



出版社出版基金资助项目
CHUBANSHECHUBANJINZHUZHANGMU

语言·文学·文化
研究系列丛书

Herman Melville
as Poet: A Study of *Battle-Pieces*
and *Clarel*

梅尔维尔诗歌研究

周 新 / 著



北京交通大学出版社
<http://www.bjtpub.com.cn>

梅尔维尔诗歌研究

**Herman Melville as Poet: A Study
of *Battle-Pieces* and *Clarel***

周 新 著

北京交通大学出版社

· 北京 ·

内 容 简 介

本书主要研究梅尔维尔的思想理念及其两部诗作：《战争集》（1866）和《克拉瑞尔》（1876）。在《战争集》中，梅尔维尔客观地评价内战，既支持北方军队完成国家统一、解放奴隶的行动，又对战争给人们带来的苦难感到悲伤。在长诗《克拉瑞尔》中，诗人向读者展示了美国 19 世纪信仰危机的图景，也通过诗歌探寻内战后新的支撑美国的理念。

版权所有，侵权必究。

图书在版编目（CIP）数据

梅尔维尔诗歌研究 / 周新著. — 北京：北京交通大学出版社，2015.2
ISBN 978-7-5121-2202-4

I. ① 梅… II. ① 周… III. ① 梅尔维尔, H. (1819~1891) — 诗歌研究
IV. ① I712.072

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字（2015）第 027785 号

责任编辑：张利军 特邀编辑：易 娜

出版发行：北京交通大学出版社

电话：010-51686414

北京市海淀区高粱桥斜街 44 号

邮编：100044

印 刷 者：北京鑫海金澳胶印有限公司

经 销：全国新华书店

开 本：148×210 印张：6.625 字数：180 千字

版 次：2015 年 6 月第 1 版 2015 年 6 月第 1 次印刷

书 号：ISBN 978-7-5121-2202-4/I·18

印 数：1 ~ 1 000 册 定价：35.00 元

本书如有质量问题，请向北京交通大学出版社质监组反映。

投诉电话：010-51686043, 51686008；传真：010-62225406；E-mail: press@bjtu.edu.cn。

前言

梅尔维尔是美国十九世纪最伟大的小说家之一。今天，很少有人会质疑他的小说在美国文学史上的重要地位。但大部分读者甚至美国及其他国家的文学批评家和学者历来都对其诗歌创作了解不多。梅尔维尔的诗歌创作无论在时间上还是成就上都占据了其文学生涯的半壁江山，但梅尔维尔在小说创作领域的声望掩盖了其在诗歌创作方面的天赋。全面而系统地研究梅尔维尔的诗歌有助于更加全面客观地理解这位多才多艺且多产的作家。

本书主要研究梅尔维尔的思想理念及其两部诗作：《战争集》（1866）和《克拉瑞尔》（1876）。梅尔维尔阅读的文学作品和他自己创作的诗歌都表明其在政治上倡导美国文学的独立。同时，梅尔维尔认为某种黑暗的力量存在于现实深处，善与恶共存于世界之中。这些理念也影响了其诗歌创作。在《战争集》中，梅尔维尔客观地评价内战，表达了对于国家前途的关切。诗人既支持北方军队完成国家统一、解放奴隶的行动，又对战争给人们带来的苦难感到悲伤。梅尔维尔的诗作表现出其看待内战的矛盾心情。在长诗《克拉瑞尔》中，诗人向读者展示了美国19世纪信仰危机的图景，也通过诗歌探寻内战后新的支撑美国的理念。虽然诗人认为对信仰的怀疑仍将长期存在，但建议读者保持希望。《克拉瑞尔》中不同的人物及他们所持的观点，反映了当时人们处在信仰与怀疑之间的两难境地。诗人通过人物的塑造，展现了美国当时的种种思想潮流，这也体现了长诗作为美国史诗的价值。本论文还探讨了《克拉瑞尔》与梅尔维尔创作的小说《玛迪》之间主题的关联性，以此证明梅尔维尔诗歌创作是其前期文学创作的延续。

梅尔维尔能够对现实进行批判性的思考，并在诗歌中致力于塑造

美国的民族思想和民族身份。他的诗歌理应获得读者的关注与认同，也值得学者们去研究。本书旨在向读者，特别是中国读者，展示其诗歌创作成就及其特征，以便读者更好地理解这位伟大的作家。

本书以著者 2009 年北京大学的博士论文为基础，在此再次向我的导师刘树森教授表示感谢。同时，也十分感谢学术委员会的各位老师，以及美国梅尔维尔研究会各位专家的的宝贵意见。

著 者

2015 年 6 月

Abstract

As few would doubt the predominant position of Herman Melville as one of the leading novelists in the 19th century USA and ever since, public readers and even critics and scholars in literary studies in the United States and other parts of the world, have paradoxically little access to his poems that make up half of his literary career and attainments. In other words, the idolized image and reputation of Herman Melville as novelist has long overshadowed his genius as a poet, which deserves critical attention in order to have a more objective understanding of such a prolific and versatile writer in an all-round way.

This book intends to make a critical study on Melville's intellectual outlook and two of his major poems, namely *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866), *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land* (1876). Melville's reading and his own poems demonstrate that politically, he advocates an independent American literature; intellectually, Melville believes in the existence of blackness at the axis of reality and the coexistence of good and evil. These ideas in turn influence his poetic writing. In *Battle-Pieces*, Melville takes a nonpartisan view in evaluating the Civil War and expresses his deep concern for the fate of the nation. The poet supports the military actions taken by the Northern troops in achieving unity and freeing slaves while feeling painful at the sufferings inflicted on the people as a result of the war. Melville's war poems reflect his inner conflict in face of war. He presents the crisis of faith in 19th century America and his pursuit of a new national ideal after the Civil War

in *Clarel*. Melville suggests readers keeping the hope though doubt may exist for a long time. The characters in *Clarel* and different views they hold represent people's dilemma between faith and doubt at that time. Melville demonstrates different thoughts in America during that period through the portrayal of characters which also proves the value of this poem as an epic. Its thematic links with *Mardi* are also discussed, which prove Melville's poetic career as a continuation of his literary quest.

Melville is a poet of critical thinking with a strong sense of shaping the national vision and identity. His poetic career deserves recognition and study. This book aims at presenting his poetic achievement and features so that readers, especially Chinese readers, will have a better understanding of this great writer.

This book is based on my dissertation in Peking University in 2009. I would avail myself of this opportunity to express my gratitude to my supervisor Professor Liu Shusen. I also greatly appreciate the valuable advice provided by the other professors in the academic committee as well as that from distinguished professors in Melville Society in USA.

Author

2015.06

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their contributions to this project. First of all, I want to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Liu Shusen for his constant encouragement that gave me solid guidance when this project seemed too daunting and complicated. His interest in the book never wavered and provided a reassurance that the project was worthwhile and valuable.

Besides, I own a tremendous debt to my committee members: Dr. Liu Jianhua, Dr. Su Weixing and Dr. Mao Liang from Peking University and Dr. Zhang Jian from Beijing Foreign Studies University for their feedback and dedication, which enable me to complete this book. I would also like to thank Professor Liu Yiqing and Professor Han Minzhong who first made me become aware of the value of a study on Melville's poetry in China. I would never have finished the book without the generous help from the Melville Society in the United States. Dr. Wyn Kelley from MIT, Dr. John Bryant from Hofstra University, Dr. Elizabeth Schultz from University of Kansas, Dr. Kenneth Price from University of Nebraska and Dr. Ezra Greenspan from Southern Methodist University and PhD candidate Xiu Limei from Peking University provide me either savvy advice or books and papers on Melville's poems which enable me to go through the difficulties and obstacles that accompany the writing of this book. I would also like to thank all the professors who participate in my final oral defense.

Finally, it is with deepest gratefulness that I thank my parents and my wife for the infinite patience they have shown in this idealistic pursuit.

Notes on Abbreviations & Quotations

(Arranged in Alphabetical Order)

- CPPHL: Melville, Herman. *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land*. Ed. Walter E. Bezanson, Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and Newberry Library, 1991.
- HMC: Melville, Herman. *Correspondence*. Ed. Merrell R. Davis and William H. Gilman. Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and Newberry Library, 1993.
- HMJ: Melville, Herman. *Journals*. Ed. Harrison Hayford and G. Thomas Tanselle. Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and Newberry Library, 1989.
- PHM: *The Poems of Herman Melville*. Ed. Douglas Robillard. Kent, Ohio: Kent University Press, 2000.

All the quotations of Herman Melville's poems, journals and letters in the present dissertation come from the above-listed sources and are identified in the text by their abbreviations and page numbers, except those whose sources are noted otherwise.

Contents

Chapter 1	Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2	Intellectual World of Herman Melville.....	47
Chapter 3	<i>Battle-Pieces</i> : The Paradox of the Civil War.....	91
Chapter 4	<i>Clarel</i> : A Postwar Epic for National Ideals.....	134
Chapter 5	Conclusion	177
	Bibliography	182

1

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 An Introduction to Melville's Career as a Poet

As few would doubt the predominant position of Herman Melville as one of the leading novelists in the 19th century USA and ever since, public readers and even critics and scholars in literary studies in the United States and other parts of the world, have paradoxically little access to his poems that make up half of his literary career and attainments. In other words, the idolized image and reputation of Herman Melville as novelist has long overshadowed his genius as poet, which deserves critical attention in order to have an objective and full understanding of such a prolific and versatile writer.

The career of Herman Melville as poet and novelist owes much to his family and his own multifarious life. He was born on 1 August 1819 in New York, the son of a prosperous merchant whose family can be traced back to a Scot knighted by James the Sixth, the grandson of Major Thomas, who participated in the Boston "Tea-Party". Melville's normal childhood and



school life was interrupted by a sudden decline of family fortune. His father, Allan Melville, failed in his fir business and died in 1832, leaving Maria Gansevoort and eight children in poor conditions. Though Melville never suffers from humiliation, it is obvious that his employments as bank clerk, shop assistant, farm worker and teacher, make him insecure and unhappy. This helps him become aware of the sufferings of the people at grassroots level early in life and drives him to explore the presence of darkness in life in his poems. In the spring of 1839, he sailed for England aboard the merchant vessel *St. Laurence*. He spent about seven years on the sea, from the first ship to Liverpool to the whalers on which he cruised among the South Sea Islands and the man-of-war in which he returned home. These experiences later become the thematic materials for his creative writing. After the launch of his first two books, *Typee* and *Omoo*, Melville wrote an ambitious novel, *Mardi* which was published in 1849. The book was not well received upon its publication but Melville later adopted a similar theme of quest in his long poem — *Clarel*.^① Despite the poor response from readers, Melville never loses heart in his creative writing. He made a two-month trip to Europe, visiting London, Paris, Brussels, and the Rhineland and went

① In this book, I use, as one of my main references, *Clarel: a Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land* published by Northwestern University Press and Newberry Library in 1991 with the introduction and notes offered by Walter E. Bezanson. This version is considered the most authoritative and reliable version by far among Melville scholars. This long poem will hereafter be referred to as *Clarel*. The Northwestern-Newberry edition of the writings of Melville is a great achievement in Melville studies. With renowned Melville experts such as Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker and Thomas Tanselle as general editors, the collection has included 15 volumes of Melville's works by now since Volume One was published in 1968. Two of the existing volumes are the letters and travel notes of Melville. The text of all these volumes is determined after careful study of Melville's manuscript and relevant materials. Each volume also includes a detailed introduction kindly offered by experts in the field as well as historical and textual notes. The whole collection provides invaluable materials for people interested in Melville studies.



back to New York in February 1850. This trip refreshes him and provides materials for his collection of poems such as *Timoleon* and *Weeds and Wildings, with a Rose or Two*.^① In 1856, after the failure of *Moby Dick* and other novels, Melville's family members persuaded him to take another tour to Europe. With approximately \$1,500 borrowed from Lemuel Shaw, his father-in-law, Melville set out for a tour of Europe and Middle East on 11 October 1856.^② For three weeks, Melville toured the Holy Land and this experience was used years later when he composed *Clarel*. Melville then visited Greece, Sicily, Naples, Rome, northern Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands before arriving at home on 20 May 1857.^{③②} This European tour provides materials for his *John Marr* and *Timoleon*. From the late 1850s, Melville began his career as poet and wrote almost nothing but poems after that. When he had enough poems to put in a collection in 1860, he named it *Poems* and sent it to his brother Allan, who would find a publisher. Unfortunately, this collection failed to be published and was later lost. However, this accident does not decrease his passion in writing poems.

After the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Melville tried in vain for a position in the navy and New York Customs House. The tight family budget eventually forced him to sell the rest of his Pittsfield property and to move to New York City. Melville did not turn back to writing marketable novels even under such poor conditions. He is

-
- ① For more information on the itinerary of Melville's European tour, see what Hershel Parker related in *Herman Melville: a Biography*. Vol. 2. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996: 351.
- ② The quotations from *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War, John Marr and Other Sailors* and *Timoleon* come from *The Poems of Herman Melville* edited by Douglas Robillard (Kent, Ohio: Kent University Press, 2000).
- ③ Hershel Parker provided relevant information on Melville's preparation before this European tour. For more information on Shaw's help in Melville's European tour, see what Hershel Parker related in *Herman Melville: a Biography*. Vol. 2. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996: 289.



deeply aware that his mission is to turn out poems which proclaim the literary independence in America. With the death of Melville's father-in-law in 1861, his wife inherited a sum of money which released the Melville family from financial difficulty for a certain period of time. This enables Melville to concentrate more on literary creativity without worrying too much about feeding the family. He read poems extensively during this period such as *The Poetic Works of Alfred Tennyson*, *The Poetic Works of Thomas Moore*, *New Poems by Matthew Arnold*, *The Poetic Works of Leigh Hunt* and so on, which mentally prepares him for later poetic writings.^① He wrote verses about the progress of the war and published them through the Harpers in 1866 in a collection entitled *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* with a prose supplement advocating peaceful reconciliation between the North and the South. It was widely reviewed, though not a big success. 1200 copies were printed and only 486 copies were sold by February 1868.^② Seventy-two poems are included in this collection and split into three sections. The first section proceeds chronologically through the war and presents views on various battles and generals in the war, which forms the majority of the collection. Poems in the second section are generally short and are often dedicated to certain individuals who sacrificed their lives in the war. The final section consists of three long poems. "The Scout toward Aldie" and "Lee in the Capitol" are based on specific historical events and "A Meditation"

① For more information on Melville's reading in the 1860s, see what Hershel Parker related in *Herman Melville: a Biography*. Vol 2. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996: 454-557.

② The poor reception does not seem to discourage Melville. For more information on the publication of *Battle-Pieces*, see what Andrew Hook related in "Melville's Poetry." *Herman Melville: Reassessments*. Ed. A. Robert Lee. London and New Jersey: Vision Press, 1984: 176-98.



expresses Melville's expectations of a bright future for America after the war. "The Portent", the first poem of the collection, depicts the hanging of John Brown as "the meteor of the war" (PHM 53), indicating the coming of the war. In the following poems, Melville covers battles in Shiloh, Antietam, Mississippi, Malvern Hill, the Wilderness and so on, as indicated by the names of the poems and comments on individuals as well as more general circumstances of the war. He depicts the greatest horror of the war by presenting the deaths of young men in his poems. In "On the Slain Collegians", the narrator feels "each bloomed and died an unabated Boy" (PHM 132). Besides showing sympathy for those who sacrificed their lives, Melville calls on people on both sides to reach reconciliation by questioning "Shall the wound of the Nation bleed again?" (PHM 169) As a poet who is keenly aware of the darkness at the bottom of people's heart, he warns against the ill intension of some Northerners to seek revenge against their Southern counterparts in the supplement of this book. Despite the destruction brought by the war, Melville is confident that America will recover from this tragedy since "faith in America never dies" (PHM 169). Although he shows sympathies and support for the Union cause in the poems, Melville takes a more objective view in judging the war and praises heroes from both the South and the North during the war. He condemns the Southern cause but applauds for the admiring qualities demonstrated among the Southern generals and this seemingly contradictory view shows Melville's insight in the face of the war.

Soon after the publication of *Battle-Pieces* in 1866, Melville got a job in the Customs House in New York and held it for about 20 years. The routine but boring work took up a great amount of his time. However, the dream to write an epic for the United States drives him to make full use of



his spare time in composing poems. He would put numerous sheets of paper in his pocket and write sketches of verses on them when he was free. A national epic is called upon when the passion for faith and belief dwindle in America and new puzzlements emerge in people's minds after they experienced the indifference of God to their misery during the Civil War and conveniences brought by the development of science. As a response to this trend, Melville plans to write an epic in which he will provide his own understanding of the situation. The eighteen thousand lines of *Clarel* come out rather slowly due to its length and Melville's limited time to write. While working on this poem, Melville was confronted with a number of family problems. Malcolm, Melville's oldest son, committed suicide in his bedroom on 11 September 1867. On 15 July 1868, his cousin Guert Gansevoort died. On 1 April 1872, his mother, Maria Gansevoort Melville, died at eighty-one. However, these misfortunes did not hamper Melville from finishing this epic and *Clarel* was completed in 1875. In August, Peter Gansevoort, Melville's uncle, offered to cover the cost of publication^①. On 4 January 1876, Melville reached agreement with G. P. Putnam's Sons for the publication of *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land* in the United States. *Clarel*, almost Melville's least read and least comprehended book, develops around the pilgrimage of Clarel, an American divinity school student. He falls in love with Ruth, a girl in Jerusalem, at first sight. However, the death of Ruth's father prevents Clarel from visiting her at that time. Clarel then decides to join a pilgrimage and the poem focuses on the conversation between the pilgrims and their impressions on the Holy Land.

① The information is based on Melville's letter to his uncle Peter dated 26 August 1875. For more information, see *Correspondence*. Ed. Merrell R. Davis and William H. Gilman. Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and Newberry Library, 1993.



As the protagonist in *Mardi*, Melville's protagonist in *Clarel* is portrayed to seek the answer facing the loss of faith. Readers first see young Clarel, an American theological student, alone in his chamber on his first evening in Jerusalem. Readers last see him follow a procession through St. Stephen's Gate and along the Via Crucis. Between the two scenes are the long weeks, leading up to an unfulfilled Easter, during which Clarel carries out his symbolic search, making the journey with a pilgrim group. The whole poem consists of four parts, namely "Jerusalem", "The Wilderness", "Mar Saba" and "Bethlehem" with 150 cantos altogether. Part I serves as a general prologue. In part II, Clarel joins a band of pilgrims and journeys with them as far as the Dead Sea. Part III describes their stay in the great mountain monastery of Mar Saba while part IV depicts their visit to Bethlehem and return to Jerusalem. In his trip, Clarel meets a variety of figures such as Celio, a handsome youth with a humped back; Derwent, a priest of the Anglican church; Margoth, a Jewish geologist; Mortmain, a Swede who had served as a revolutionary leader in Paris; Rolfe, a roving American adventurer; Ungar, an ex-officer of the Southern Confederacy and so on. A larger part of the work is taken up with discussions among the characters and with descriptions of the land and monuments in Palestine. Melville creates a pilgrimage which allows people from different backgrounds to stay together for a while and readers are thus enabled to witness their argument on issues such as divine justice and human vulnerability, science and faith, and idealism and skepticism. In this way, *Clarel* as an epic presents a picture of the clashing thoughts of that era. Clarel comes to the Holy Land in the hope of clarifying his puzzlement. After hearing admirable talk on many subjects, he remains as much a doubter as he was the first day he came to Jerusalem. Finally, Clarel returns to Jerusalem only to find that Ruth has died from grief at the