

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: HERMAN MELVILLE (1819-1891)

EXAMPLE FOR LIB 100 EDUCATIONAL BIOGRAPHY PROJECT

1. Allen, Gay Wilson. *Melville and His World*. New York: Viking Press, 1971.

A relatively unsophisticated survey biography with many good illustrations. 131 pages + bibliography, notes, index.

2. Garner, Stanton. *The Civil War World of Herman Melville*. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1993.

A study of the historical and political situation in the U.S. around the time of the Civil War, when Melville was in his forties, with particular attention to his work *Battle-Pieces* and *Aspects of the War*. 455 pages + notes, bibliography, index.

3. Herbert, T. Walter, Jr. *Moby Dick and Calvinism: A World Dismantled*. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1977.

An examination of the religious struggles Melville worked through in his great novel: "Melville achieved in *Moby-Dick* a sophisticated, acute, and prophetic attack on the scheme of theological ideas that was taken as an accurate quote of ultimate reality in his time." 178 pages + index.

4. "Herman Melville." *The Literature Network*. 2004. Jalic LLC. 19 January 2004.
<<http://www.online-literature.com/melville/>>

Offers a six-paragraph biography of Melville and links to *searchable* electronic copies of selected books, short stories, and poetry. How else would I know that the word "lunatic" appears exactly once in *Moby Dick*? Yes, it's in reference to Ahab—after his dismemberment.

5. *The Life and Works of Herman Melville*. 19 January 2004. <<http://www.melville.org>>

An online-only publication "dedicated to disseminating information about Herman Melville on the Internet and the World Wide Web." Includes current events related to Melville and his work, information about his life, collections of his writings in electronic form, and links to other related sites. This is the best place to start your online Melville research.

6. Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick or The Whale*. Illus. by Rockwell Kent. New York: Modern Library, 1982.

My re-reading of Melville's novel, provoked by my encounter with Naslund's novel in the Autumn of 1999, led me to do this project on Melville. 825 pages.

7. Naslund, Sena Jeter. *Ahab's Wife, or, The Star-Gazer*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1999.

A novel that tells the “other side of the story” of Moby-Dick: Naslund creates the character of Ahab’s wife, Una, based on a few brief hints dropped by Melville, and explores the causes and effects Ahab’s madness further than Melville did. 668 pages.

8. Olson, Charles. *Call Me Ishmael*. Afterword by Merton M. Sealts, Jr. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

An idiosyncratic, controversial, and in my view brilliant work of literary criticism, originally published in 1947, that explores the place of Moby-Dick as American tragedy. Noticeably ignored by most of the other Melville commentaries and biographies I consulted. 158 pages.

9. Robertson-Lorant, Laurie. *Melville: A Biography*. New York: Clarkson Potter Publishers, 1996.

An exhaustive but also exhausting biography. Excellent as a reference work, but its length, minute detail, and print made it an extremely difficult read. 620 pages + notes, bibliography, index.

10. Sealts, Merton M. *The Early Lives of Melville: Nineteenth-Century Biographical Sketches and Their Authors*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974.

A critical examination and comparison of eleven biographies written during Melville’s lifetime and shortly after his death. Includes reprints of these sources, together with three “Family Reminiscences.” 206 pages + notes, index.