

Nature Voices in Herman Melville's *Typee*: The Cocoa-Nut Trees

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Abstract—The purpose of this study is to examine the representation of cocoa-nut trees in Herman Melville's *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846). With the rise of adverse effects of environmental crisis and climate change, calls for action on environment due to its status quo have attracted scholarly attention including the study of literature in lights of environmental humanities. Furthermore, writers have used nature with its diverse elements to contribute into the thematic and narrative structure of their writing. In specific, this study attempts through a close reading of *Typee* to analyze the cocoa-nut imagery from an ecocritical perspective. It also argues that the narrator's perception of the cocoa-nut tree has changed over time as a result of his interaction as a white American sailor with the islanders themselves. In other words, the cocoa-nut trees with their multifaceted symbolic representations provide a commentary on the sociopolitical and historical context of the text and reveal the narrator's endeavors to understand his identity as a 19th century white sailor within non-white and non-Western context. In short, Melville's *Typee* centralizes the function of cocoa-nut trees in terms of their textual and contextual significance.

Index Terms—Melville, 19th century America, ecocriticism, Cocoa-nut Trees

I. INTRODUCTION

In their quest to form national American literature that is cut off from Europe, the American writers during the 19th century were engaged in continuous dialogues with their contexts and with each other to write the Great American Novel. In his book *The Dream of the Great American Novel* (2014), Lawrence Buell (1939-) remarks that the “monumentally nineteenth century concept” of the Great American Novel (GNA) “was born a century and a half ago, in the wake of the Civil War” (Buell, 2014, pp. 1-2). Earlier in his renowned essay “The Great American Novel” that according to *Britannica* was published in *The Nation* chronicles in 1869, the American writer John William DeForest (1826-1906) has “called for a full-bodied realism in American fiction but said it was hard to achieve because American society was changing too rapidly to be comprehended as a whole” (*Britannica*). DeForest's notion of writing the Great American novel seems to be like a dream lost on the grounds that the American writers during the 19th century, whether consciously or unconsciously, have contributed to the formation of the American novel with their diverse approaches and styles which makes the quest for one great novel of America a more complex quest. In her article “Why Are We Obsessed With The Great American Novel?” featured in *The New York Times* in 2015, the American writer Cheryl Strayed (1968 -) refers to DeForest's essay and clarifies that “De Forest was arguing in hopes of not one Great American Novel, but rather the development of a literary canon that accurately portrayed our complex national character” (Strayed, 2015). Hence and over time, many American writers have attempted, either intentionally or unintentionally, to produce great American novels that archive the collective quest to create national American literature. The American novelist, poet and short story writer Herman Melville (1819-1891) was one of the American writers whose expansive experiences in the seas have provided him with first-hand knowledge and have enriched his literary content. In specific, Melville's renowned novel *Moby Dick* (1851) stands out as a crowning glory. Having prefaced this, this study aims at examining the representation of cocoa-nut trees in Herman Melville's *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846) in lights of ecocriticism.

The Trinidadian cultural historian and theorist C.L.R. James, who was part of Pan African movement, describes Melville in his book *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In*, originally published in 1953, as “The miracle of Herman Melville is this: that a hundred years ago in two novels, *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre*, and two or three stories, he painted a picture of the world in which we live, which is to this day remains unsurpassed” (James, 1953, p. 3). According to James, Melville's value lies not only in the context of his times (i.e. 19th century America), but also in Melville's position within the American canon and outside it. In other words, Melville's narrative of issues of his time has also been proven valid in the context of 20th century and ahead. On another occasion in the same book (i.e. *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In*), James points out how Melville has “worked out an entirely new conception of society” where different concepts such as “[n]ature, technology, the community of men, science and knowledge, literature and ideas are fused into a new humanism, opening a vast expansion of human capacity and human achievement” (James, 1953, p. 89). Having prefaced that, Melville in his writing project has created a dialogue between those aforementioned concepts to

provide the readers of his vision of the world where literature and other fields of human knowledge were in action not only within his time, but also in the world to come.

In addition to James's remark about Melville's contribution of painting worlds not only within his literary texts, but also of using those worlds as a point of departure to create other worlds across-texts, Geoffrey Sanborn (1965 -) reveals in his insightful book *The Value of Herman Melville* (2018) how Melville has "far more than most authors, opened himself up to the reader's successive uses of him" (Sanborn, 2018, p. 53). By underlining the importance of Melville in reference to his readership, Sanborn reviews and revisits Melville's works, specifically *Moby Dick*, in lights of recent times' contexts where his literary texts seem thematically significant. One example is Melville's recognition of environmental issues in his fiction where the environment with its diverse elements is actively engaged in the events to integrate into the thematic structure of his fiction. Besides, Sanborn's book suggests new approaches through which the readers of today can read Melville's fiction to make it relatively meaningful in the course of recent times.

One of the new approaches that can be used to revisit Melville's fiction is ecocriticism and hence this study attempts to offer an eco-critical reading of Herman Melville's debut novel *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846) in a way that contributes to bridging the gap between Literary Studies and Environmental Humanities. Having prefaced that, the purpose of this study is to examine the representation of cocoa-nut trees and its contribution into the thematic and narrative structure of the text. In specific, this study attempts through a close reading of *Typee* to analyze the cocoa-nut imagery from an ecocritical perspective. As the novel outlines the narrator's adventure in the harbor of Nukuhava among the Typees, nature with its different elements form a pivotal component of this narrative. In specific, the cocoa-nut trees reveal the narrator's endeavors to understand his identity as a 19th century white sailor within non-white and non-Western context. It also argues that the narrator's perception of the cocoa-nut tree has changed over time as a result of his interaction as a white American sailor with the islanders themselves. Although the novel is narrated by a white sailor, Tommo, the title indicates the significant position of the Typees in the text and how the narrator's perception of the land and its people, i.e. the Typees, reflects the inherent conflict between white and non-white. In other words, Melville's *Typee* centralizes the function of cocoa-nut trees in terms of their textual and contextual significance. Based on Melville's representation, the study concludes that the cocoa-nut trees contribute into the thematic and narrative structure of the novel in reference to their textual and contextual significance. Further, this study suggests rethinking world politics in lights of ecocriticism.

II. ON ENVIRONMENT AND WHITENESS

With the rise of adverse effects of environmental crisis and climate change, calls for action on environment due to its status quo have attracted scholarly attention. Ecocriticism as a literary approach that emerged officially during the mid-twentieth century and it was specifically addressed in one of the meetings by the Western Literature Association (WLA) in Salt Lake City in 1994 where this meeting was entitled as "Defining Ecocritical Theory and Practice", and in this meeting, sixteen position papers were introduced by scholars in an attempt to answer the question "What is Ecocriticism?" ("Definitions of Ecocriticism Archive – ASLE"). In *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996), Cheryll Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996, p. xviii) where it is also referred to as "earth-centered approach" (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996, p. xviii). This linkage between literature and the physical environment gives ecocriticism an interdisciplinary nature whereby ecologists, writers, literary critics are engaged in a dialogue to show how, according to *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, "human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it" (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996, p. xix). In other words, the physical dimension of nature contributes to the thematic and narrative structure of literary texts. For example, the setting of Melville's selected novel is central in connecting the plot threads and contributes to understanding Melville's position in the narrative and within the American context.

Accordingly, literature, like any other field of knowledge now, has engaged in a dialogue with the ecological status quo and consequently new approaches have emerged to interpret the literary texts by scrutinizing how ecological issues are represented. At one point, this newly introduced approach opens the literary text to a wide variety of meanings and interpretations in reference to environmental frameworks. Furthermore, the literary text can have a major role in spreading awareness of some environmental and ecological issues and can promote green environment and advocate contemporary concepts such as 'Go Green' which is defined in John McCloy's "Advantages of Going Green: Help The Environment" (2018) as "learning and practicing an environmentally-mindful lifestyle that contributes towards protecting the environment and preservation and conservation of the natural resources, habitats, and biodiversity" (McCloy, 2018). Hence, literary texts have to take part in the combat against ecological crises such as climate change and against the human activity that causes the most striking change in the natural environment. During mid-20th century and with the introduction of ecocriticism as a term coined in William Rueckert's essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" (1978), many scholars have underlined the connection between nature and literary texts to provide further research and studies of literature from the environmental perspective.

According to Timothy Clark in *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (2011), "Environmental issues pose new questions to inherited modes of thought and argument" and hence ecocriticism provides a tool for intellectuals to "conceptualise and engage the multiple factors behind the accelerating degradation of

the planet” (Clark, 2011, p. xiii). This claim finds confirmation within the context of environmental humanities where scholars have identified different waves of ecocriticism in response to the core features of each wave, addressing the field with its multifaceted nature as ecocriticism(s) rather than one unified set of thought.

The first wave of ecocriticism traces its roots back, according to Pippa Marland in her “Ecocriticism” (2013), in the USA to the 19th century where “ecocriticism was predominantly associated with the championing of non-fiction nature writing” and the presence of American Transcendentalism where nature was associated with wilderness, according to Marland, “with its emphasis on the educative value of wild nature and on intense individual connection with the landscape” (Marland, 2013, p. 849). Unlike the American ecological approach, the British ecology concerned itself mainly with poetry during the British Romanticism (1798-1832). Hence, the introduction of nature writing forms a significant moment in the context of Herman Melville’s time, i.e. the American Transcendentalism. Yet and unlike the first wave, in reference to Oxford Bibliographies (2019), which “tended to take a dehistoricized approach to ‘nature,’ often overlooking more political and theoretical dimensions and tending toward a celebratory approach of wilderness and nature writing,” the second wave takes a different direction by “offering new ways of approaching literary analysis by, for example, theorizing and deconstructing human-centered scholarship in ecostudies; imperialism and ecological degradation; agency for animals and plants; gender and race as ecological concepts; and problems of scale” (Oxford Bibliographies, 2019). On another occasion in “Ecocriticism” (2013), Marland points out that the second wave of ecocriticism is a more “reflexive approach that provided the scope to address the complex intertwining of nature” and reflects “social and sexual politics” (Marland, 2013, p. 851). Thus, the second wave of ecocriticism gives much value to the physical dimension of nature and addresses subtler issues such as studying the environment in the postcolonial literary works, forming the so-called ecocritical postcolonial approach.

The evolution of ecocriticism within and across different fields of knowledge makes its rich domain through which critics and scholars can introduce new and up-to-date research in an attempt to forge the relationship between postcolonialism and ecology. This association between the postcolonialism and ecocriticism finds its roots earlier. In their *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literature of the Environment* (2011), to Elizabeth Deloughrey and George B. Handley refers to Franz Fanon and Edward Said within the context of postcolonial ecocriticism where “Franz Fanon identified the land as a primary site of postcolonial recuperation, sustainability, and dignity” in reference to the Algerian status quo during the independence and “A generation later, the Palestinian scholar Edward Said argued that the imagination was vital to liberating land from the restrictions of colonialism” (3). For this very end, the land and its people are both connected in their struggle against the colonial power.

As issues of the environment gain more recognition in different fields of knowledge, more approaches evolve within ecocriticism to contribute to the formation of later waves. As ecocriticism has undergone through many changes and additions, the third wave introduced by Joni Adamson and Scott Slovic in a special issue of *Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States (MELUS)* “recognizes ethnic and national particularities and yet transcends ethnic and national boundaries” and “explores all facets of human experience from an environmental viewpoint” (Adamson & Slovic, 2009, pp. 6-7).

Like the third wave, according to Oxford Bibliographies (2019), which goes “beyond Anglo-American prominence” and “advocates for a global understanding of ecocritical practice through issues like global warming; it combines elements from the first and second waves” (Oxford Bibliographies, 2019), the fourth wave, according to Marland in “Ecocriticism” (2013), “should be regarded as co-existent with rather than superseding the third (or indeed the other strands of ecocriticism) and has only very recently been identified. It is the emergent field of material ecocriticism” (Marland, 2013, p. 855). Consequently, scholars who have grown interest in ecocriticism and environmental humanities are still engaged in this dialogue aiming at as Sandip Kumar Mishra points out in her article “Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature,” (2016) “developing its nature and scope” (Mishra, 2016, p. 168) and this anticipates more waves to evolve within the field. By tracing Melville’s literary works chronologically and in lights of the diverse waves of ecocriticism, each work showcases certain features of a specific wave, yet all his work cumulatively reflects the core values of ecocriticism. On one hand, Melville’s novels do not only portray the environment or environments of their contextual backgrounds, but also outline the ways in which humans are affected by their environment and the ways they interact with their environment and affect it. Hence, both the spatial dimensions and the ecological ones are studied on an equal footing to address the injustices and inequalities between different regions based on power dynamics.

III. MELVILLE’S TYPEE

Melville’s debut novel *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846) tells the story of a white narrator who is later referred to as Tommo. Tommo decides to leave the whaling ship *Dolly* with his shipmate Toby and his reasons, as listed in the early chapters of *Typee*, “for resolving to take this step were numerous and weighty” (Melville, 1846, p. 15). As a result of leaving the ship, Tommo and Toby have eventually ended up in the harbor of Nukuhava which is a “volcanic island of the northwestern Marquesas Islands, French Polynesia, in the central South Pacific Ocean” (Britannica, 2018). After embarking on this adventure in the South seas, Tommo and Toby get exposed to the natives of the valley who are identified in the narrative as the Typee people. Similar to Melville’s personal encounter with the natives of the Polynesian Islands during his time as a sailor, the narrator Tommo also encounters an exotic culture in a remote island

where the Typees and other native islanders are described as “lovers of flesh” or cannibals. The years that Melville spent as a sailor when, according to *Critical Companion to Herman Melville: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work* (2007), Melville first “signed on with the New Bedford whaler ACUSHNET, and on January 3, 1841, he shipped for the Pacific” (Rollyson et al., 2007, p. 4) have provided him with plentiful experience from which he has drawn his explored and well-received narrative. In reference to Melville’s biography in *Critical Companion to Herman Melville: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work* (2007), records show that he “lived among the Taipi for four weeks before finding his way back to Nukuheva, where on August 9 he went aboard an Australian whaler named the LUCY-ANN” (Rollyson et al., 2007, p. 5) which represents an equivalent of the whaling ship of Julia in Melville’s second novel *Omoo*.

In his recurrent attempts to resist the hegemonic white and Western perception of others as primitive and less civilized, if not seen as uncivilized at all, in comparison with the white Western man, Tommo goes through many incidents through which he has achieved a momentary interaction with the Typees and their land. Yet, Tommo’s connectivity with the Typee people is cut short due to his fear of others on the grounds that Tommo is still preoccupied with his white supremacist background. But what alters his attempts to integrate into the Typee community is his confrontation with the tattoos. In his article “Made in the Marquesas”: Typee, Tattooing and Melville’s Critique of the Literary Marketplace” (1992), John Evelev states that the “depiction of tattooing in *Typee* serves as a literal form of documentation (as factual texture, proof that Melville was in the Marquesas), but it is also symbolic, symbolic of a set of meanings” and one of which is “reflecting on the complicated attitudes of the ‘civilized’ to the ‘primitive,’” (Evelev, 1992, p. 20). Being preoccupied by his background as a white American man, Tommo struggles through his time in the island, yet with time and by observing the lifestyle of the islanders from the Typees, he starts recognizing them beyond the limitations derived from his socio-political context. Consequently, and through his experience in the island and his interaction with the Typees, Tommo does not only explore the islandspace with its multifaceted natural elements including rivers and trees, but also he goes beyond the spatial reality to explore his inner struggle and identity in relation to the white American and European supremacy. Being in the space of the other, i.e. the Typees, Tommo was able consciously and unconsciously to escape temporarily his stereotypes and moreover, he was able to see the Typees in specific occasions as more civilized than the white American man.

For example, when Tommo was observing the Typees while taking baths in the river, he has noticed how the islanders were physically fit and superior in terms of wellbeing in comparison to the white man. In his narrative, Tommo was astonished of their “beauty of form” where, according to the narrator’s description in Melville’s *Typee*, “[n]ot a single instance of natural deformity was observable” except of the “scars of wounds they had received in battle; and sometimes, though very seldom, the loss of a finger, an eye, or an arm, attributable to the same cause” (Melville, 1846, p. 160). Tommo’s remarks of the Typees’ physical wellbeing inform his perception of the other as inferior. For Tommo, the islanders’ perfect structure makes them capable of being “taken for a sculptor’s model”, yet he is still preoccupied by his white background that leads him to feel that “their physical excellence did not merely consist in an exemption from these evils” (Melville, 1846, p. 160). This juxtaposition between the Typees on one hand and the white man on the other hand, considering Tommo’s perspective as a product of the white community, shows the conflict between the so-called civilized man and the so-called primitive man. This juxtaposition starts with Tommo’s description of nature in its rivers, trees and other elements that, according to the white supremacist representation, is associated with primitiveness. In his “Islandscapes and Savages: Ecocriticism and Herman Melville’s *Typee*” (2011), Amber L. Drown states that “the juxtaposition of civilization and primitive life throughout the plot. It discusses the dichotomy established by Melville in plot and setting and uses concrete detail to show how such conflict informs not only the narrative at large but the discourse therein as well” (Drown, 2011, p. 4). In other words, Tommo’s description of the Typees and their lifestyle is not informed through his observation of them in their land, but apparently shaped by the hegemonic white supremacy that sees itself as superior to others either in its white dominant context or beyond.

Though Tommo has witnessed the life of the Typees during his stay and he has noticed how they surpass the white man in terms of many aspects including the physical wellbeing and their cultivation of the environment, he has kept his suspense of cannibalism. At the end of his adventure, Tommo is offered to be tattooed by the Typees, which reveals how they have accepted him as part of their community. According to John Evelev in his article “Made in the Marquesas”: Typee, Tattooing and Melville’s Critique of the Literary Marketplace” (1992), “[t]attooing (in both its positively aesthetic and terrifyingly violent forms) is a representation of representation” (Evelev, 1992, p. 20), where “[r]epresentation operates as a threatening fixing of identity, where the represented ‘object’ (‘What an object he would have made of me!’) is victimized by the commodification of and trade in representation” (Evelev, 1992, p. 20). In other words, the Typees are reduced into objects that are packed with different fixed unchanging description, one of which is the white man’s perception of other races as primitive. Yet, Tommo has decided to escape the tattooing and the island as well. Tommo’s fear of tattooing pinpoints his fear of assimilation into the Typees’ culture which makes him, metaphorically, equal to them. This rooted fear of breaking the superior-inferior relationship between the white and non-white showcases the inherent conflict between the white Western man and the non-white non-Western other. In reference to Evelev’s argument in his article “Made in the Marquesas”: Typee, Tattooing and Melville’s Critique of the Literary Marketplace” (1992), “Tommo’s alternating attraction toward and rejection of Typee culture and the objectifying exchange of tattooing is a textualization of Melville’s critical consciousness” (Evelev, 1992, p. 20). On one

hand, Melville's narrative does not only reflect his personal experience with the Typees, but also Melville's contextual background, i.e. 19th century America.

As the above survey shows, studies on the selected text have resorted to different critical and theoretical approaches from diverse perspectives. Yet, studies on the portrayal of environment in general and trees in specific do not appear to be fully explored by researchers. Thus, this study builds on the previous studies to examine the representation of trees in Melville's *Typee* in reference to its textual and contextual significance.

IV. THE TREE AS A METAPHOR IN TYPEE

Trees in literature have structured different meanings, i.e. denotations and connotations in different literary works, like the works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Walt Whitman, William Butler Yeats, Robert Frost, Seamus Heaney and Betty Smith, to name just a few, where Trees have functioned as recurrent motifs. Having prefaced that, one may argue that trees can be a central character in narratives that revolve around themes of identity and otherness. As Victoria Bladen succinctly explores in her book *The Tree of Life and Arboreal Aesthetics in Early Modern Literature* (2022), the motif of the tree of life, which is defined as "an ancient symbol with pre-Christian histories in the Middle Eastern cultures that produced the Old Testament and in related classical ideas of renewal and rebirth" (Bladen, 2022, p. 1) has been revisited by modern writers in order to address various themes. Further, she remarks that "writers drew on the motif and its rich language of trees to articulate spiritual and political states and to create hybrid terrains in their work that intersected material spaces with landscapes of the mind. It maps the deep histories and iconographical traditions associated with the tree of life" (Bladen, 1). In other words, modern writers have referred to the tree of life as a point of departure to embrace trees in their texts where trees function as active agents and contribute to the thematic and narrative structure of literary texts. On another occasion, trees have functioned as historical records of specific times where the local people have used them to document their traditions and tell their stories by carving on the trees' trunks which is known as Arborglyphs or tree writing or carving. In his remark on Arborglyphs, Joxe Mallea offers in his article, "Carving Out History" (2001) a clarification why this action was possible for some areas as "the happy coincidence of three components—leisure time, loneliness, and trees—made the arborglyphic phenomenon possible" (Mallea, 2001, p. 45). An example of the importance of tree writing in tracing the history of the place and its people, Nancy Hadlock and Richard Potashin argue in their article "Horse Meadows and Bohler Canyon Arborglyphs: History Recorded on the Trees" (2020) that the shepherders have recorded their existence in the land of Eastern Sierra in California during the 1900s by carving on the trees. In other words, Nancy Hadlock and Richard Potashin's argument suggests that trees can contribute into the process of transforming the history of the place and its people through the presence of the trees themselves as a major component in the ecological system of the place. Further, through the scripts and the drawing on those trees, the local people have documented their stories and histories by carving on the trunks to form what could be seen as historic tree graffiti. So, each tree with its multifaceted meanings can provide another reading of the literary text by exploring the interconnection between trees and their literary representations within and across texts.

In their article "The Stories Trees Tell: Jad El Hage's *The Myrtle Tree* and Sinan Antoon's *The Corpse Washer*" (2021), Sadouni and Abu Amrieh point out the importance of trees as storytellers since they are "[h]aving the capacity to live for ages, trees represent a faithful kind of witnessing. Like old storytellers, they have a lot to say. Each tree, each species, is an author in the book of nature. A broken branch can narrate a tale of human invasion. A fallen leaf can recall memories of old inhabitants" (Sadouni & Abu Amrieh, 2021, p. 671). Furthermore, in their article "Trees as Safe Havens in Faqir's *Willow Trees Don't Weep* and Matar's *In the Country of Men*" (2022), - Sadouni and Abu Amrieh underline the connection between the portrayal of trees and "the exilic experiences of characters, highlighting the concept of exile and its nature which could be psychological/territorial, internal/external or imagined/real" (Sadouni & Abu Amrieh, 2022, p. 3). The quote reflects the significance of trees in reference to the characters where trees, in short, stand out as an active entity that is capable of telling the untold story of the place and its people. For instance, Zuhair and Awad (2020) in "Trees, Rootedness and Diaspora in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*" discuss how many writers resort to use tree images in order to engage the reader where "one will be aware of the socio-political and historical circumstances and conditions" (Zuhair & Awad, 2020, p. 12). To sum up, trees, in many literary works, function differently to contribute into the textual and contextual dimensions of the work.

V. COCOA-NUT TREES AND THE TYPEES

The Typees have used natural resources in every aspect of their lives. During his stay in the island, Tommo has observed the nature of the island in its rivers, trees, animals and other elements. In his remark about the rich nature of the Marquesas, Tommo in the early chapters of Melville's *Typee* describes that island before his arrival based on his shipmates' talk in the ship *Dolly* as "Lovely houris- cannibal banquets- groves of cocoa-nutscoral reefs tattooed chiefs- and bamboo temples; sunny valleys planted with bread-fruit trees- carved canoes dancing on the flashing blue waters- savage woodlands guarded by horrible idols- heathenish rites and human sacrifices" (Melville, 1846, p. 7).

Tommo does not dissociate the land from its people, referring to the 'groves' as "cannibal banquets" and the woodlands as "savage". Hence, this association between the landscape and its inhabitant forms a point of departure

through which the Typees are looked at through their natural surroundings. For Tommo, the land with its people is subject to his stereotypes where he sees it through his white lens. One example is the way he perceives the cocoa-nut trees throughout the novel which reflects the way he perceives his identity and contextualizes his experience as a white Western man in a non-white and non-Western land.

When Tommo's ship was approaching the harbor, he has noticed the scattered cocoa-nut floating around where he has described their movement as "mysterious" and later he has noticed one of those fruits and "thought it bore a remarkable resemblance to the brown shaven skull of one of the savages" (Melville, 1846, p. 13). Tommo's thought of the Typees as savages has extended to include the way he sees their lands and its products. For him, the cocoa-nut stands to represent the Typees themselves and thus he has underlined a resemblance between the cocoa-nut in terms of its color and, as mentioned in the quote above, the color of the savages. In another remark in the first chapters of *Typee*, Tommo describes the houses of the Typees that are "constructed of the yellow bamboo, and "scattered irregularly along these valleys beneath the shady branches of the cocoa-nut trees" from *Dolly* as "a vast natural amphitheatre in decay, and overgrown with vines, the deep glens that furrowed its sides appearing like enormous fissures caused by the ravages of time" (Melville, 1846, p. 18). In other words, Tommo's views of the island as out of place or as an exotic place that can be seen as an amphitheater, yet "in decay". This comment by Tommo reveals how the white man driven by his background and informed by the stereotypes about others views others as they belong to different place, or what is worse as they are out of place. Tommo's views on the cocoa-nut trees and the place showcase his deeper thoughts of the islanders themselves. Yet, the perception of the cocoa-nut as a fruit and a tree though changes along the novel based on Tommo's observations where his stereotypical thoughts of the natives are altered by his first-hand experience in the island and his direct interaction with its people. Thus, by tracing the different functions of the cocoa-nut for the natives, Tommo has embarked into a journey of self-discovery where his identity as white Western man is altered in the natives' non-white and non-Western land and context.

During his stay, Tommo notices how the cocoa-nut trees form a central role in the lives of the Typees. In his book *Legends of Maui--A Demi-God of Polynesia and His Mother Hina* (1910), the American Author W. D. Westervelt (1849-1939) explores the significance of the Polynesian demigod, i.e. Māui in the context of the Hawaiian legends and mythology. According to Westervelt in *Legends of Maui--A Demi-God of Polynesia and His Mother Hina* (2010), "The Maui legends form one of the strongest links in the mythological chain of evidence which binds the scattered inhabitants of the Pacific into one nation" (Westervelt, 1910, p. vii). Hence, and since the Typees live in the Marquesas Islands, i.e. Polynesia, Māui has a culturally significant position within their history. In the same afore listed book, Westervelt refers to many stories associated with Māui where the environment with its different elements form a central role in this narrative. Accordingly, trees have played a major role in many of those narratives such as the cocoa-nut trees. For example, the cocoa-nut leaf was used as a hook, in reference to *Legends of Maui--A Demi-God of Polynesia and His Mother Hina*, when "Maui and his brothers went fishing for eels" (Westervelt, 1910, p. 83). Yet, the most remarkable story of Māui in Westervelt's book was his story with the sun where he used ropes to capture the sun by breaking "the strong cords of cocoanut fiber which Maui made and placed around the opening by which the sun climbed out from the under-world" (Westervelt, 1910, p. 53). Again, the cocoa-nut tree plays a critical role in this classic tale of the demigod Māui. According to the *Legends of Maui*, the story behind the cocoanut tree is rooted back to the legends of the Samoans who are the indigenous people of the Samoa islands of Polynesia (Mead) where there was a woman called Sina who "captured a small eel and kept it as a pet. It grew large and strong and finally attacked and bit her. She fled, but the eel followed her everywhere" (Westervelt, 1910, p. 96). In her journey to escape the eel, she moved from one place to another to finally receive the help of a chief who promised to help her. Yet, in reference to Westervelt's narrative, when she arrived "to the place where she was the pains of death had already seized him. While dying he begged her to bury his head by her home. This she did, and in time a plant new to the islands sprang up. It became a tree, and finally produced a cocoanut, whose two eyes could continually look into the face of Sina" (Westervelt, 1910, p. 97). This aforementioned story reveals the importance of cocoa-nut trees in the Polynesian heritage.

Tommo's strolls around the island prove the significance of the cocoa-nut trees for the Typees in specific and the Polynesians in general. One example is how the cocoa-nut trees with their trunks contribute into the architectural structure of the inhabitations. In his description of his dwelling in the island, the narrator states in *Typee* that his "description will apply also to nearly all the other dwelling-places in the vale, and will furnish some idea of the generality of the natives" (Melville, 1846, p. 70) where the cocoa-nut trunks are used as part of the building. Later in the novel, Tommo continues his description of the interior space of the dwelling as "[t]his space formed the common couch and lounging-place of the natives, answering the purpose of a divan in Oriental countries" (Melville, 1846, pp. 70-71). Tommo's reference to the Orient reveals how he views others, whether they are from the Orient or the South Seas, as one and the same. Classifying any non-white and non-Western as others also indicates that the white Western man sees them as one and this reductive logic practically ignores their differences and thus denies their presence. The cocoa-nut trees then function as a marker of difference where the Typees and through their architectural identity show their belonging to the place by designing their dwelling and inhabitations to cope with their natural surrounding and also by using the natural resources such as the cocoa-nut tress as an integral part of their architecture. Hence, the cocoa-nut trees represent the senses of belonging for the natives and it indicates their rootedness where the place and its people are associated. Hence, any malfunction of nature or any destruction of it will directly influence the people. Later in his

second novel *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas* (1847), which is a sequel to *Typee*, Melville traces the changes in nature at the touch of white colonialism. Throughout the novel, the narrator's attitude of the land underlines his attitude of the people themselves. For example, Tommo sees how the utility of the cocoa-nut trees goes beyond the material needs of the islanders as it serves their cultivation of beauty. As previously mentioned, Tommo notices during his stay in the island the remarkable physical wellbeing of the natives. One example of utilizing nature in general and the cocoa-nut trees in specific is the way the natives use the cocoa-nut oil when he describes how the Typees "every day bathed their glowing limbs in rivers of cocoa-nut oil" (Melville, 1846, p. 152). This use of the cocoa-nut oil shows how this tree's function transforms from its material reality into a symbol of beauty. In another example in *Typee*, Tommo observes how the female Typees take care of themselves as they "devote much of their time to the dressing of their hair and redundant locks. After bathing, as they sometimes do five or six times every day, the hair is carefully dried, ... and anointed with a highly-scented oil extracted from the meat of the cocoa-nut" (Melville, 1846, p. 196). Hence, Tommo's remarks of Nukuhava show how both female and male Typees, on an equal footing, make use of their natural surroundings. Further, the Typees have used the cocoa-nut tree, including its trunk, oil, fruits and shell. Some examples like how they have used the cocoa-nut shells to either make smoking pipes (146) or polishing them to be used as drinking-vessel (97) and they have used the "dried cocoa-nut boughs" (177) as a torch of fire.

VI. THE COCOA-NUT TREES AND THE ART OF TATTOOING

In his last days in the island, Tommo has started appreciating the rich environment of the Typees' land including the cocoa-nut tree. In one of his remarks, he refers to the cocoa-nut as "invaluable fruit" (Melville, 1846, p. 181) that, according to him, takes its value from the "rich soil of the Marquesas" (181). This change in Tommo's attitude towards the cocoa-nut tree reveals the inner change in his attitude towards the Typees. In other words, Tommo's perception of the land with a sense of appreciation and his acknowledgement of the "surprising agility and ingenuity of the islanders" (Melville, 1846, p. 182) underline the transformation that has occurred within himself. In the last part of *Typee*, Tommo states that how the islanders "have at least twenty different terms to express as many progressive stages in the growth of the nut" (Melville, 1846, p. 182), indicating their progressiveness not only in their cultivation of the land, but also in their utilization of all parts of the cocoa-nut tree. This lifestyle that Typees follow outlines their ecological responsibility which puts them ahead of the white Western man. Besides providing an example how humans can live in harmony with the environment, they have echoed the way Native Americans have cultivated responsibly as the ecologist Herb Hammond as cited in Bill Devall's *Clearcut: The Tragedy of Industrial Forestry* (1995) describes: "For many thousands of years, most of the indigenous nations on this continent practiced a philosophy of protection (first) and use (second) of the forest" (Hammond, 1993; as cited in Devall, 1993). Hammond asserts that "[i]n scientific terms, we recognize that their use of the forest was ecologically responsible—meaning that it kept all the parts" (Hammond, 1993; as cited in Devall, 1993). Seen from this perspective, the Typees, in reference to Tommo's description and observation, are ahead of their times, i.e. ahead of the white Western man on the grounds that they are ecologically responsible and plan well to protect and preserve their environment. Hence, they can be seen as pioneers in terms of environmental ethic. Furthermore, this representation of the Typees as environmentally developed people also introduces Melville's text as a potentially valuable text in the ecological thinking, both textually and contextually. Throughout his journey of discovering the island and its people, Tommo has underlined the significance of the environment in general and the cocoa-nut tree in specific by referring to many examples and then reflecting upon them accordingly.

On one hand, Tommo's observation of the Typees as a community has led him to change his attitude towards them and, to some extent, to achieve a level of assimilation. In *Typee*, Melville has ventured to push the limits of the Romantic journey of Tommo who has experienced both the beautiful and the sublimic dimension of nature since Tommo has embarked into a longer journey in the midst of, according to Tommo's presuppositions, an exotic culture. Tommo has had some transcendentalist moments where he was able to overcome his pride and prejudice which were rooted back to his cultural background and influenced by the biased narrative of European shipmates. Hence, he was able to achieve a momentary interaction and engagement with the Typees. Yet, this physical and symbolic assimilation has cut short with his growing fear of the tattoo. In one of his strolls, Tommo has "witnessed for the first time the operation of tattooing as performed by these islanders" (Melville, 1846, p. 185) where the cocoa-nut shell was used as a container. By tracing chronologically Tommo's remarks of the cocoa-nut tree, the tree stands out as an eye-witness of Tommo's experience in the island and among the Typees. For him, to accept the idea of being tattooed was scary since he was puzzled by his fear of the so-called cannibalistic acts of the Typees and this hindered his assimilation and integration in the 'other' culture.

VII. CONCLUSION

Melville's long journey to Nukuhava and his experience with the others, i.e. the Typees, has shaped and reshaped his narrative and has led him later to write *Omoo* as the sequel of *Typee*. Tommo eventually leaves the island of the Typees, yet the change that has occurred within him will ever leave him. Melville's narrator in *Typee* embodies that transformation that could occur when a white person packed with stereotypes goes beyond the actual and cultural

boundaries of the white supremacist thoughts. This movement from the white hegemonic context into the so-called primitive island of the Typees underlines white/non-white dilemma, portrayed through the characters' perception of the place.

To conclude, it can be deduced that reading literature from the lens of ecocriticism in general and trees in specific can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the literary text. Tracing the portrayal of cocoa-nut trees in Melville's *Typee* discloses some meanings within the text. In other words, the cocoa-nut trees with their multifaceted symbolic representations provide a commentary on the sociopolitical and historical context of the text and reveal the narrator's endeavors to understand his identity as a 19th century white sailor within non-white and non-Western context.

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