

The Confidence-Man

BY HERMAN
MELVILLE

Introduction by
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THE
Confidence-Man

His Masquerade

B Y

HERMAN MELVILLE



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Introduction



In the summer of 1856, Herman Melville became an object of serious concern to his family. His tenth book, *The Confidence-Man*, was almost finished, but the effort had exhausted him physically and spiritually. In ensuing correspondence his brother-in-law, Lemuel Shaw, Jr., reported that Melville was "preparing another book for the press," and voiced the family consensus when he added that he had "no confidence in his productions." Lemuel Shaw, Sr., Melville's father-in-law, noting "how very ill, Herman has been" because "he overworks himself and brings on severe nervous affections," suggested that "a voyage or a journey" might "be highly beneficial to him and probably restore him." He advanced the money, and on October 11, 1856, Melville sailed from New York for Europe and the Holy Land.

His boat landed in Glasgow on October 26. On November 10 he called his old friend, Nathaniel Hawthorne, then the American consul in Liverpool. In his journal Hawthorne wrote that Melville looked "much as he used to do (a little paler, and perhaps sadder), in a rough outside coat, and with his characteristic gravity of manner." He invited Melville to accompany him to Southport, a sea-shore resort where he had taken a house. The visit was a memorable one for both men, though the record that Melville made in his travel diary is abrupt and laconic: "Took a long walk by the sea. Sands and grass. Wild and desolate. A strong wind. Good talk." Hawthorne's journal is more revealing: ". . . we took a pretty long walk together, and sat down in a hollow among the sand hills. . . . Melville, as he always does, began to reason of

Providence and futurity, and of everything that lies beyond human ken, and informed me that he had 'pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated.' . . . He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other." What Melville had done in a rare moment was to put aside his own masquerade, disclosing the ambiguities and complexities of his being which he had objectified in the novel so recently completed. For Melville, "annihilation" did not mean simply defeat or death, but the recognition of the limitations inherent in the human situation. As Hawthorne was aware, even more difficult and profound matters were involved—how to live in a world in which nothing is what it appears to be, in which the only thing knowable is that nothing can be known, and the only thing believable is that nothing can be believed. In this special sense "annihilation" is the theme of *The Confidence-Man* and the ultimate source of its structure and style.

The structure of *The Confidence-Man* is a symbolic counterpart of Melville's grim but basically compassionate agnosticism. With a cunning disregard for conventional form because it implied conventional values and attitudes, he designed a novel in which the unimportance of plot, movement, suspense and climax, and the lack of a sympathetic protagonist are positive qualities. Plot is replaced by a series of confrontations, at times so patterned that they suggest the performance of a ritual. But instead of moving toward a resolution or a climax, these recurring performances trail off into what at first seems an aimless direction. Upon closer scrutiny they appear to circle back upon themselves. The outcome of the confrontations is usually clear from the beginning, and suspense depends not on revelation but on process. Talk is substituted for action, and wit for emotion. Like a carrousel, the novel whirls in its circle while remaining in the same place, the tension between stasis and motion underscored through the flow of characters who slip in and out of their various guises, and the setting, a river steamer moving downstream on a voyage of more than a thousand miles.

The voyage begins at sunrise on April 1, All Fools' Day. As the

riverboat *Fidèle* departs St. Louis for New Orleans, "a man in cream-colors" comes aboard. He is the first of a number of grotesque figures who momentarily become the center of attention as they demand a response from their fellow passengers. With their uncanny behavior, their curious costumes, their slippery language, and their strange comings and goings, they are quite distinct from one another. They also have much in common. In fact, it becomes apparent that they are identical, a single actor playing a number of different roles, a supernatural being of some kind in a variety of incarnations. Through a protagonist who shifts his shape as readily as he shifts his ground, Melville expresses his commitment to a belief in uncertainty. His sardonic reaction to the necessity for such a belief is to identify this protagonist with Satan in the form of the Confidence Man.

The Confidence Man appears in eight successive incarnations:

1. (Chapters 1-2) His "advent" at dawn is in the role of "the man in cream-colors," a flaxen-haired "stranger" identified with Manco Capac, the Inca sun god. He arrives alone and without baggage, seemingly having traveled a great distance; writes his message of faith, hope, and charity on a slate which he holds aloft; falls asleep in "lamblike" innocence at the foot of a ladder; and departs unnoticed. He is pallid, weak, and ineffectual, and provokes little response from the passengers except when they observe him as he sleeps. Then their conflicting opinions regarding his origins and nature intensify the mystery of his significance, in general suggesting an unworldliness not entirely wholesome.

2. (Chapter 3) In his second embodiment he assumes the shape of a Negro beggar, Black Guinea. Grotesquely stunted, he shuffles about like a performing dog, snuffing piteously, catching pennies in his mouth, seeking charity and trust. When he is accused of fraudulently playing upon the sympathies of the public, he offers the names of "honest ge'mmen" aboard the riverboat who will vouch for him. None of them can be found, but they later appear as incarnations of the Confidence Man. He is last seen as he "forlornly stumped out of sight" toward an uncertain destination.

3. (Chapters 4-5) John Ringman, whom Black Guinea has

called "dat good man wid de weed," is the Confidence Man in his third form. He wears a weed or crape to signify that he is in mourning. His pathetic appeal for money is effective with Henry Roberts, a kindly, elderly merchant, but his effort to insinuate himself into the confidence of a college student is less successful. Before being left "to wander away," he tells the merchant and the college student about a quick profit to be made through stock speculation, setting them up as marks for a future Confidence Man.

4. (Chapters 6-8) The Confidence Man is next seen as an agent for "a Widow and Orphan Asylum recently founded among the Seminoles." He obtains donations from a young Episcopal clergyman, "a charitable lady," and a good-hearted "gentleman with gold sleeve-buttons" who is notable for his immaculate clothing and his spotless hands, and who listens attentively, though with reservations, to the Seminole agent's plans for a grandiose "World's Charity" operated on a businesslike basis.

5. (Chapters 9-15) John Truman, president and transfer agent of the Black Rapids Coal Company, is the fifth shape of the Confidence Man. A "brisk, ruddy-cheeked man . . . carrying under his arm a ledger-like volume," he sells stock to the receptive college student and offers him the opportunity to invest in a real estate development called New Jerusalem. He also sells stock to Roberts, the kindly merchant. His chief coup is bilking a senile miser whose greed overwhelms his reason.

6. (Chapters 16-17) The sixth appearance of the Confidence Man is as a jovial quack dressed in a "snuff-colored surtout." An herb doctor and bonesetter, he wanders about extolling the virtues of Nature, especially natural medical remedies, and hawking his cure-alls, "the Omni-Balsamic Reinvalidator" and "the Samaritan Pain Dissuader." Making capital of misery and wan hopes, he places his nostrums in the hands of an incurably "sick man," a crippled "soldier of fortune" who is himself something of a charlatan, and the senile miser; but not Pitch, a Missouri backwoodsman whose associations with Nature have given him cause to doubt natural remedies. As the riverboat approaches Cape Girardeau, he blandly wishes Pitch well and takes his leave.

7. (Chapter 22) A few minutes after the boat is again under way, Pitch is addressed by a fawning little man wearing a brass plate around his neck engraved with the letters "P.I.O." He is the Confidence Man in his seventh manifestation. The initials are those of the Philosophical Intelligence Office, an employment agency conducted on philosophical, scientific principles, of which he is the representative. The cantankerous Pitch, on his way to buy a labor-saving machine to replace the rascally boys he had previously employed, cannot resist his arguments, based upon scientific rationalism, for trusting human nature. Essentially hopeful beneath his crusty skepticism, Pitch is persuaded to try one more boy, a decision he regrets as the employment agent disappears in the noxious fog that swirls about the wharf at Cairo.

8. (Chapters 23-45) The brooding reveries of Pitch are interrupted by Frank Goodman, a self-proclaimed cosmopolitan, a promoter of universal brotherhood, and the incarnation of the Confidence Man in his final form. He wears a multihued costume that includes "Highland plaid, Emir's robe, and French blouse," smokes a German pipe, and sprinkles his conversation with foreign phrases. In a chapter with the deliberately misleading title, "A Philanthropist Undertakes to Convert a Misanthrope," Pitch identifies the Cosmopolitan for what he is—a man-hater posing as a man-lover—and sends him on his way. Thereafter the Cosmopolitan encounters Charles Noble, a Mississippi sharper whose attempt to dupe the Cosmopolitan ends in his own befuddlement; Mark Winsome, a mystical philosopher shielded by his remoteness from human considerations; Egbert, his practical, logical disciple; William Cream, a barber who in the pursuit of his calling has learned something of how far a man can be trusted; and, as midnight approaches, "a clean, comely, old man" reading his Bible, "untainted by the world, because ignorant of it." Tired and confused, the old man turns to the Cosmopolitan for assistance. The Confidence Man puts out the reading lamp and leads him off into the darkness.

The design of the novel is established by the Confidence Man, but its meaning is determined by the response of the secondary characters, foils, and dupes to his machinations. In the simpler

situations these characters are gulled as a result of their own shortcomings—their weaknesses, follies, selfishness, and knavery. The Episcopal clergyman, the charitable lady, and the old man represent the vulnerability of the innocent. The college student, the sick man, and the senile miser are the victims of self-interest. But things are usually more complex. The senile miser, for example, is not merely selfish. A knave as well as a fool, he pays for his box of restorative in clipped and sweated coins. The herb doctor sees the fraud but does not object. Charles Noble, the Mississippi operator, is even more obviously playing the confidence game. For shady purposes he seeks out the Cosmopolitan, tells him the story of the Indian-hater, and plies him with wine and pledges of friendship, the doubtful qualities of which the Cosmopolitan is aware. Thomas Fry, the crippled beggar in tattered regimentals, thrives by pretending to be a veteran of the Mexican War. His confession, which reveals him as a confidence man in his own right yet more sinned against than sinning, does not save him from being victimized. The Confidence Man knows his own and consumes them with particular relish. "That good dish, man, still delights me," the Cosmopolitan tells Pitch, though whether he prefers fools of vice to fools of virtue is difficult to determine.

The vicious and the virtuous are not his only victims. In a more subtle way, by forcing them to reveal their moral imbalance, the Confidence Man sets his mark upon the well-disposed and the high-principled. The man with gold sleeve-buttons is so "winsome" that the mere sight of him diverts the agent for the Seminole Asylum from lesser prey. He is mature, handsome, elegantly attired, and beneficent. He listens attentively to the Seminole agent and gives him three "virgin" banknotes to which he adds another "with a look half humor, half pity" at the conclusion of their conversation. His impeccable behavior and his immaculate clothing are possible, however, through his avoidance of situations in which he might be sullied. His gloves and his hands are spotless because a "negro servant's hands did most of his master's handling for him." The winsome man, like Pontius Pilate, "the Hebrew governor, knew how to keep his hands clean . . .," a distinction shared with another Melville

character, the Reverend Mr. Falsgrave in *Pierre*, "an image of white-browed and white-handed, and napkined immaculateness."

The mystical Mark Winsome, an Emersonian philosopher whose insights are as clear and transparent as ice, and as cold, is also aloof from commitment. He intuitively knows the nature of the Confidence Man and, like the winsome man of the clean hands, transcends the problem by dealing with it through a surrogate, his practical disciple Egbert. The applied transcendentalism of Egbert is adequate to the occasion. The doctrine of self-reliance protects him from the risk of making a loan to a friend, and the Cosmopolitan wryly gives him a shilling for fuel to "warm the frozen natures of you and your philosopher by."

Imbalance also characterizes the "gimlet-eyed, sour-faced" man with the wooden leg who is so suspicious of Black Guinea. He has learned that "looks are one thing, and facts another." A cynic and a railer, he tells an ugly story about a cuckold who refuses to face the evidence of his wife's duplicity. Though he can see where others are blind, his vision has blighted his spirit, and the militant Methodist preacher who attacks him for his want of charity is correct when he comments: "There he shambles off on his one lone leg, emblematic of his one-sided view of humanity." But the Methodist preacher reveals his own one-sidedness when he tries to teach the wooden-legged man charity by "shaking him till his timber-toe clattered on the deck like a nine-pin."

Rage of an even darker hue distinguishes the somber "invalid Titan in homespun," a swarthy, taciturn backwoodsman. Accompanied by a "little Cassandra" of a child, "perhaps Creole, or even Camanche," he boards the riverboat from a wilderness landing. He is suffering from an obscure hurt that seems as much spiritual as physical, but he ignores the herb doctor's playful overtures through the child, his sympathetic inquiries about imperfectly healed wounds and internal pains, and his offer of a "certain cure for any pain in the world," except to retort angrily that "some pains cannot be eased but by producing insensibility, and cannot be cured but by producing death." His fury increases to "hypochondriac mania" as he listens to the extravagant claims of the medicine man,

and becomes so overpowering that he strikes him a vicious blow.

The imbalance evidenced by the hot anger of the wilderness Titan reaches its greatest degree in the cold, obsessive dedication of the Indian-hater, Colonel John Moredock. Born on the frontier, Moredock learned the "histories of Indian lying, Indian theft, Indian double-dealing, Indian blood-thirstiness, Indian diabolism." When his family fell victim to the treachery of the Indian chief, Mocmohoc, a kind of redskinned confidence man, he becomes the scourge of the race, "a Leather-stocking Nemesis." His strength, woodcraft, and implacable hatred transform him from a human to something very close to that which he would destroy. The defense of the Indian is maintained by the Cosmopolitan, who cites the names of celebrated chieftains (including several best known as leaders of bloody massacres) and denounces Moredock as a misanthrope "focused on one race of men," while Noble senses Moredock's original idealism and humanity, now twisted by his obsession. The implication is that Moredock exchanges imbalance in one direction for imbalance in another.

As Melville indicates, the source of the account of the Indian-hater is James Hall's *Sketches of History, Life, and Manners, in the West* (1835). He follows Judge Hall closely, but he departs from his source in one important particular. Hall carefully explains, and to some extent justifies, the behavior of the Indian on the basis of his mistreatment by white pioneers. Melville, who elsewhere makes clear his sympathies for the Indian on these very grounds, takes pains to have his narrator portray him as a diabolical monster who, like the Confidence Man, is an arch dissembler.

With the exception of the wooden-legged man, who is a kind of universal malcontent, the pattern of moral imbalance which culminates in the Indian-hater has specific geographical identifications. The immaculate gentleman represents the South and the moral dilemma of slavery. Mark Winsome is that type of New England transcendentalism so rarified as to be above ordinary human concerns. Egbert is the laissez-faire commercialism of the North sanctioned by the doctrines of individualism and self-reliance. The "in-

valid Titan," the Indian-hater, and Pitch are men of the wilderness of the West.

For Melville, the American wilderness had romantic and even Turnerian undertones, but more important here, it was associated with the biblical wilderness as a place of trial and temptation. In the wilderness the children of Israel wandered, prophets saw visions, and Christ confronted Satan. The wilderness experience shapes the response of Moredock to the diabolical Indians, and the Titan and Pitch to the Confidence Man. Moredock and the Titan are blasted by the evil they encounter there, and thenceforth respond instinctively, on the level of animals. Pitch is toughened and his vision enhanced. He learns that the Devil is aboard and he must be alert, but his humanity and his essential trust have not been shattered. His wilderness experience arms him against the herb doctor's notions of natural goodness, but his faith in human reason and his sympathy for his fellow man cause him to drop his guard with the Philosophical Intelligence Officer. He recovers immediately, recognizing the Cosmopolitan as "Diogenes in disguise," a true cynic and misanthrope. For his part, the Cosmopolitan calls Pitch "an Ishmael." Ishmael was a character toward whom Melville felt deep affinities, and Ishmael-Pitch, the American Westerner—thin-skinned but tough, skeptical but trusting, a solitary but a lover of mankind—is Melville's answer to impending "annihilation." The Confidence Man traps his victims by forcing them to commitments and extremes in a context in which, because the only certainty is uncertainty, such positions are suicidal. China Aster, whose story is an inversion of Colonel Moredock's, destroys himself by being persuaded "into the free indulgence of confidence and an ardently bright view of life, to the exclusion of that counsel which comes by heeding the opposite view." Though he totters close to the brink of destruction, Pitch survives because he accepts the counsel of moderation.

The repeated confrontations of the Confidence Man and his foils give the novel its fundamental design, but Melville achieves further coherence through a number of other devices. For example, the

book divides into two parts of almost equal length. The first seven incarnations of the Confidence Man occur in the first part (Chapters 1-22); the eighth, and final, incarnation, the Confidence Man in the guise of the Cosmopolitan, dominates the second part (Chapters 24-45). The first part takes place in daylight, the second part at night. Pitch is the bridge between. In the short chapter at the precise center of the book (Chapter 23), Pitch, at twilight, after musing glumly on his having been taken in by the Philosophical Intelligence Officer, is gently accosted by the Cosmopolitan. The two parts are held together firmly by a number of framing devices and by compression of time and space: from daybreak until midnight on the "1st day of April, 18—" aboard a riverboat as it sails from St. Louis to some point beyond Cairo. The ship microcosm appears in Melville's novels as early as *Omoo* and is crucial to *White-Jacket* and *Moby-Dick*. The variety of the passengers, "an Anacharsis Cloots congress of all kinds of that multiform pilgrim species, man," suggests that they are to be taken as representative of the whole human race. That Melville has the man with the wooden leg call them "fools . . . in this ship of fools" is important to his theme, but it also serves as a subtle reminder that the *Fidèle* is in the tradition of Sebastian Brant's widely known medieval satire, *The Ship of Fools*.

Recurring episodes, such as the three in which the Confidence Man and a companion sit together over a bottle of wine, serve the double function of tightening the structure of the novel and elaborating its meaning. After John Truman and the kindly merchant, Henry Roberts, complete their stock transaction, they drink champagne. Touched to "his natural heart" by the wine, the kindly merchant blurts out: "Ah, wine is good, and confidence is good; but can wine or confidence percolate down through all the stony strata of hard considerations, and drop warmingly and ruddily into the cold cave of truth? Truth will *not* be comforted." Truman guilefully quotes the proverb "*In vino veritas*" and then argues that the truth which Roberts has seen as a result of his tippling is not true at all. The drinking bout of Charles Noble and the Cosmopolitan is an even more detailed inversion. (We are warned that it will be:

they drink immediately following the story of Moredock and the devilish Indians from a bottle served up in "a little bark basket, braided with porcupine quills, gayly tinted in the Indian fashion.") Ordinarily a source of geniality and good-fellowship, wine creates distrust when Noble encourages the Cosmopolitan to excess and the Cosmopolitan impugns its quality by his extravagant defense of winemakers and barkeeps and his sly talk of poisoners. When Noble retires, the Cosmopolitan invites Mark Winsome to help him finish the bottle, but Winsome prefers to keep wine "in the lasting condition of an abstraction" and takes a goblet of ice water instead. Pitch is also abstemious, but for a better reason. His water, though cold, is not iced. He replies to the Cosmopolitan's anecdote on the virtues of wine: "If I take your parable right . . . the meaning is, that one cannot enjoy life with gusto unless he renounce the too-sober view of life. But since the too-sober view is, doubtless, nearer truth than the too-drunken; I, who rate truth, though cold water, above untruth, though Tokay, will stick to my earthen jug." That Melville himself cherished wine, and in his later years worked on a series of sketches about an imaginary "Burgundy Club" whose winebibbing members he idealized, makes the function of wine in this novel even more poignant.

The recurrence of animal imagery contributes to the structural unity of the novel in addition to its primary purpose of characterization. The deaf mute is "lamblike" in his innocence and weakness. Black Guinea and the Philosophical Intelligence Officer are canine as they crouch, whine, and faun, and the etymology of the word is used to hint at their underlying cynicism. Pitch calls the herb doctor a fox and identifies the Cosmopolitan with a performing ape and "monkery." The peg-legged man is a porcupine and, according to the militant Methodist preacher, a "foiled wolf." The senile miser has a "ferret eye," a hand that is "a sort of wasted penguin-flipper," and a "buzzard nose." The vicious Goneril is a toad, and the sham Mexican War veteran a hyena. The Indian-hater sleeps on a pile of wolf skins and is compared to Hairy Orson, the wild man of medieval romance who was nurtured by a bear, and to a Shetland seal beneath whose "bristles lurks the fur." The valuable fur appar-

ently represents such Emersonian traits as "self-reliance," "untutored sagacity," and "dwelling exclusively among the world of God," which Melville hastens to add are common to the lowly opossum. Pitch, "eccentrically clothed in the skins of wild beasts," is the center of numerous bearish allusions and much ursine word-play, but for all his growling he is a rather tame "Bruin." His efforts to simulate a wildcat are "more or less dubious," and he is called, not unpleasantly, "Coonskins" and referred to as an "entertaining old 'coon." Pitch's garb of animal skins and his bearish behavior are a superficial masquerade.

Snake imagery associates the Confidence Man with Satan, especially in his role of the dissembler and tempter of Eden, and only the Titan from the wilderness, Pitch, and Mark Winsome are capable of seeing the serpent behind his disguise. The man with the weed, the herb doctor, the Philosophical Intelligence Officer, and the Cosmopolitan are all depicted in ophidian terms and sometimes in language close to the Bible and *Paradise Lost*, and they make use of their serpentine powers to "charm" and "fascinate" their prey (cf. Chapter 43, "Very Charming").

Several other means of enriching the texture of *The Confidence-Man* while at the same time enhancing its structure should be noted. Black Guinea's roll call of "honest ge'mmen" is justified by the immediate situation and fixes the episodic structure of the novel, but as the "honest ge'mmen" come forward one by one they also find appropriate reasons to mention those who have preceded them or will follow, thus linking the loose episodes more closely together. For example, Black Guinea wanders off ostensibly in search of the man with the weed; the agent for the Seminole Asylum claims to have helped him ashore and the herb doctor to having treated him. Shakespearian allusions operate in a similar way. They are drawn mainly from the darker plays like *Timon of Athens* and *Hamlet*, or those like *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, and *As You Like It*, which are much concerned with transformations and disguises, and stress rogues like Autolycus, railers like Thersites, and hypocrites like Malvolio. Pertinent to particular passages in the novel and cumulatively to its total meaning, they

also serve a structural purpose as they take their place in the configuration of references to the theater, costumes, dramatic performances, actors, role-playing, exchange of roles, and transformations, whether natural, such as the Philosophical Intelligence Officer's analogy of bad boys to caterpillars which metamorphose into butterflies, or artificial, such as the barber with his "hair dyes, cosmetics, false moustaches, wigs and toupees," or magical, such as the Cosmopolitan and his sorcery with the gold coins.

Among its picaresque elements, *The Confidence-Man* has a number of digressions tending, formally at least, to give the novel a slack, disjointed quality. They are of three kinds: authorial intrusions into the flow of the narrative (Chapters 14, 33, and 44); extravagant descriptive passages (e.g., Chapter 2, p. 7, and Chapter 16, p. 80); and tales (Chapters 25-27, 34, and 40), biographical accounts of characters in the novel (Chapters 12 and 19), and short anecdotes (e.g., Chapter 6, p. 29, Chapter 13, p. 66, and Chapter 24, p. 142). Unlike the picaresque novel in which they may occur for their own sake, the digressions in *The Confidence-Man* are closely integrated into the total structure. This is obvious enough in the instance of the various stories and anecdotes but less so with the other two categories. Somewhat like Fielding's asides in *Tom Jones* (a comparison of the chapter titles of the two novels is suggestive), Melville discourses on his theories of fiction, in themselves of interest, but not gratuitously, for he provides applications as well as expositions, and the theories in their contradictions and reversals are consistent with philosophical assumptions and literary techniques which he employs in the novel. Nor are the passages of rhapsodic description, though departing from the prevailing tone, disruptive. Their effect is to heighten the satire in which they are embedded.

Important elements in the last chapters of *The Confidence-Man* are foreshadowed in the first chapter. The barber and his "No Trust" sign reappear, and his description of the Cosmopolitan as "quite an original," a creature resembling East Indian snake charmers, brings to mind the placard warning against "a mysterious imposter . . . from the East; quite an original genius." Sunrise has

declined into darkness, and the sun is now a "solar lamp" or argand light. On its ground glass shade are a figure of a man with a halo, emblematic of Christ and the New Testament, and the altar of the Old Testament, the horns of which signified sanctuary. Reading his Bible by the light of the solar lamp is the white-haired old man with "a countenance like . . . good Simeon." It was the aged Simeon who awaited the coming of the Messiah and whose blessing, the *Nunc Dimittis*, last of the canonical hours, hails Christ as "A light to the Gentiles." Identification of the old man with Simeon recalls the "advent" of the whitish deaf mute associated with the Inca sun deity. The old man's simple piety and patient expectancy is rewarded by the coming of the Cosmopolitan, an incarnation of Lucifer, who seems "to dispense a sort of morning through the night." The appeal for faith quoted from Corinthians in the first chapter is succeeded by skeptical verses from Ecclesiastes. Bewildered but still credulous, the old man asks for help in finding his stateroom. After making him the object of a coarse April Fool joke involving a life preserver, the Cosmopolitan extinguishes the solar lamp and leads the old man away.

More often than not, Melville ended his novels without concluding them. Taken in chronological order, *Typee* stops only to begin again in *Omoo*, the final phrase of which is "before us was the wide Pacific," and the last sentence of *Mardi*, which starts out where *Omoo* leaves off, is "And thus, pursuers and pursued fled on, over an endless sea." The subtitle of *Redburn* is *His First Voyage*, implying a certain incompleteness, and *White-Jacket* ends with the ship homeward bound but "still with the land out of sight—still with the brooding darkness on the face of the deep" because, in the words of the narrator, "I love an indefinite, infinite background—a vast, heaving, rolling, mysterious rear!" The last novel, *The Confidence-Man*, is more than mysteriously inconclusive and open-ended. The "something further" which "may follow of this Masquerade" is a circling back to the beginning, not in the way of the old natural cycles but like the conception of the universe of steady-