti, the latter suffers visibly from the comparison. Melville is adamant in his stand on the natural goodness of the untouched primitive state. He points to the benefits enjoyed by primitives even over civilization:

Civilization does not engross all the virtues of humanity; she has not even her full share of them. They flourish in greater abundance and attain greater strength among many barbarous people. The hospitality of the wild Arab, the courage of the North American Indian, and the faithful friendships of some of the Polynesian nations, far surpass anything of a similar kind among the polished communities of Europe.³

Just as firm is our author in his denunciation of semicivilization. The partly civilized islands, with its peoples infested with disease, corrupted morally and physically by foreign vice, present mute but eloquent accusations against the ill effects of civilization. Unquestionably, the primitive would have been better off had he never seen the white man:

In view of these things, who can remain blind to the fact, that so far as mere temporal felicity is concerned, the Tahitians are far worse off now than formerly; and although their circumstances, upon the whole, are bettered by the presence of the missionaries, the benefits conferred by the latter become utterly insignificant when confronted with the vast preponderance of evil brought about by other means.¹

1. Omo, p. 228.

The prospects appear hopeless, for it seemed that the Polynesians must soon join that caravan of passing races. Even Melville's Noble Savage is not exempt from the beckoning finger of civilization. So admirable is his noble status that our author is clearly reluctant to see him a victim of this fate:

Ill-fated people! I shudder when I think of the change a few years will produce in their paradisiacal abode; and probably when the most destructive vices, and the worst attendances on civilization, shall have driven all peace and happiness from the valley, the magnanimous French will proclaim to the world that the Marquesas Islands have been converted to Christianity!²

2. Typee, p. 262.

We take leave of Melville's Noble Savage with the undeniable feeling that soon his nobility will be crushed beneath the heel of a tyrannical civilizer. His natural goodness will vanish with his nobility and his famed beauty will soon fade under the ravages of disease. It is no small wonder that our young author was later a profound pessimist. We have noted previously
that Melville evinced no desire to live the primitive life that he eulogized. Perhaps the reason is discernible here. Undoubtedly he saw the inevitable fate that was his Noble Savage's, and while deploring his foreseen end, reaffirmed his faith in the idea of natural goodness in man.
CHAPTER VII

Conclusion

The Noble Savage played a significant role in romantic thought. It is evident that he came at the time when he was most needed—when his virtues were instrumental in piercing the clouds of artificiality and superficiality. An escape from reality was provided in dreams of remote, strange lands where man lived in naturally luxurious settings, and received the bountiful blessings of a generous providence. It is natural that man in his struggle for perfection should idealize something in the past that he thinks perfect. Even more natural is the idealization of a contemporary standard of perfection. Primitivists of all ages have attempted to present pictures of a better and happier existence. The idealization of beauty and the idealization of good are concurrent themes. The Noble Savage fitted perfectly into this scheme. He is always described as physically perfect. The romanticist’s pen is given free rein in describing the physical beauty of the Noble Savage. Usually in comparison with civilized standards, the superiority rests with the savage. Concurrent with this is his goodness. He is gentle, kind, and possessed with an instinctive propensity for love. His goodness of character is innate and natural. He lives a lazy, indolent existence, with few worries or cares. This picture would naturally be attractive to the civilized reader, bothered with the monotonous existence of civilized life. The idea of natural goodness is also related to sensibility and humanitarianism. The Noble Savage evoked sympathy in civilized breasts for the oppression of the uncivilized.

We have noted the various uses of the Noble Savage as a literary type. His greatest prominence was gained through his idealization against a critical
picture of civilized life. Both philosophically and as a literary fad, the Noble Savage's popularity was increased through the travel accounts of the eighteenth-century. In this same century, Rousseau's influence was immeasurable in popularizing the Noble Savage tradition.

In Melville, we find the conventional usage of all of the primitivistic devices, yet with some alteration. Unlike most of his predecessors, our author actually saw the savages that he idealizes. He is admittedly the first literary artist to write with authority on the South Seas. His information was first hand, and his is an authoritative picture of the Noble Savage. He also breaks from the conventional pattern in his analysis of the savage's natural goodness. Clearly all of Melville's savages are not noble. He reserves this adjective for those who lived in a state of unspoiled nature. For the partly civilized native his sympathy is unbounded, but to Melville, his plight is hopeless. He lays at civilization's feet the blame for this partial state of civilization that caused so much pain and misery. He deplores the well-meaning, yet ill-planned approach of the missionaries. Indeed he finds the natives mentally incapable of embracing the Christian faith. The result of this semicivilization was neither Paganism nor Christianity, but merely living examples of the vices of two incompatible traditions. He closes his chapters on native life with the indeniable feeling of certain doom for the natives.

In the study of Melville's primitivism, the element of idealization of the Noble Savage is decidedly present; and just as conspicuously absent is any desire to revert into the savage existence. This does not point to any insincerity in our author's treatment of his Noble Savage, but merely to a growing inability to find compatibility between the good that should exist and the evil that actually dominates man.
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