

STATUES IN ROME

[In the absence of a surviving manuscript of Melville's first lecture it is impossible to determine with certainty the exact title which he intended. Writing during his second lecture season to W. H. Barry of Lynn, Massachusetts, on 12 February 1859, he listed the titles of his "two lectures" as "The South Seas" and "Statues in Rome"—see Jay Leyda, *The Melville Log*, II, 602. But this single bit of evidence is not sufficient in itself to establish Melville's own usage, however, since in other letters which have not survived he apparently employed different phrasing. Some ten variants are to be found in newspaper references to the lecture, all of which derive ultimately from Melville's original wording, either in correspondence with local lecture committees on which advance publicity was based or else in his delivery of the lecture itself. There is disagreement as to the title not only among newspapers within the same city but even between the advance notices and the later review appearing in the same publication. Of the variant titles occurring more than once in newspapers the following are most frequent, in the order given: "[The] Statues in [or of] Rome," "[The] Statuary in [or of] Rome [or Italy]," and "Roman Statuary."

The composite text printed here is based upon the twenty-eight surviving contemporary newspaper reports of "Statues in Rome" discussed in Chapter 2 above. Two of these are of especial importance. (1) The introductory section of the lecture, comprising the first three paragraphs of the present reconstructed text, was reported almost verbatim, though with indication of some omissions, in the Cincinnati *Daily Commercial*, 3 February 1858. The *Commercial's* version has provided the basis for this portion of the text. (2) The remainder of the lecture, taken as a whole, was most fully reported in the Detroit *Daily Free Press*, 14 January 1858, which printed a detailed summary clearly revealing the over-all organization of Melville's material, though some parts of it, such as the introduction, were covered more thoroughly in other accounts. The *Free Press* report has accordingly provided the basis for the body of the present text, exclusive of the first three paragraphs. Extracts from other contemporary accounts have been introduced into the text here and there to replace or supplement the wording of the *Free Press* and the *Commercial*, however. This has been done wherever there is reason to believe that these other accounts offer a fuller or more accurate approximation of Melville's own language, as determined by collation of the several newspaper versions and by detailed comparison of their phrasing with that of

similar passages in Melville's Mediterranean journal or in his published works. The consistent agreement, in essentials, among the newspaper reports indicates that Melville made little if any change in the pattern of the lecture during the course of the season.

In the absence of an authoritative version of any of the lectures, spelling and punctuation have been standardized throughout the composite texts. Citation of Melville's works in the accompanying annotation is by chapter number only, there being as yet no definitive collected edition. Citation of his Mediterranean journal is by date of entry or, if need be, to the published text edited by Howard C. Horsford: *Journal of a Visit to Europe and the Levant, October 11, 1856–May 6, 1857* (Princeton, 1955).]

It might be supposed that the only proper judge of statues would be a sculptor, but it may be believed that others than the artist can appreciate and see the beauty of the marble art of Rome. If what is best in nature and knowledge cannot be claimed for the privileged profession of any order of men, it would be a wonder if, in that region called Art, there were, as to what is best there, any essential exclusiveness. True, the dilettante may enjoy his technical terms; but ignorance of these prevents not due feeling for Art, in any mind naturally alive to beauty or grandeur.¹ Just as the productions of nature may be both appreciated by those who know nothing of Botany, or who have no inclination for it, so the creations of Art may be, by those ignorant of its critical science, or indifferent to it. Art strikes a chord in the lowest as well as in the highest; the rude and uncultivated feel its influence as well as the polite and polished. It is a spirit that pervades all classes. Nay, as it is doubtful whether to the scientific Linnaeus flowers yielded so much satisfaction as to the unscientific Burns, or struck so deep a chord in his bosom; so may it be a question whether the terms of Art may not inspire in artistic but still susceptible

¹ So in "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (1850) Melville had written of "the mystical, ever-eluding Spirit of All Beauty, which ubiquitously possesses men of genius." His concept recalls the discussion of love of the beautiful in Plato's *Symposium* drawn upon in the early chapters of *Pierre*. Here the linking of beauty with grandeur also suggests the influence of eighteenth-century aestheticians.

minds, thoughts, or emotions, not lower than those raised in the most accomplished of critics.

Yet, we find that many thus naturally susceptible to such impressions refrain from their utterance, out of fear lest in their ignorance of technicalities their unaffected terms might betray them, and that after all, feel as they may, they know little or nothing, and hence keep silence, not wishing to become presumptuous. There are many examples on record to show this, and not only this, but that the uneducated are very often more susceptible to this influence than the learned. May it not possibly be, that as Burns perhaps understood flowers as well as Linnaeus, and the Scotch peasant's poetical description of the daisy, "wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower,"² is rightly set above the technical definition of the Swedish professor, so in Art, just as in nature, it may not be the accredited wise man alone who, in all respects, is qualified to comprehend or describe.

With this explanation, I, who am neither critic nor connoisseur, thought fit to introduce some familiar remarks upon the sculptures in Rome, a subject which otherwise might be thought to lie peculiarly within the province of persons of a kind of cultivation to which I make no pretension. I shall speak of the impressions produced upon my mind as one who looks upon a work of art as he would upon a violet or a cloud, and admires or condemns as he finds an answering sentiment awakened in his soul. My object is to paint the appearance of

² These words open Burns' "To a Mountain Daisy." Melville's two-volume edition of Burns (Edinburgh, 1856) is now in the Harvard College Library. This reference to the daisy foreshadows the abundant flower imagery of his later poetry and prose. An especially striking parallel can be found in *Clarel*, I, xxxi, where Rolfe's meditation on science and religion resembles even to its imagery this earlier juxtaposition of science with poetry:

"Yea, long as children feel affright
In darkness, men shall fear a God;
And long as daisies yield delight
Shall see His footsteps in the sod.
Is 't ignorance? This ignorant state
Science doth but elucidate—
Deepen, enlarge."

Roman statuary objectively and afterward to speculate upon the emotions and pleasure that appearance is apt to excite in the human breast.

As you pass through the gate of St. John, on the approach to Rome from Naples, the first object of attraction is the group of colossal figures in stone surmounting, like storks, the lofty pediment of the church of St. John Lateran.³ Standing in every grand or animated attitude, they seem not only to attest that this is the Eternal City, but likewise, at its portal, to offer greetings in the name of that great company of statues which, amid the fluctuations of the human census, abides the true and undying population of Rome. It is, indeed, among these mute citizens that the stranger forms his most pleasing and cherished associations, to be remembered when other things in the Imperial City are forgotten.

On entering Rome itself, the visitor is greeted by thousands of statues, who, as representatives of the mighty past, hold out their hands to the present, and make the connecting link of centuries. Wherever you go in Rome, in streets, dwellings, churches, its gardens, its walks, its public squares, or its private grounds, on every hand statues abound, but by far the greatest assemblage of them is to be found in the Vatican.⁴ In that grand hall you will not only make new acquaintances, but will likewise revive many long before introduced by the historian.

³ Melville first visited this basilica 1 March 1857, returning two days later. His journal records his initial impressions: "Loneliness of the spot by Giovanni Gate (Naples) . . . 12 Apostles gigantic—drapery—Did not visit Stairs &c." That his count of the statues was in error is to be seen from Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy* . . . Including . . . Rome (London, 1843), p. 348, which describes the "massive entablature and balustrade, on which are placed colossal statues of our Saviour and ten saints." (This volume is cited hereafter as *Handbook*. Editions later than that of 1843 are unchanged insofar as the content of passages relevant to "Statues in Rome" is concerned.)

⁴ According to the journal, 2 March 1857 had been Melville's first "Vatican Day (Monday)"; he remained "from 12 to 3 in Museum" and in the Vatican "till closed. Fagged out completely, & sat long time . . . recovering from the stunning effect of a first visit. . . ." He returned the following day and again on 9 and 16 March.

These are all well known by repute; they have been often described in the traveler's record and on the historic page; but the knowledge thus gained, however perfect the description may be, is poor and meager when compared with that gained by personal acquaintance. Here are ancient personages, the worthies of the glorious old days of the Empire and Republic. Histories and memoirs tell us of their achievements, whether on the field or in the forum, in public action or in the private walks of life; but here we find how they looked, and we learn them as we do living men. Here we find many deficiencies of the historian supplied by the sculptor, who has effected, in part, for the celebrities of old what the memoir writer of the present day does for modern ones; for to the sculptor belongs a task which was considered beneath the dignity of the historian.

In the expressive marble, Demosthenes,⁵ who is better known by statuary than by history, thus becomes a present existence. Standing face to face with the marble, one must say to himself, "This is he," so true has been the sculptor to his task. The strong arm, the muscular form, the large sinews, all bespeak the thunderer of Athens who hurled his powerful denunciations at Philip of Macedon; yet he resembles a modern advocate, face thin and haggard and his body lean. The arm that had gesticulated and swayed with its movement the souls of the Athenians has become small and shrunken. He looks as if a glorious course of idleness would be beneficial. Just so in the statue of Titus Vespasian, of whom we read a dim outline in Tacitus,⁶ stands mildly before us Titus himself. He has a

⁵ Although the impression given by the newspaper accounts is that the busts Melville describes are for the most part in the Vatican, he was probably referring to the bust of Demosthenes in the Hall of the Philosophers at the Capitoline Museum, where busts of Socrates, Seneca, and Plato were also to be seen. His discussion of Demosthenes is indebted not only to his general knowledge of classical history and biography but also to his familiarity with Demosthenes' *Orations*, included in the set of Harper's Classical Library which he had bought in 1849.

⁶ This bust Melville had seen in the Hall of the Emperors at the Capitoline Museum; a note near the back of his journal mentions "Busts of Titus & Tiberius (side by side)" (Horsford ed., p. 267). The "dim outline in Tacitus" to which he alludes here suggests a principal source for his

short, thick figure and a round face, expressive of cheerfulness, good-humor, and joviality; and yet all know how different was his character from this outward seeming.

✓ In the bust of Socrates we see a countenance more like that of a bacchanal or the debauchee of a carnival than of a sober and decorous philosopher. At a first glance it reminds one much of the broad and rubicund phiz of an Irish comedian. It possesses in many respects the characteristics peculiar to the modern Hibernian. But a closer observer would see the simple-hearted, yet cool, sarcastic, ironical cast indicative of his true character.⁷

✓ The head of Julius Caesar fancy would paint as robust, grand, and noble; something that is elevated and commanding. But the statue gives a countenance of a businesslike cast that the present practical age would regard as a good representation of the President of the New York and Erie Railroad, or any other magnificent corporation. And such was the character of the man—practical, sound, grappling with the obstacles of the world like a giant.

✓ In the bust of Seneca, whose philosophy would be Christianity itself save its authenticity, whose utterances so amazed one of the early fathers that he thought he must have corresponded with St. Paul, we see a face more like that of a disappointed pawnbroker, pinched and grieved. His semblance is just, for it was well known that he was avaricious and grasping, and

sketches of Roman notables. The *Ohio Farmer's* reviewer, taking note of Melville's acknowledgment, "could have sat for hours," he declared, "witnessing this skillful and appreciative master of ceremonies taking the robes from the pictured pages of Tacitus and putting them upon the lifeless marbles . . . breathing into them the breath of life, till Rome became living Rome again. . . ."

⁷ Writing to Hawthorne in November 1851, Melville had likened himself to "the ugly Socrates"; in his later sketch "The Paradise of Bachelors" he had described a London waiter as having "a head like Socrates." His admiration for the character of Socrates outlasted his changing regard for other philosophers who attracted him at various times. The characterization here may be compared with that of old Ushant in *White-Jacket*, described in ch. 84 as "a sort of sea-Socrates," or with the passage in ch. 10 of *Moby Dick* in which the "calm self-collectedness of simplicity" in savages like Queequeg is called "a Socratic wisdom."

dealt largely in mortgages and loans, and drove hard bargains even at that day. It is ironlike and inflexible, and would be no disgrace to a Wall Street broker.⁸

Seeing the statue of Seneca's apostate pupil Nero at Naples,⁹ ✓ done in bronze, we can scarce realize that we are looking upon the face of the latter without finding something repulsive, half-demoniac in the expression. And yet the delicate features are only those of a genteelly dissipated youth, a fast and pleasant young man such as those we see in our own day, whom daily experience finds driving spanking teams and abounding on race-courses, with instincts and habits of his class, who would scarce be guilty of excessive cruelties.

The first view of Plato surprises one, being that of a Greek Grammont or Chesterfield. Engaged in the deep researches of philosophy as he was, we should certainly expect no fastidiousness in his appearance, neither a carefully adjusted toga or pomatumed hair. Yet such is the fact, for the long flowing locks of that aristocratic transcendentalist were as carefully parted as a modern belle's and his beard would have graced a Venetian exquisite. He might have composed his works as if meditating on the destinies of the world under the hand of a hair-

⁸ So in ch. 124 of *Mardi* Melville's philosopher Babbalanja quotes extensively from an unidentified "antique pagan"—actually Seneca—and the historian Mohi finds in his words "the very spirit" of early Christianity. Some of the early church fathers, as the *Encyclopædia Britannica* points out (14th ed., XXIV, 637), indeed "reckoned Seneca among the Christians; this assumption in its turn led to the forgery of a correspondence between St Paul and Seneca which was known to Jerome (cf. Augustin, *Ep.* 153 . . .)" and to which Melville alludes here. In 1854 he had given his brother Tom the copy of *Seneca's Morals* used in *Mardi*; in a volume of Seneca's works which he owned—a 1614 London edition, now in the collection of Mr. Carl Haverlin—there is this marginal comment in his hand (p. 204): "in Seneca . . . we meet with maxims of actual life, & lessons of practical wisdom which not only equal but exceed any thing in the Scriptures.—But . . . Seneca's life belied his philosophy. . . ." In *The Confidence-Man*, ch. 37, is an allusion to Seneca as "a usurer."

⁹ In this section Melville probably had in mind three bronze busts which he had seen in the same Neapolitan museum on 21 February 1857. Compare his journal entry for that day: "Plato (hair & beard & imperial) Nero (villianous [*sic*]) Seneca (caricature.)."

dresser or a modern *valet-de-chambre*, as Louis XIV mused over documents while he smelled his Cologne bottle.¹⁰

Thus these statues confess and, as it were, prattle to us of much that does not appear in history and the written works of those they represent. This subject was illustrated by instances taken from modern times with which we are all acquainted because in this way we best obtain a true knowledge of the statues. They seem familiar and natural to us because the aspect of the human countenance is the same in all ages. If five thousand ancient Romans were mingled with a crowd of moderns in the Corso it would be difficult to distinguish the one from the other unless it were by a difference in dress. The same features—the same aspects—belong to us as belonged to them; the component parts of human character are the same now as then.¹¹ And yet there was about all the Romans a heroic tone peculiar to ancient life.¹² Their virtues were great and noble,

¹⁰ The impression of Plato's personal appearance which Melville develops here may have been affected by a glimpse of several busts in the Capitoline Museum which bear Plato's name but are, in the words of Murray's *Handbook*, p. 434, "only bearded images of Bacchus." In *Moby Dick*, ch. 101, Melville had linked the epithets "transcendental" and "Platonic"; his reference here to "that aristocratic transcendentalist" anticipates Ungar's castigation in *Clarel*, IV, xx, of nineteenth-century liberal thought that ignores the existence of evil and imitates "Plato's aristocratic tone." Satirical portraits of the type had previously been drawn by Melville in *Pierre* and *The Confidence-Man* as Plotinus Plinlimmon and Mark Winsome. Yet his own regard for Plato himself, though not without major qualifications, was far higher than his opinion of Plato's latter-day disciples, for above all else he regarded Plato as a great original thinker. For further evidence on this point see note 52 below.

¹¹ "The grand points of human nature," Melville had written in ch. 14 of *The Confidence-Man*, "are the same to-day as they were a thousand years ago. The only variability in them is in expression, not in feature." When he visited Pompeii 18 February 1857 he found it "like any other town," as he observed in his journal. "Same old humanity," he added. "All the same weather [*sic*] one be dead or alive." And so to Ungar in *Clarel*, IV, xxi, man

"abides the same
Always, through all variety
Of woven garments to the frame."

¹² Further development of this characteristic theme may be found in Melville's later poem "The Age of the Antonines," which another passage in "Statues in Rome" similarly anticipates (note 42 below). Melville's views of paganism and Christianity, influenced both by his personal ob-

and these virtues made them great and noble. They possessed a natural majesty that was not put on and taken off at pleasure, as was that of certain eastern monarchs when they put on or took off their garments of Tyrian dye. It is to be hoped that this is not wholly lost from the world, although the sense of earthly vanity inculcated by Christianity may have swallowed it up in humility.

Christianity has disenchanted many of the vague old rumors in reference to the ancients, so that we can now easily compare them with the moderns. The appearance of the statues, however, is often deceptive, and a true knowledge of their character is lost unless they are closely scrutinized. The arch dissembler Tiberius was handsome, refined, and even pensive in expression. "That Tiberius?" exclaimed a lady in our hearing. "He does not look so bad." Madam, thought I, if he had *looked* bad, he could not have been Tiberius. His statue has such a sad and musing air, so like Jerome in his cell, musing on the vanities of the world, that to some, not knowing for whom the statue was meant, it might convey the impression of a man broken by great afflictions, of so pathetic a cast is it. Yet a close analysis brings out all his sinister features, and a close study of the statue will develop the monster portrayed by the historian. For Tiberius was melancholy without pity, and sensitive without affection. He was, perhaps, the most wicked of men.¹³

servations in various parts of the world and by his interest in antiquity, are discussed in Part I above, particularly in Chapters 1 and 3.

¹³ As in an earlier passage on "the diabolical Tiberius," in ch. 55 of *Redburn*, Melville was presumably relying here on the account of "unmatchable Tacitus." In *Redburn* he had written of Tiberius as "that misanthrope upon the throne of the world . . . who even in his self-exile, embittered by bodily pangs, and unspeakable mental terrors only known to the damned on earth, yet did not give over his blasphemies but endeavored to drag down with him to his own perdition, all who came within the evil spell of his power." The passage occurs in a discussion of the sailor Jackson, whose characterization anticipates Ahab in *Moby Dick* and Claggart in *Billy Budd*.

When Melville saw the bust of Tiberius in the Hall of the Emperors at the Capitoline Museum 26 February 1857 he recorded in his journal the comment of his fellow-tourist: "That Tiberius? he dont look ["wicked

The statue which most of all in the Vatican excites the admiration of all visitors is the Apollo, the crowning glory, which stands alone in the Belvedere chapel. Every visitor to Rome, immediately on his arrival, rushes to the chapel to behold the statue, and on his quitting the Eternal City, whether after a few weeks or many years, always makes a farewell visit to this same loadstone. Its very presence is overawing. Few speak, or even whisper, when they enter the cabinet where it stands.¹⁴ It is not a mere work of art that one gazes on, for there is a kind of divinity in it that lifts the imagination of the beholder above "things rank and gross in nature,"¹⁵ and makes ordinary criticism impossible. If one were to try to convey some ade-

at all' lined out] so bad at all'—It was he. A look of sickly evil,—intellect without manliness & sadness without goodness. Great brain overrefinements. Solitude." One hostile critic, reviewing Melville's appearance in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and finding the lecture "particularly dull," was grateful for the anecdote: "Excepting for [Melville's] conversation with the lady about the head of Tiberius, one would hardly have guessed that he had ever been in Italy at all."

¹⁴ Notwithstanding Melville's admiring discussion of the Apollo there is no corresponding passage of impressions in his journal, where it is altogether unmentioned. Nor had he rushed to behold it "immediately on his arrival" in Rome, having walked first to the Capitol in disregard both of the Apollo's supposed appeal and of the "principle" mentioned in his journal entry for 30 March 1857: "that at Rome you go first to St. Peters." It is true, however, that he had found his first visit to the Vatican "stunning" (2 March 1857), and to this effect his glimpse of the Apollo had doubtless contributed. The contemporary enthusiasm for the Apollo reflected in the present passage was indebted to the writings of Winckelmann and of Byron, whose well-known description of the statue's "ideal beauty" in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, IV, clxi-clxiii, is quoted in full for the admiring traveler in Murray's *Handbook*, p. 414. Melville's own youthful enthusiasm for Byron entered into his regard for the statue as early as 1839, when in the first of his "Fragments from a Writing Desk"—heavily indebted to *Childe Harold*—the narrator terms himself "beautiful as Apollo." In *Typee*, ch. 18, Melville later described the "beautifully formed" Marnoo as a suitable model "for the statue of the Polynesian Apollo," and in a magazine sketch of 1856, "The 'Gees," he used the expression "an Apollo Belvedere for beauty." It seems likely that his introduction to the statue itself merely confirmed his long-standing conception of its merit. Melville's account in the lecture of the reaction of spectators reminded the Cleveland *Herald's* critic "of the passage in the poet Campbell's letters, where he says that the first sight of the Apollo struck him dumb, and that he shed tears of joy copiously at the contemplation of such sublime beauty."

¹⁵ *Hamlet*, I, ii, 136.

quate notion, other than artistic, of a statue which so signally lifts the imagination of men, he might hint that it gives a kind of visible response to that class of human aspirations of beauty and perfection that, according to Faith, cannot be truly gratified except in another world.

Milton's description of Zephon makes the angel an exact counterpart of the Apollo.¹⁶ He must have been inspired to a great degree by his recollections of this statue, once the idol of religion and now the idol of art; and the circumstances of his having passed a year in Italy might not be deemed unfortunate for England's great epic. In fact, the whole of that immortal poem, "Paradise Lost," is but a great Vatican done into verse. Milton must have gleaned from these representations of the great men or the gods of ancient Rome high ideas of the grand in form and bearing. Many of those ideas from heathen personages he afterwards appropriated to his celestials, just as the Pope's artist converted the old heathen Pantheon into a Christian church.¹⁷ Lucifer and his angels cast down from Heaven are thus taken from a group in a private palace at Padua,

¹⁶ In *Paradise Lost*, IV, 844-848, the cherub Zephon administers to Satan a "grave rebuke" which to the cherub himself,

"Severe in youthful beauty, added grace
Invincible: abasht the Devil stood,
And felt how awful goodness is, and saw
Virtue in her shape how lovely. . . ."

Melville's ensuing comments about the effect of Milton's sojourn in Italy upon *Paradise Lost* are quoted here from the account of the *Detroit Daily Free Press*, which gives a more credible version of the passage than such other reports as the *Boston Journal's* brief sentence: "The elevating effect of such statues was exhibited in the influence they exerted upon the mind of Milton during his visit to Italy." Referring to the *Journal's* words, Henry F. Pommer, *Milton and Melville* (Pittsburgh, 1950), pp. 159-161 (note 22), though presenting several possible sources for the idea, considers it "difficult to find precisely what authority, if any," Melville had for this statement and thinks him "almost surely wrong" if he believed that Milton "was much influenced by statuary." Yet the affinities suggested to Melville have also impressed a recent critic: Wylie Sypher, *Four Stages of Renaissance Style* (Garden City, 1955), pp. 222-223, holds that Milton "derives his figures in *Paradise Lost* from the traditions of antique sculpture."

¹⁷ The Pantheon, built by Agrippa, was consecrated as a Christian church by Boniface IV in 608 (Murray's *Handbook*, p. 286). A reflection upon its antiquity occurs in *Clarel*, I, xii.

among the most wonderful works of statuary. This was sculptured out of a single solid block by one of the later Italian artists. Three-score of the fallen lie wound together writhing and tortured, while, proud and sullen in the midst, is the nobler form of Satan, unbroken and defiant, his whole body breathing revenge and his attitude one never to submit or yield. The variety and power of the group cannot be surpassed.¹⁸

Speaking of the Apollo reminds one of the Venus de Medici,¹⁹ although the one is at Rome and the other is at Florence. She is lovely, beautiful, but far less great than the Apollo, for her chief beauty is that of attitude. In the Venus the ideal and actual are blended, yet only representing nature in her perfection, a fair woman startled by some intrusion when leaving the bath. She is exceedingly refined, delicious in everything—no prude but a child of nature modest and unpretending. I have some authority for this statement, as one

¹⁸ *La caduta degli angeli ribelli*, by Agostino Fasolato, in the Palazzo Pappafava at Padua. Melville saw the statue there on 1 April 1857, describing it in his journal as "the 'Satan and his host.' Fine attitude of Satan. Intricate as heap of vermicelli." Photographs of the statue are reproduced in Pommer, *Milton and Melville*, facing p. 31, and Leo Planiscig, "Fasolato's Satan and Melville," *Art News*, L (1952), 21. Pommer, p. 138 (note 15), points out that in mentioning the "unbroken, defiant form of Satan" Melville "probably confused one of the angels with Satan, who is really at the bottom, in the form of an infernal monster." And as Pommer also observes, p. 32 and note 16, p. 138, it was probably Melville himself rather than a reporter who introduced into the present passage—as given in the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*—"the phrase from Satan's first speech in *Paradise Lost*," i.e., I, 107-108:

"And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield. . . ."

¹⁹ This statue, like the Apollo, was mentioned in the first of Melville's "Fragments from a Writing Desk." He saw it 26 March 1857 in the Uffizi Gallery at Florence and returned two days later for a "last look." According to his journal, he was "Not pleased with the Venus de Medici" though "very much astonished at the wrestlers & charmed with Titian's Venus." His observation in the lecture that the Venus is "of the earth," contrasting to the "divinity" of the Apollo, may be compared with a comment in Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*, where the Venus is described as "an example of sculpture when the art had, in a great degree, departed from its highest aim, that of addressing the sentiment by means of tranquil expression and simple grandeur of form, and had entered on the comparatively easy task of fascinating the senses by the display of the soft and beautiful models offered by a less idealised nature" (1852 ed., p. 519).

day from my mat in the Typee valley I saw a native maiden, in the precise attitude of the Venus, retreating with the grace of nature to a friendly covert.²⁰ But still the Venus is of the earth, and the Apollo is divine. Should a match be made between them, the union would be like that of the sons of God with the daughters of men.²¹

In a niche of the Vatican stands the Laocoön, the very semblance of a great and powerful man writhing with the inevitable destiny which he cannot throw off.²² Throes and pangs and struggles are given with a meaning that is not withheld. The hideous monsters embrace him in their mighty folds, and torture him with agonizing embraces. The Laocoön is grand and impressive, gaining half its significance from its symbolism—the fable that it represents; otherwise it would be no more than Paul Potter's "Bear Hunt" at Amsterdam.²³ Thus the

²⁰ This incident, which is unmentioned in *Typee*, appears only in accounts of the lecture given by the *Boston Journal* and by Henry Gansevoort. But the *Ohio Farmer's* reviewer, who thought that Melville "had never forgotten his imprisonment among the Pacific cannibals, and half regretted his extradition from that physical paradise," seems to allude to it. "We would venture a bet," he goes on to say, "that Mr. Melville, with all his admiration for the Medicean Venus, thinks Fayaway worth a score of cold unhabited marbles." Among later critics, James Baird would agree with the Cleveland reporter. In *Ishmael* (Baltimore, 1956), pp. 95-96, he cites Gansevoort's version of this passage as illustrating the persistence in Melville's writing of images of his Polynesian experience: "even the Venus must be made one with Fayaway of Typee Valley, or one of her island sisters."

²¹ See Genesis 6:2-4.

²² The appeal of the Laocoön to Melville's imagination is suggested by the earlier reference in *Pierre*, Bk. XI, iii, to "a marble group of the temple-polluting Laocoon and his two innocent children, caught in inextricable snarls of snakes, writhed in eternal torments." A later instance occurs in *Clarel*, I, xxxvii:

"From the mystic sea
Laocoon's serpent, sleek and fine,
In loop on loop seemed here to twine
His clammy coils about the three."

As in the case of the Apollo, Melville's attitude toward the statue was probably influenced by the description of Byron, also quoted in Murray's *Handbook*, p. 414.

²³ While in Amsterdam on 24 April 1857 Melville "went to Picture Gallery. Wonderful picture of Paul Potter—the Bear." One critic of the lecture, the reporter for the *Chillicothe Advertiser*, objected to Melville's refusal to confine himself strictly to "those statues which immortalize the 'Eternal City'" instead of telegraphing his audience "to Naples and Flor-

ideal statuary of Rome expresses the doubt and the dark groping of speculation in that age when the old mythology was passing away and men's minds had not yet reposed in the new faith.²⁴ If the Apollo gives the perfect, and the Venus equally

ence, and to Amsterdam, with little regard for their convenience" and without even taking the trouble "to render the travelling easy." No other reviewers, however, complained of Melville's side-glances at works seen elsewhere than in Rome.

²⁴ This observation, though reported only by the *Clarksville Daily Chronicle*, is unquestionably genuine; in fact it directly anticipates the comparison of ancient and modern religious doubt in *Clarel*, I, xxi. There Rolfe, the speaker, begins his discussion with a reference to another favorite of Melville's among the Roman writers, Cicero: Cicero's "fine tomes" would "(change the gods)"

"serve to read
For modern essays. And indeed
His age was much like ours; doubt ran,
Faith flagged; negations which sufficed
Lawyer, priest, statesman, gentleman,
Not yet being popularly prized,
The augurs hence retained some state—
Which served for the illiterate.
Still, the decline so swiftly ran
From stage to stage, that *To Believe*,
Except for slave or artisan,
Seemed heresy. Even doubts which met
Horror at first, grew obsolete,
And in a decade. To bereave
Of founded trust in Sire Supreme
Was a vocation. Sophists throve—
Each weaving his thin thread of dream
Into the shroud for Numa's Jove.
Cæsar his atheism avowed
Before the Senate. But why crowd
Examples here: the gods were gone.
Tully scarce dreamed they could be won
Back into credence; less that earth
Ever could know yet mightier birth
Of deity. He died. Christ came.
And, in due hour, that impious Rome,
Emerging from vast wreck and shame,
Held the forefront of Christendom."

In a similar vein are other passages in Melville's poetry, such as this image in *Clarel*, IV, viii, of the decline of modern faith:

"that vast eclipse, if slow,
Whose passage yet we undergo,
Emerging on an age untried.
If not all oracles be dead,
The upstart ones the old deride. . . ."

shows the beautiful, the Laocoön represents the tragic side of humanity and is the symbol of human misfortune.

Elsewhere in the Vatican is the Hall of Animals.²⁵ In all the ancient statues representing animals there is a marked resemblance to those described in the book of Revelations. This class of Roman statuary and the pictures of the Apocalypse are nearly identical. But the ferocity in the appearance of some of these statues, such as the wolf and the slaughtered lamb, is compensated by the nature of others, like that of the goats at play around the sleeping shepherd. The quiet, gentle, and peaceful scenes of pastoral life are represented in some of the later of Roman statuary just as we find them described by that best of all pastoral poets, Wordsworth. The thought of many of these beautiful figures having been pleasing to the Romans at least persuades us that their violence as a conquering people did not engross them, and that the flame of kindness kindled in most men by nature was at no time in Roman breasts entirely stamped out. If we image the life that is in the statues and look at their more humane aspects, we shall not find that the old Roman, stern and hard-hearted as we generally imagine him, was entirely destitute of tenderness and compassion, for though the ancients were ignorant of the principles of Christianity there were in them the germs of its spirit.²⁶

Thus, when I stood in the Coliseum, its mountain-chains of

²⁵ Melville first visited the Hall of Animals 2 March 1857, noting a "Wolf & sheep," and returned there a week later. His journal entry for 9 March, upon which the present passage is directly based, reads as follows: "Hall of Animals—Wolf & lamb, paw uplifted, tongue—fleece. Dog on stag, ey[e]ing him. Lion on horse.—But Playing Goats—the goat & kid—show a Wordsworthian appreciation of the gentle in Nature."

²⁶ Although the *Boston Post* was the only newspaper reporting Melville's lecture to bring out the Christian references in this and the following paragraph, there is little reason to question their authenticity. The specific identification, here and in the succeeding description of the Dying Gladiator, of tenderness and compassion with Christian attitudes seems not out of keeping with Melville's earlier treatment of the "antique pagan" in *Mardi* (note 8 above). After his first view of the Dying Gladiator, 26 February 1857, he remarked in his journal: "Shows that humanity existed among the barbarians of the Roman time, as it now among Christian barbarousness[?]."

ruins waving with foliage girding me round, the solitude was great and vast like that of savage nature, just such as one experiences when shut up in some great green hollow of the Apennine range, hemmed in by towering cliffs on every side. But the imagination must rebuild it as it was of old; it must be re-peopled with the terrific games of the gladiators, with the frantic leaps and dismal howls of the wild, bounding beasts, with the shrieks and cries of the excited spectators.²⁷ Unless

²⁷ This "rich scene of word painting," as the *Auburn Daily Advertiser* termed Melville's description of the Coliseum, was evidently the high point of the lecture for many listeners; "in all our reading" the reviewer for the *Clarksville Daily Chronicle* could not remember "a more beautiful passage." That such writing was considered "eminently lecturesque," to use the phrase of another reviewer, is indicative of the kind of material which pleased the taste of Melville's day. This is the one section of the lecture most often singled out not only for praise but also for extended summary, paraphrase, and quotation in the various newspaper accounts.

To match the unusually full reconstruction which these detailed reports have made possible, there is a clear indication, from Melville's journal entries and notes, of how the passage took form in his mind. Near the end of the journal (Horsford ed., p. 268) he had written the following memorandum, which may indeed have been the germ of the entire lecture: "Coliseum. great green hollow—restore it repeople it with all statues in Vatican Dying & Fighting Gladiators." The note was probably occasioned by his first visit to the Coliseum: on 26 February 1857, when he also saw the Dying Gladiator in the Capitoline Museum, he described the Coliseum as like a "great hollow among hills. Hopper of Greylock. Slope of concentric ruins overgrown. Mountainous." On 5 March he again visited the Coliseum, and when he returned on 12 March the idea of "Repeopling it, &c," was included in his journal entry, with evident reference to the earlier notations. His description in its final form compares the Coliseum not with the Hopper of Greylock, in the New England Berkshires, but with a valley of the Apennines: "Grand scenery," he had written of the Italian mountains on 29 March 1857. "Long reaches of streams through solitary vallies [*sic*]. No woods. No heartiness of scenery as in New England." Another adaptation seems indicated by his impression of the ruins as "waving with foliage"; "summit wavy with verdure" was what he had written of the Temple of Venus near Naples on 23 February. As none of these passages in the journal are marked in any special way it is impossible to say how much Melville depended upon its wording to recall or enrich his visual recollection of the scene he describes in the lecture. James Baird, *Ishmael*, p. 96, argues that the passage is also reminiscent of Melville's handling of Polynesian landscape in *Typee*, *Omoo*, and *Moby Dick*. Pointing out similarities in imagery and phrasing, he suggests that Melville either saw the Coliseum "with both Roman and Polynesian vision, or, in retrospect, the image drifted into a Polynesian framework, making a double image representing antiquity."

this is done, how can we appreciate the Gladiator? It was such a feeling of the artist that created it, and there must be such a feeling on the part of the visitor to view it and view it aright. And so, restoring the shattered arches and terraces, I re-peopled them with all the statues from the Vatican, and in the turfey glen of the arena below I placed the Fighting Gladiator from the Louvre, confronting him with the dying one from the Capitol. And as in fancy I heard the ruffian huzzas for the first rebounded from the pitiless hiss for the last, I felt that more than one in that host I had evoked shared not its passions, and looked not coldly on the dying gladiator whose eyes gazed far away to

"where his rude hut by the Danube lay,
There were his young barbarians all at play."

Some hearts were there that felt the horror as keenly as any of us would have felt it. None but a gentle heart could have conceived the idea of the Dying Gladiator, and he was Christian in all but the name.²⁸

It is with varied feelings that one travels through the sepulchral vaults of the Vatican.²⁹ The statues there are of various

²⁸ As with the Apollo and the Laocoön, Melville may first have heard of the Dying Gladiator in reading Byron; he refers to the statue as early as *Mardi*, ch. 135, and *White-Jacket*, ch. 87. While in Paris during his previous trip to Europe he had undoubtedly seen what in *Pierre*, Bk. XVI, ii, is called "that vaunted *chef d'œuvre*, the Fighting Gladiator of the Louvre," when he visited its "admirable collection of antique statuary" on 30 November 1849.

The brief quotation on the Dying Gladiator from Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, IV, cxli, appears in only one newspaper account, that of the *Clarksville Chronicle*, but there seems little doubt that Melville had the passage from Byron in mind. He may indeed have quoted it as extensively in his manuscript as it is given in Murray's *Handbook*, p. 435: compare the *Auburn Advertiser's* reference to his "beautiful poetical quotations."

²⁹ There is some question as to the precise reference intended in this passage. Although the two newspapers alluding to this portion of the lecture, the *Boston Journal* and the *Detroit Daily Free Press*, agree in their mention of "vaults of the Vatican," it seems likely that Melville had actually been speaking of one or more quite different places. Among the possibilities, all of which contain ancient sepulchral inscriptions and monuments, are the Galleria Lapidaria, a long gallery of the Vatican Museum; the crypt of St. Peter's, known as the *grotte Vaticane*, which he probably

characters: Hope faces Despair; Joy comes to the relief of Sorrow; Rachel weeps for her children and will not be comforted; Job rises above his afflictions and rejoices. The marbles alternate; some are of a joyous nature, followed by those that are of a sad and somber character. The sculptured monuments of the early Christians in these vaults show the joyous triumph of the new religion—quite unlike the somber mementoes of modern times. But just as a guide hurries us through these scenes with his torch-light, bringing out one statue in bold relief while a hundred or more are hidden in the gloom, so must I do to keep within the limits of an hour.

In passing from the inside of the Vatican to the square in front, we find ourselves surrounded by the mighty colonnade with its statues, from whence we see the balloon-like dome of St. Peter's and the great pile of confused architecture which is the outside of the Vatican. If one stands a hundred feet in front of St. Peter's and looks up, a vast and towering pile meets his view.³⁰ High, high above are the beetling crags and precipices of masonry, and yet higher still above all this is the dome. The mind is carried away with the very vastness.³¹ But through-

visited during his "tour of interior" on 8 March 1857; and the Catacombs, whose "labyrinth" he had explored three days later. The appearance in the present passage of a guide with a torch-light suggests that Melville had at least referred briefly to one or both of the subterranean sites. Murray's *Handbook*, pp. 404-405, after pointing out that pagan and Christian works face one another across the Galleria Lapidaria, observes that the Christian inscriptions show "the influence of a purer creed . . . in the constant reference to a state beyond the grave, which contrasts in a striking manner with the hopeless grief expressed in the Roman monuments." But Melville, in his similar mention of "the joyous triumph of the new religion," prefers to emphasize the contrast between the early Christian monuments and "the somber mementoes of modern times."

³⁰ Upon arriving in Rome 25 February 1857 Melville had noted that the cathedral "looks small from Tower of Capitol.—Walked to St. Peters," his journal continues. "Front view disappointing. But grand approach. Interior comes up to expectations. But dome not so wonderful as St: Sophia's." On 3 March he arrived at the church too late for an ascent to the dome, but on the following day he returned to find "feilds [sic] and paddocks on top—figures of saints." On 6 and 8 March ("tour of interior") he was again at the church. Later, on 7 April, he was to find Milan Cathedral "More satisfactory" than St. Peter's.

³¹ Melville's reaction is characteristic of his prevailing response to the magnitude of Roman buildings and the colossal size of some of the statues,

out the Vatican it is different. The mind, instead of being bewildered within itself, is drawn out by the symmetry and beauty of the forms it beholds.³²

But nearly the whole of Rome is itself a Vatican on a large scale—everywhere are fallen columns and sculptured fragments. These are of different and varied character. Remarkable, however, among all are the sculptured horses of Monte Cavallo, riderless and rearing, seeming like those of Elijah to soar to heaven.³³ The most of these, it is true, were works of Greek artists, and yet the grand spirit of Roman life inspired them, for the marble horses seem to represent the fiery audaciousness of Roman power. The equestrian group of Castor and Pollux illustrates the expression of untamed docility, ra-

notably those of the horses which he describes in the succeeding paragraph. Similar remarks are to be found throughout his journal, especially in his account of the overpowering effect upon him of the Egyptian pyramids. "In other buildings, however vast," he had written (Horsford ed., p. 123), "the eye is gradually inured to the sense of magnitude, by passing from part to part." But with the pyramids "there is no stay or stage." They stir "the sense of immensity," so that in comparison "all other architecture seems but pastry. . . . As with the ocean, you learn as much of its vastness by the first five minutes glance as you would in a month, so with the pyramid. Its simplicity confounds you." Compare also Melville's unfavorable discussion of the Crystal Palace near the conclusion of his lecture (note 54 below), a further expression of his taste in architecture.

³² Compare this expression of Melville's admiration with two comments among the penciled notes at the back of his journal (Horsford ed., pp. 267, 268): "The Vatican (a volume)" and "Vatican like long walks in great Park—arbores with arabesques."

³³ As he beheld these "colossal horses from ruins of baths" on 28 February 1857 Melville thought his experience "like finding the bones of the mastadon [sic]—gigantic figures emblematic of gigantic Rome." Richard Chase, *Herman Melville: A Critical Study* (New York, 1949), p. 227, pointing out that Melville consistently "thought of the earliest age as the age of giants," compares this passage in the journal with ch. 104 of *Moby Dick* on "The Fossil Whale," that "ante-mosaic, unsourced existence." Melville's journal entries on Monte Cavallo and the Baths of Caracalla are filled with comments on the magnitude of their ruins. On 1 March, when he saw a "colossal equestrian group" (Castor and Pollux), he thought of such ruins found in the Baths as the "most imposing group of antiques in Rome. . . . Gigantic Rome.—St. Peters in its magnitude & colossal statuary seems an imitation of these fragments."

For the reference to Elijah, to whom "appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire; . . . and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven," see II Kings, 2:11.

ther than conquered obedience, which ancient artists have given the horse.³⁴ From this can be deduced the enlarged humanity of that older day, when man gave himself none of the upstart airs of superiority over the brute creation which he now assumes. The horse was idealized by the ancient artists as majestic next to man, and they longed to sculpture them as they did heroes and gods. To the Greeks nature had no brute. Everything was a being with a soul, and the horse idealized the second order of animals just as man did the first.³⁵ This ideal and magnificent conception of the horse, which had raised that animal into a sort of divinity, is unrivaled in its sublime loftiness of attitude and force of execution. We see other instances of this same profound appreciation of the form of the horse in the sculpture of the frieze of the Parthenon.³⁶

Of other statues of large size much might be said. The Moses by Michelangelo appears like a stern, bullying genius of druidical superstition; that of Perseus at Florence would form a theme by itself.³⁷ This statue, by Benvenuto Cellini, is

³⁴ Valery's *Travels in Italy* (Paris, 1852), p. 566, notes that among the embellishments of the piazza of Monte Cavallo are "its superb colosses of *Castor* and *Pollux*," conjectured to be Greek productions, though "despite the Latin inscription, neither by Phidias nor Praxiteles." The passage is unmarked in Melville's copy (Osborne Collection, New York Public Library).

³⁵ The "most striking and beautiful thought" of this passage, as the *Clarksville Daily Chronicle's* reporter termed it, recalls Melville's earlier praise of the Liverpool truck-horses in *Redburn*, ch. 40: "what is a horse but a species of four-footed dumb man . . . ?" There is "a touch of divinity even in brutes," he had gone on to affirm, "and a special halo about a horse, that should forever exempt him from indignities." Later, in *Clarel*, IV, ix, there is an exchange of views growing out of Melville's own travel experiences. When Derwent observes that "poor Dobbin (Jew indeed / Of brutes) seems slighted in the East," Ungar counters with a reminder of Anglo-Saxon cruelty to horses (see "Traveling," note 5).

³⁶ Melville had seen this frieze in February of 1857 and was later to describe it in the third section of "The Parthenon":

"What happy musings genial went
With airiest touch the chisel lent
To frisk and curvet light
Of horses gay. . . ."

After visiting the studios of several contemporary artists working in Rome he remarked in his journal, 10 March: "Art perfect among Greeks."

³⁷ The famous figure of Moses, at the tomb of Pope Julius II in the

another astonishing conception, conceived in the fiery brain of the intense artist and brought to perfection as a bronze cast in the midst of flames which had indeed overshot their aim. Another noble statue, conceived in a very different spirit, is the Farnese Hercules, which in its simplicity and good nature reminds us of cheerful and humane things.³⁸ This statue is not of that quick, smart, energetic strength that we should suppose would appertain to the powerful Samson or the mighty Hercules; but rather of a character like that of the large ox, confident of his own strength but loth to use it. No trifles would call it forth; it is reserved only for great occasions. To rightfully appreciate this, or, in fact, any other statue, one must consider where they came from and under what circumstances they were formed. In other respects they reveal their own history.

Thus to understand the statues of the Vatican it is necessary to visit often the scenes where they once stood—the Coliseum, which throws its shade like a mighty thunder cloud, the gardens, the Forum, the aqueducts, the ruined temples—and remember all that has there taken place. I regret that the time will not allow me to speak more fully of these surroundings. But Roman statuary is by no means confined to the Vatican, or even to Rome itself. The villas around the city are filled

Church of San Pietro in Vincoli, is unmentioned in Melville's journal. Cellini's statue of Perseus holding the severed head of Medusa had interested Melville long before his glimpse of it in Florence on 24 March 1857. Describing Ahab in ch. 28 of *Moby Dick*, he had written that his form "seemed made of solid bronze, and shaped in an unalterable mould, like Cellini's cast Perseus." His present images of artistic conception "in the fiery brain of the intense artist" and of "flames which had indeed overshot their aim" not only recall Cellini's story of his work on the statue while affected by a high fever but also suggest comparison with Melville's own fire-symbolism in *Mardi*, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," and *Moby Dick*.

³⁸ This colossal replica, ten feet high, was found in the Baths of Caracalla and was once housed in the Farnese Palace, as Melville noted in his journal 27 February 1857. He had previously seen it while in Naples on 21 February, remarking on its size and describing it in his journal as having a "gravely benevolent face." Compare the reference in *Billy Budd*, ch. 2, to "that humane look of reposeful good nature which the Greek sculptor in some instances gave to his strong man, Hercules."

with it, and, in those quiet retreats, we catch some of the last and best glimpses of the art.³⁹ Here, where nature has been raised by culture and refinement into an almost human character, are found many of those trophies which have challenged the admiration of the world; here, where once exhaled sweets like the airs of Verona, now comes the deadly malaria, repelling from these ancient myrtles and orange groves. This reminds us that in a garden originated the dread sentence, Death⁴⁰—that it was amidst such perfumed grottoes, bowers, and walks that the guests of a Lucretia Borgia were welcomed to a feast, but received a pall.

Many of these villas were built long years ago by men of the heathen school, for the express purpose of preserving these ancient works of art. The villas which were to shield and protect them have now crumbled, while most of the statues which were to be thus preserved still live on. Notable is the Villa Albani, built as it was by one who had made art and antiquity the study of his life, as a place to preserve the splendid works he had collected.⁴¹ Here are the remains of antiquity from

³⁹ In addition to the Villa Albani, which Melville singled out for special attention, he had visited a number of the villas near Rome. The grounds of the Villa Borghese, which he saw on 28 February 1857 and again on 13 March, he described in his journal as of "Great beauty. . . . Fine rich odours of bushes & trees. The laurel &c. The closed villa, statues seen thro' railing. Silence & enchantment. . . ." On 17 March he went to the Villa Aldrobrandini at Frascati, with its "Avenues of trees. Laurel cypress, pine, olive. Rich masses of foliage." During the next three days as he visited additional villas he made similar brief comments in the journal. On a page near the end of the volume (Horsford ed., p. 267) is the following note: "The cypress in the Villa D'Este / Whispering like Michael Angelo's 'Fates.'"

⁴⁰ Melville was to return to this theme in *Clarel*, I, xxx:

"Within a garden walking see
The angered God . . . where the vine
And olive in the darkling hours
Inweave green sepulchres of bowers."

Memory, he adds in the same passage, "Links Eden and Gethsemane. . . ."

⁴¹ Melville had paid two visits to the Villa Albani, an eighteenth-century structure built by Alessandro Cardinal Albani outside the Porte Salaria. Murray's *Handbook*, p. 467, quotes a description of Cardinal Albani as "a profound antiquary" who, "having spent his life in collecting ancient sculpture, formed such porticos and such saloons to receive it as an old

Pompeii, and we might bring back the guests to the rooms where they sat at the feast on the eve of the fatal eruption of Vesuvius. It was not unusual for them at their feasts to talk upon the subject of death⁴² and other like mournful themes forbidden to modern ears at such scenes. Such topics were not considered irrelevant to the occasion, and instead of destroying the interest of the feast by their ill-timed intrusion, they rather added to it a temporary zest. One of the finest of the statues to be found in this villa is the Minerva,⁴³ a creature as purely and serenely sublime as it is possible for human hands to form. Here also is to be found a bust of Aesop,⁴⁴ the dwarfed and de-

Roman would have done. . . ." The villa itself is termed "the third sculpture gallery in Rome, being surpassed only by the Vatican and the Capitol" (p. 468). Melville particularly noticed a statue of Antinous and a "small bronze Apollo" on his visit of 28 February 1857; on 14 March he mentioned a caryatid and admired the "long lines of foliage—architecture of pp. 224–227, considers at some length the relations between these comments in Melville's journal and his later "After the Pleasure Party," in which these lines occur:

"Entering Albani's porch she stood
Fixed by an antique pagan stone
Colossal carved."

⁴² An exact parallel to this passage occurs in Melville's "The Age of the Antonines," the second stanza of which is quoted here from an early version sent by Melville to John C. Hoadley 31 March 1877:

"Ere the sting was dreamed to be taken from death—
Ere the saving of scamps was taught,
They reasoned of fate at the flowing feast
Nor stifled the fluent thought:
We sham, we shuffle, while faith declines:
They were *frank* in the age of the Antonines!"

According to Melville's accompanying letter, he had recently come across the poem "in a lot of papers. I remember that the lines were suggested by a passage in Gibbon (*Decline & Fall*)"—a book which had been in his mind during his visit to Rome, as indicated by his journal entry for 8 March 1857. Similarities between the poem and the lecture (see also note 12 above) and their common indebtedness to Gibbon may suggest an even earlier date for the genesis of the poem than that of 1862 advanced by Jay Leyda (*Log*, II, 760).

⁴³ Probably the "fine and imposing statue" at the Villa Albani mentioned in Murray's *Handbook*, p. 469, and thus the original of the "form august of heathen art" (an "armed Virgin") in "After the Pleasure Party," quoted in note 41 above.

⁴⁴ Also at the Villa Albani; Murray's *Handbook*, p. 470, finds the Aesop "perhaps the only example of an ancient statue of deformity." In

formed, whose countenance is irradiated by a lambent gleam of irony like that we see in Goldsmith's.

In conclusion, since we cannot mention all the different works, let us bring them together and speak of them as a whole. It will be noticed that statues, as a general thing, do not present the startling features and attitudes of men, but are rather of a tranquil, subdued air such as men have when under the influence of no passion. Not the least, perhaps, among those causes which make the Roman museums so impressive is this same air of tranquility. In chambers befitting stand the images of gods, while in the statues of men, even the vilest, what was corruptible in their originals here puts on incorruption.⁴⁵ They appeal to that portion of our beings which is highest and noblest. To some they are a complete house of philosophy; to others they appeal only to the tenderer feelings and affections. All who behold the Apollo confess its glory; yet we know not to whom to attribute the glory of creating it. The chiseling them shows the genius of the creator—the preserving them shows the bounty of the good and the policy of the wise.

These marbles, the works of the dreamers and idealists of old, live on, leading and pointing to good. They are the works of visionaries and dreamers, but they are realizations of soul, the representations of the ideal. They are grand, beautiful, and true, and they speak with a voice that echoes through the ages. Governments have changed; empires have fallen; nations have passed away; but these mute marbles remain—the oracles of time, the perfection of art. They were formed by those who had yearnings for something better, and strove to attain it by embodiments in cold stone. We can ourselves judge with what success they have worked. How well in the Apollo is expressed

Clarel, I, xii, Melville was to describe the deformed Celio's "fair head" as "set on crook and lump, / Absalom's locks but Æsop's hump. . . ."

⁴⁵ See I Corinthians 15:53. Throughout his journal of 1856-57 Melville had rung changes on the Pauline theme of corruption and incorruption.

the idea of the perfect man. Who could better it? Can art, not life, make the ideal?⁴⁶

Here, in statuary, was the Utopia of the ancients expressed.⁴⁷ The Vatican itself is the index of the ancient world, just as the Washington Patent Office is of the modern.⁴⁸ But how is it possible to compare the one with the other, when things that are so totally unlike cannot be brought together? What comparison could be instituted between a locomotive and the Apollo? Is it as grand an object as the Laocoön? To undervalue art is perhaps somewhat the custom now.⁴⁹ The world has taken a practical turn, and we boast much of our progress, of our energy, of our scientific achievements—though science is

⁴⁶ "Can art, not life, make the ideal?": in ch. 33 of *The Confidence-Man* Melville had recently written that "as with religion" the art of fiction "should present another world, and yet one to which we feel the tie," and that art should exhibit to men "even . . . more reality, than real life itself can show." A passage in the later *Clarel*, I, xxvii, touches on the difficulty of his proposition:

"But ah, the dream to test by deed,
To seek to handle the ideal
And make a sentiment serve need:
To try to realize the unreal!"

Compare also a passage of "After the Pleasure Party":

"For never passion peace shall bring,
Nor Art inanimate for long
Inspire."

⁴⁷ Melville's dislike of utopian political schemes as contrasted with the Utopia of ideal art is reflected in his manuscript poem entitled "A Reasonable Constitution" (Harvard College Library):

"What though Reason forged your scheme?
'Twas Reason dreamed the Utopia's dream:
'Tis dream to think that Reason can
Govern the reasoning creature, man."

Even in Plato's *Republic*, as in More's *Utopia*, he found an "almost entire reasonableness" offset by its "almost entire impracticality," as a note to the verse makes clear.

⁴⁸ In *The Confidence-Man*, ch. 22, the man with the brass plate reproaches the Missourian for his "way of talking as if heaven were a kind of Washington patent office museum."

⁴⁹ Living in a "utilitarian time and country," in the phrasing of the supplement to *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866), Melville had long felt the modern temper to be inimical to art. Compare his later allusion to "something retarding in the environment or soil" in his headnote to the poem "The American Aloe on Exhibition."

beneath art,⁵⁰ just as the instinct is beneath the reason.⁵¹ Do all our modern triumphs equal those of the heroes and divinities that stand there silent, the incarnation of grandeur and of beauty?

We moderns pride ourselves upon our superiority, but the claim can be questioned. We did invent the printing press, but from the ancients have we not all the best thought which it circulates, whether it be law, physics, or philosophy?⁵² As the

⁵⁰ In Boston, according to the *Traveller's* reporter, Melville's "proposition" about art and science "caused some little discussion in several groups of homeward-bound listeners, after the lecture was closed." "Never before," remarked the *Clarksville Daily Chronicle*, "was the superiority of art over science, so triumphantly and eloquently sustained." The *Clarksville* reviewer had "hung entranced" upon Melville's vindication of "these spiritual productions of the ancient mind from their alleged inferiority to the utilitarian inventions of the present age." For further discussion of Melville's thesis, see Chapter 1 above.

⁵¹ In *The Confidence-Man*, ch. 3, Melville had similarly called instinct "a teacher set below reason." But in *Mardi* he had written of reason itself as a "noble instinct" (ch. 135) and also as "revelation" and "inspiration" (ch. 175), while in *Pierre*, Bk. XI, iv, there is a scornful reference to "the mere philosopher" and his "mere undiluted reason." What at first seems inconsistent terminology can be explained by distinguishing between Melville's conception of reason in the ordinary sense of the word—as something "reasonable," or even "rational," in man—and what he regarded as "right reason." "Right reason," as F. O. Matthiessen remarks in *American Renaissance* (New York, 1941), p. 457, note 6, is, "in the Coleridgean and Emersonian terminology . . . the highest range of intuitive intelligence, the gateway to divine madness" (italics added). This is what Melville had meant by "the sane madness of vital truth" in "Hawthorne and His Mosses." "So man's insanity is heaven's sense," he subsequently wrote in *Moby Dick*, ch. 93; "and wandering from all mortal reason, man comes at last to that celestial thought, which, to reason, is absurd and frantic . . ." (italics added). It was this same "mortal reason" that Melville evidently had in mind when he wrote "A Reasonable Constitution" (note 47 above).

⁵² In private conversation 20 April 1859 with John Thomas Gulick, a student at Williams College, Melville reaffirmed this opinion: see Mentor L. Williams, "Two Hawaiian-Americans Visit Herman Melville," *New England Quarterly*, XXIII (March 1950), 97-99, and Chapter 4 above. "What little there was of meaning in the religions of the present day," Gulick quoted Melville as saying, "had come down from Plato. All our philosophy and all our art and poetry was either derived or imitated from the ancient Greeks." Similar pronouncements occur in Melville's poetry, as in Rolfe's declaration in *Clarel*, II, xxi,

"That even in Physics much late lore
But drudges after Plato's theme"

Roman arch enters into and supports our best architecture, does not the Roman spirit still animate and support whatever is soundest in societies and states? Or shall the scheme of Fourier supplant the code of Justinian?⁵³ Only when the novels of Dickens shall silence the satires of Juvenal. The ancients of the ideal description, instead of trying to turn their impracticable chimeras, as does the modern dreamer, into social and political prodigies, deposited them in great works of art, which still live while states and constitutions have perished, bequeathing to posterity not shameful defects but triumphant successes. All the merchants in modern London have not enough in their coffers to re-produce the Apollo. If the Coliseum expresses the durability of Roman ideas, what does their Crystal Palace express?⁵⁴ These buildings are exponents of

and in his own admonition in "Lone Founts" to

"Stand where the Ancients stood before,
And, dipping in lone founts thy hand,
Drink of the never-varying lore:
Wise once, and wise thence evermore."

⁵³ In *The Confidence-Man*, ch. 7, the "philanthropist" contrasts himself with "Fourier, the projector of an impossible scheme"; in "The South Seas" Melville was again to express his low opinion of Fourierism. François Marie Charles Fourier (1772-1837) had proposed the reorganization of society into small cooperative communities, "phalansteries," holding property in common.

⁵⁴ While in London in the spring of 1857, Melville had one day fallen into a reverie on the theme of this passage. The observations made in his journal at that time, as Raymond Weaver pointed out in editing *Journal up the Straits* (p. 172, note), form the basis of the present discussion: "Chrystal Palace—digest of universe. Alhambra—House of Pansi [Pansa, in Pompeii]—Temple of ——— &c&c&c.—Comparison with the pyramid [see note 31 above].—Overdone. If smaller would look larger. The Great Eastern. Pyramid.—Vast toy. No substance. Such an appropriation of space as is made by a rail fence. Durable materials, but perishable structure. Cant exist 100 years hence." So in *The Confidence-Man*, ch. 7, the inventor of the "Protean easy-chair," after seeing it placed on exhibition at the World's Fair, and observing that in the Crystal Palace was "the pride of the world glorying in a glass house," is impressed by "a sense of the fragility of worldly grandeur." Or as Melville himself had already pointed out in writing ch. 75 of *Mardi* ("Of Time and Temples"), "that which long endures full-fledged, must have long lain in the germ . . . and though a strong new monument be builded to-day, it only is lasting because its blocks are old as the sun. It is not the Pyramids that are ancient, but the eternal granite of which they are made. . . . For to make an eternity, we must build with eternities; whence, the vanity of the cry for any

the respective characters of ancients and moderns. But will the glass of the one bide the hail storms of eighteen centuries as well as the travertine of the other?

The deeds of the ancients were noble, and so are their arts; and as the one is kept alive in the memory of man by the glowing words of their own historians and poets, so should the memory of the other be kept green in the minds of men by the careful preservation of their noble statuary. The ancients live while these statues endure, and seem to breathe inspiration through the world, giving purpose, shape, and impetus to what was created high, or grand, or beautiful. Like the pillars of Rome itself, they are enduring illustrations of the perfection of ancient art.

✓ "While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand;
When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall;
And when Rome falls, the world." ⁵⁵

thing alike durable and new. . . ." Perhaps Melville considered his views vindicated when on 5 October 1858 another Crystal Palace, that built in New York for the World's Fair of 1853, was destroyed by fire.

⁵⁵ Murray's *Handbook*, pp. 294-295, points out that "the famous prophecy of the Anglo-Saxon pilgrims" embodied in these lines from Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, IV, cxlv, was recorded by the Venerable Bede. In Melville's *Clarel*, II, xxv, a Dominican adapts the phrasing to his own argument in defense of Roman Catholicism:

"If Rome could fall
'Twould not be Rome alone, but all
Religion."