

The Metamorphosis of Nature in Melville

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<https://doi.org/10.15017/1355916>

出版情報：英語英文学論叢. 40, pp.35-44, 1990-02. 九州大学英語英文学研究会
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Melville's depiction of nature is developed through a metamorphosis from brightness into darkness. How this metamorphosis takes place will be traced and analyzed in this paper. The works dealt with are *Typee*, *Moby-Dick*, *Pierre* and "The Encantadas."

In *Pierre*, primitive nature is represented as a kind of Edenic paradise though at times there lurks a vein of cannibalism. As the fear of cannibalism increases, Melville seems to have had a suspicion that apparent paradise is really nothing more than an illusion produced by something evil. Hence the White Whale symbolizing nature in *Moby-Dick* becomes a phantasmagoric incarnation of both divinity and infernality. In *Pierre*, idyllic nature discloses its real aspect of desolateness just as Sodom's apple does when touched. The image of nature in "The Encantadas" looks "much as the world at large might, after a penal conflagration."

In *Pierre* Melville develops a unique and interesting viewpoint of nature: Nature is "the mere supplier of that cunning alphabet, whereby selecting and combining as he pleases, each man reads his own peculiar lesson according to his peculiar mind and mood." Taking such a point of view into account, it is apparent that a closer look at the metamorphosis of nature in Melville's world could provide the reader with some insights into the development of his "mind and mood."