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## Poverty, Class, and Christian Charity in Melville's "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs"

First published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in June 1854, "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs" was the earliest of Melville's three paired sketches, or so-called diptychs, comparing related aspects of English and American life. Like the other two paired sketches, "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" and "The Two Temples," "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs" adapts the form of the transatlantic travel sketch pioneered by Washington Irving, most notably in *The Sketch Book* (1819–20), in order to explore subversive Tocquevillean truths about class structures and cultural ideologies in nineteenth-century America and England. With homiletic force and poignancy, "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs" thus exposes differing attitudes towards the poor and the role of Christian charity in each national culture, as found in a communion-like meal in which the narrator directly or indirectly participates. Because of the inherent biases in their class structures, both America and England are shown to be incapable treating the poor with dignity, generosity, and respect. For in both sketches, each society fails a crucial test of charity while revealing the endemic callousness of the affluent towards the poor—a lesson as relevant today as it was two centuries ago.<sup>1</sup>

Criticism of "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs" has explored some of the salient social, historical, and religious themes in the paired sketches, yet the biblical basis for the concept of charity illustrated by each narrative has not been fully explicated; nor have the larger ideological attitudes towards poverty in America and England revealed in each sketch been adequately examined. As in much of his writing in the 1850s, in this diptych Melville is paradoxically showing the insufficiency of meaningful acts of Christian charity in the nineteenth-century Anglo-American world while dramatizing the dehumanizing effects of

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their absence.<sup>2</sup>

Writing to Nathaniel Hawthorne in June 1851, Melville asserted, “With no son of man do I stand upon any etiquette or ceremony, except the Christian ones of honesty and charity.” The idea of Christian charity was thus a key component in his own personal ethical vision, and this fact is reflected in much of his fiction. A large portion of *Redburn*, for example, is devoted to describing the pervasive evidence of poverty in the port city of Liverpool, and the various honest and devious means devised to overcome individual economic hardship. In *Pierre*, Melville revealed the debilitating and demoralizing effects of rural poverty in the life of Pierre’s alleged half-sister, Isabel Banford, and in the family of his friend Charlie Millthorpe, while dramatizing his hero’s youthful plunge into urban poverty in harrowing terms. In *Israel Potter*, Melville depicted an ordinary New England soldier in the American Revolution War who is forced by poverty to live in exile in London for fifty years, depriving him of proper recognition or recompense for his service to his nation. And in *The Confidence-Man*, Melville began his panoramic apocalyptic satire with a chalkboard lesson in St. Paul’s famous teachings on charity displayed by the mysterious Christ-like man in cream colors. The biblical ideas of charity set forth by Christ and St. Paul thus formed a recurrent theme in Melville’s fiction and were an integral part of his view of Christianity as providing a moral foundation for his culture. “Poor Man’s Pudding and Rich Man’s Crumbs” is perhaps the most concentrated fictional illustration of Melville’s recognition of the social necessity of Christian charity, while illustrating the manner in which it can be evaded or abused by middle- and upper-class citizens in the two transatlantic nations that led the evangelical revival of Christianity in the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

Before we examine Melville’s paired sketches in detail, it is essential to review some of the most important biblical teachings on Christian charity in order to understand the implicit argument of this diptych. One of the chief tenets of both testaments was the need for charity and economic justice towards the poor.<sup>4</sup> A number of passages in the Old Testament made clear that caring for the poor and oppressed within the covenanted community was incumbent on the Hebrew people, while the New Testament asserts many of the same basic teachings on treatment of the poor. Jesus’s mission was thus directed towards the Galilean and Judean poor and oppressed, and embodied his core teaching of stressing the blessedness of giving to others (Acts 20:35). In the Sermon on the Mount, for example, Jesus begins by blessing the “poor in spirit,” referring to those whose poverty makes them dependent on God (Matt. 5:3), and he sets forth a militantly ascetic notion of charity towards others,

outdoing even the strict provisions of the Mosaic Law (Matt. 5:40–48). The giving of alms should be done secretly (Matt. 6:1–4), and “treasures” should be laid up in heaven, not earth (Matt. 6:19–20). In general, Jesus instructed his followers to embrace a strict physical self-denial that would make them dependent on God’s bounty for food, clothing, and shelter (Matt. 6:25–34). In keeping with this teaching, Jesus tells a rich young man that in order to spiritually perfect himself he must sell his possessions and give them to the poor (Matt. 19:24). Expressing a similar message in his apocalyptic parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus announces that those who had fed the hungry, aided the stranger, clothed the naked, or visited the sick and imprisoned would inherit eternal life at the Last Judgment (Matt. 25:31–46).

In Luke, the gospel most concerned with riches and poverty, Jesus explicitly blesses the poor (Luke 6:20) and later tells his disciples to invite the poor to dine because they won’t be able to reciprocate the favor (Luke 14:12–14). In the subsequent parable of the Great Supper, Jesus told the story of a man who invited a group of guests for dinner, but they all excused themselves from attending; whereupon he quickly invited “the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind” (Luke 14:21) as more worthy guests. And in the influential parable of Dives and the beggar Lazarus, the latter ascends to the heaven of “Abraham’s bosom” at his death, while the rich Dives descends to hell where he begs Lazarus for water to cool his burning tongue. But Abraham tells the rich man that nothing can bridge the gulf between the poor in heaven and the rich in hell; if the rich man wants to spare his rich brothers the same experience, they should read the law of Moses for instruction on how to treat the poor and needy (Luke 16:19–31).

Jesus’s teaching on charity towards the poor and oppressed was carried on by St. Paul, whose writings are most closely associated with the term “charity” in the New Testament. The Greek word *agape* (brotherly love) appears in the New Testament 116 times, and in a quarter of those appearances it is translated in the Authorized Version as “charity.” The term describes an openly caring attitude towards the poor and oppressed, rather than a concrete manifestation of aid or assistance. Most famous perhaps is Paul’s hymn to charity in 1 Corinthians 13, which sets forth the word as an ideal standard of behavior for Christians. Thus, some Christians may speak eloquently, have gifts of faith and prophecy, perform miracles, give to the poor, or sacrifice themselves—but even with all these virtues they are still at fault if they are lacking in charity, or a loving attitude towards their fellows. In a subsequent litany of definitions, St. Paul characterizes charity as a long-suffering virtue, unaffected

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by passion, and he concludes his hymn with the hopeful instruction that “Charity never faileth” (1 Cor. 13:8).

If we now turn to Melville’s “Poor Man’s Pudding and Rich Man’s Crumbs,” we can see that the two sketches are almost textbook illustrations of how charity—namely, an attitude of caring, love, or empathy—does indeed fail in the modern world, in both republican America and monarchical England, because of class-based blindness and ideology. The first sketch thus depicts an impoverished American rural couple whose honest husbandry fails to fulfill the Jeffersonian ideal of a nation of independent yeoman farmers. Here the narrator partakes of a frugal meal with Martha and William Coulter where he learns that the seemingly beneficent forces of nature that his affluent friend Blandmour claims as assisting the poor are all fraudulent. In the second sketch, by contrast, the London poor are degraded into beasts by an aristocratic charity event based on the principle of “noblesse oblige”; and here we find key allusions to Christ’s well-known parable of Dives and Lazarus, which highlighted the impassable gulf that allegedly exists between the heavenly reward of the poor and the hellish fate of the ungenerous rich. In Melville’s sketch, however, it is the poor who inhabit a symbolic hell on earth, while it is the invisible rich and powerful who are honored for leaving their “crumbs” behind for the poor to feed on.

In the first sketch, the narrator begins by noting that he’s giving a retrospective account of events that allegedly occurred four decades previous, a narrative framing device that creates an illusory distance between the events of the story and the present.<sup>5</sup> While visiting his comfortably situated friend, the poet Blandmour, in the country, the narrator describes his visit to the Coulters, whose life of physical deprivation is fatuously misrepresented by Blandmour as rich in the charities of nature. It should be noted that the very name “Blandmour” conveys an allegorical implication of fraudulence, for it is made up of the words “bland amour” or “insipid love”; and indeed the character bearing this name is notable for his smooth-spoken, hypocritical charity. For contrary to Blandmour’s false report, the rural couple’s lot is not only deprived of physical necessities but it is also psychologically burdensome since their poverty contradicts the vaunted American ideals of economic opportunity and equality.

The initial ideological target of the sketch is accordingly found in the poet Blandmour’s remark to the narrator at the beginning of the narrative: “you see, my friend, that the blessed almoner, Nature, is in all things beneficent; and not only so, but considerate in her charities, as any discreet philanthropist might be.”<sup>6</sup> Blandmour is implicitly claiming that by

acting discreetly in its acts of philanthropy, nature is behaving the way Christ instructed individuals in the Sermon on the Mount to be discreet in their charities (Matt. 6:11). Blandmour's displacement of Christian ideas of human benevolence onto nature is manifestly absurd, even as his remarks imply that nature's charitable actions are sometimes invisible—meaning, for the narrator (and reader), that they are in fact non-existent.

Blandmour's idealized view of nature is in fact an amalgam of various strains of early nineteenth-century American thought. The idea that everything in nature was providentially designed by God was famously promulgated by the Anglican clergyman William Paley's *Natural Theology* (1802), which had a strong influence in nineteenth-century America. In addition, a widely disseminated belief propounded by Thomas Jefferson and championed by many other cultural spokesmen in the early national period was that American "nature" was superior to European "civilization," just as agriculture was superior to manufacturing. In its vast continental expanses, American nature was thus a guarantor of national prosperity as well as a mystic symbol of divinity—the latter idea being further developed by Emerson and the Transcendentalists beginning in the 1830s. Read within the context of the mid-1850s when the story was published, Blandmour's fatuous remarks on natural beneficence in "Poor Man's Pudding" would have suggested a topical satire on the current Transcendentalist celebration of nature that began with Emerson's *Nature* (1836) and was most recently articulated in Thoreau's *Walden* (1854). In the section on "Commodity" in *Nature*, for example, Emerson claims that the "ministry" of nature's cyclical workings prove that "the endless circulations of divine charity nourish man." Emerson's use of religious language like the "ministry" of nature and its "divine charity" in this section is implicitly subverted in Melville's sketch; for the alleged circulations of the divine charity of nature do *not* nourish the impoverished Coulters. Indeed, based on the example of the narrator's visit to the Coulters, nature feeds humanity poorly, makes them physically uncomfortable and unhealthy, and kills them with disease.<sup>7</sup>

In the narrator's conversation with Blandmour before he visits the Coulters, the latter goes on to point out a specific example of nature's benevolence to the poor American farmer in the fact of late-March snow, which he denominates "Poor Man's Manure" and claims that "it is as good as the rich farmer's farm-yard enrichments" (289). Not easily taken in by such a claim, the narrator notes that despite Blandmour's assertion, nature still seems to favor the wealthy Squire Teamster in its actions: "It may be as you say, dear Blandmour. But tell me, how is it that the

wind drives yonder drifts of 'Poor Man's Manure' off poor Coulter's two-acre patch here, and piles it up yonder on rich Squire Teamster's twenty-acre field?" (289). Significantly, Emerson had argued in the "Discipline" section of *Nature* that the hard lessons of debt must be respected, for even in their inequitable actions, both nature and property operate according to divine laws: "property, which has been well compared to snow,—if it fall level to-day, it will be blown into drifts to-morrow,—is the surface action of internal machinery, like the index on the face of a clock."<sup>8</sup>

Admitting for argument's sake that the spring snow might have some beneficent use to the poor, the narrator of "Poor Man's Pudding" asks what use can be found in "the cold snows of the long, long winters here?" (290). True to his convictions, however, Blandmour is ready to fall back on a biblical proof text, asking, "Why, do you not remember the words of the Psalmist?—'The Lord giveth snow like wool'" (Ps.147:16); he then proceeds with fatuous casuistry to argue his point: "So, you see, the winter's snow *itself* is beneficent; under the pretense of frost—a sort of gruff philanthropist—actually warming the earth, which afterward is to be fertilizingly moistened by these gentle flakes of March" (290). The snow is thus personified as a "gruff philanthropist" paradoxically heating the earth with its coldness—a logical contradiction as well as a significant distortion of the meaning of the quotation from Psalm 147 when read in context.<sup>9</sup>

In their further discussion, Blandmour informs his friend that water also has other unexpected salubrious and nutritional uses for the poor, implying that it is a kind of miraculous substance like the water of life of paradise (Gen. 2:10; Rev. 22:1), or the manna that fed the Israelites in the desert after falling from heaven like snow (Exod. 16). Each example, however, merely magnifies Blandmour's glib insensitivity and adds to the cumulative *reductio ad absurdum* of his argument. Blandmour's first example cites the use of water as a remedy for eye ailments, or what the narrator describes as "Poor Man's Eye-water," a remedy that is transparently fraudulent from its implicit association with the more familiar phrase "eye wash." Further claims about the unexpected culinary ("Poor Man's Egg") and medical ("Poor Man's Plaster") uses of water are equally fatuous. In the end, Blandmour blithely insists that what he now calls "Poor Man's Pudding" is "as relishable as a rich man's" and encourages the narrator to try it himself, ending his remarks with the callous assertion that "through kind Nature, the poor, out of their very poverty, extract comfort" (291). Taking up his friend's challenge, the narrator decides to drop by the residence of the Coulters in order to judge the merits of

Blandmour's claims on the natural charities given to the poor. As in Christ's parables on the blessedness of the poor in the Gospel of Luke, the narrator will share a humble meal with those who are implicitly qualified to "eat bread in the kingdom of God" (Luke 14:15) through their piety and suffering.

In addition to its implicit satirical attack on the idealization of nature found in Anglo-American natural theology, Jeffersonian agrarianism, and New England Transcendentalism, another potential target of Melville's social criticism here is an influential school of New York authors whom Adam Sweeting has dubbed the "Genteel Romantics" and who promoted the contemporary English Romantic aesthetic of the picturesque. In such popular writers as Washington Irving, Andrew Jackson Downing, and Nathaniel P. Willis, all of whom built country houses in the Lower Hudson Valley in 1830s, '40s, and '50s, we thus find "a willingness on the part of Americans to aestheticize the built environment, to view houses, properties, and the people who inhabited them as objects of art whose deviance from picturesque norms was subject to criticism. Because the Genteel Romantics did not consider economic and social realities essential to the aesthetic appreciation of the countryside, their sketches and accounts usually dismissed such concerns."<sup>10</sup> It is just such a glaring omission of economic and social realities, in favor of fatuous picturesque norms, that Melville draws attention to in "Poor Man's Pudding." For the narrator's actual encounter with William and Martha Coulter contradicts everything that Blandmour has said about nature's beneficence and the allegedly contented lot of the rural poor. The sketch thus demonstrates that concrete acts of charity toward the poor will not come from a morally indifferent nature but must come from other caring human beings.

Arriving "on a wet Monday noon" (291) on an improvised visit, the narrator accordingly finds Mrs. Coulter just finishing her washing at an outdoor shed where the cold and damp threaten her health, especially since she is pregnant. The narrator's first exposure to the supposedly beneficent powers of cold water thus immediately negates Blandmour's assertions. When the narrator sits down in front of the fire, he learns that the couple must burn the inferior rotten logs from Squire Teamster's forest where William chops wood for a living. Looking around him, he sees that the carpet-less house "was old, and constitutionally damp" and the couple live with only "bare necessities" that include "an old volume of Doddridge" (292) on the chimney-shelf, a likely reference to Philip Doddridge's *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* (1745), a classic of eighteenth-century Anglo-American Christian apologetics.<sup>11</sup> When Martha

Coulter mentions that they will be eating a pudding for lunch made of “only rice, milk, and salt boiled together” (292), the narrator identifies the concoction as the so-called “Poor Man’s Pudding” mentioned by his friend Blandmour; but the wife is quick to perceive the demeaning quality of the term while denying that she and her husband give it this name, and the narrator inwardly regrets his gaffe.

When the wife’s husband William soon returns from chopping wood, the narrator is able to test the pudding’s culinary appeal, along with the rye-bread and year-old salt pork that Squire Teamster has let the couple have “on account.” But as the narrator soon discovers, the pork is partially spoiled and almost inedible. Not only is the meat from William’s employer of substandard quality, but the narrator also learns that Squire Teamster is a demanding taskmaster and is waiting for him to finish his unappetizing lunch and get back to work. The oppressive relationship between the two men is in fact embedded in the very names of the two characters here, William *Coulter* and Squire *Teamster*, underlining the onerous subordination of the rural laborer to the rural landowner, for a “coulter” cuts the ground in advance of the plow, while a “teamster” drives horses pulling freight. The squire’s only charitable act to the poor farm couple is to arrange to have his servant take Martha Coulter to church on Sundays in her pregnant condition because it is too far to walk and, lacking a horse, her husband cannot carry her there. The squire thus fails to give the Coulters anything that will materially benefit them, but he facilitates Martha’s Sunday trip to church, an experience that will give her only moral consolation. Before he leaves to go back to work, William mentions that he plans to buy a horse so that he can provide his wife with this means of transportation, thereby demonstrating both his conjugal affection and his self-respecting desire to improve his lot.

With her husband gone back to work, Martha speaks of his continued affection for her and her grief that their two children, Martha and William, had died, while the narrator compassionately listens as he attempts to eat some of the pudding in front of him. The “Poor Man’s Pudding” that has been so vaunted by his friend Blandmour turns out in the end to have a “mouldy, briny taste” because the rice was the “damaged sort sold cheap” and the salt came “from the last year’s pork barrel” (295); thus it is almost inedible. As Martha Coulter continues to express her grief for her two lost children using an appropriately damp comparison (“still, still does dark grief leak in, just like the rain through our roof” [295]), the narrator can only listen silently while he is emotionally “half choked with but one little mouthful” of the inedible pudding. In a scene



of Wordsworthian pathos, the narrator shows his empathy for the grieving mother.

An additional irony here arises from the name of the bereaved mother, Martha Coulter. In the Gospel of John, Martha was the sister of Lazarus, whom Christ raised from the dead (John 11:1–44); but unfortunately no Christ can raise Martha Coulter’s children from the dead in Melville’s sketch. Instead, she sadly speculates on whether her dead children can come back to life in the form of new offspring by means of a transmigration of souls, but she can’t really convince herself of the fact: “Ah, sir, if those little ones yet to enter the world were the same little ones which so sadly have left it; returning friends, not strangers, strangers, always strangers! Yet does a mother soon learn to love them; for certain, sir, they come from where the others have gone. Don’t you believe that, sir?” (295). The empathic narrator, however, remains helplessly silent on an issue he can’t—or doesn’t want—to answer.

During his visit to the Coulters, then, the narrator learns to see the fallacy of Blandmour’s callous assertions. Moreover, unlike Blandmour, who has a ready tongue for glossing over the troubles of the poor, the narrator has no words for Martha Coulter’s inconsolable grief and so must take his leave, after having himself been the recipient of a charitable meal from his hosts. His final homiletic remarks about the condition of the poor in America are, however, far more cogent about the condition of the rural poor than anything said by Blandmour; indeed, they are as direct and honest in their purport as Blandmour’s were evasive and dishonest. As the narrator notes, the situation of the American poor is rendered problematic by the nation’s egalitarian ideology, which discounts the existence of the poor as a permanent subclass; for in a society of upwardly mobility, those who remain at the bottom—the undeserving poor—are by implication morally at fault:

The native American poor never lose their delicacy or pride; hence, though unreduced to the physical degradation of the European pauper, they yet suffer more in mind than the poor of any other people in the world. Those peculiar social sensibilities nourished by our own peculiar political principles, while they enhance the true dignity of a prosperous American, do but minister to the added wretchedness of the unfortunate; first, by prohibiting their acceptance of what little random relief charity may offer; and, second, by furnishing them with the keenest appreciation of the smarting distinction between their ideal of universal equality and their grind-stone experience of the practical misery and infamy of poverty—a misery and infamy which is, ever has been, and

ever will be, precisely the same in India, England, and America.  
(296)

With its final outspoken denial of what is now called American exceptionalism, the contrast outlined above—between the political ideals and economic reality of American life—shows the poor as doubly disadvantaged in both their physical deprivation and their intractable sense of failure.

The narrator's comments on the physical and psychological suffering of the "native American poor" are in fact an astute counter-argument to the widely promulgated idea of the nation as an upwardly mobile society, and of the poor as being morally responsible for their own condition, as in the following representative statement by the New York Protestant Episcopal Church Mission Society in their sixth annual report in 1837:

In the older countries of Europe there is a CLASS OF POOR: families born to poverty, living in poverty, dying in poverty. With us there are none such. In our bounteous land individuals alone are poor; but they form no poor class, because with them poverty is but a transient evil . . . save paupers and vagabonds . . . all else form one common class of citizens; some more, others less advanced in the career of honorable independence; but none without having in their hands, under God's providence, the means of attaining it; and all, with individual exceptions, going on, by industry and economy, to acquire it.

A decade later, the New York Almshouse Commissioner echoed such sentiments in his 1847 annual report: "In our highly favored country, where labour is so much demanded and so liberally rewarded, and the means of subsistence so easily and cheaply obtained, poverty need not and ought not to exist." Such claims demonstrate how far the inability to recognize larger economic, social, and political sources of poverty pervaded American democratic ideology.<sup>12</sup>

Contrary to the above assertions, Melville's sketch shows that industry and economy do not always allow individuals and families to rise in America; and a few other isolated voices in the antebellum debate over poverty would have agreed. In an 1843 "Address on the Prevention of Pauperism," for example, Walter Channing, a professor of obstetrics at the Harvard Medical School and brother to the Unitarian divine William Ellery Channing, outlined the many social causes of poverty and the inadequacy of current institutional remedies, all while protesting against the common tendency to blame poverty on the moral vices of the poor:

I speak now of poverty as a social condition, — embracing within its melancholy precincts great numbers, — as numbering among these, along with the abject and degraded, men and women of noble sentiments, and of noble actions, — men and women who have learned the true significance of self-sacrifice in the midst of their own unnamed, unknown destitution, and who do acts of self-sacrificing charity, which put to the blush the careful, prudential kindness of wealth or competence. I speak of poverty, deep poverty, which exists along with the truest delicacy, the most honorable self-respect.<sup>13</sup>

Such virtuous and charitable poverty is exemplified by the Coulter family in Melville's sketch.

The first sketch of "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs" thus ends when the narrator says goodbye to Martha Coulter, noticing on his way out that the house is unhealthily overheated and unventilated—a frequent subject of criticism "made on the habits of the poor by the well-housed, well-warmed, and well-fed" (296) like his friend Blandmour. Yet upon his return to his friend's house, he does not attack Blandmour for the falsity of his ideas of the poor but instead he leaves his criticism unspoken, thereby exercising his own act of charity towards his friend, in accordance with Christ's injunction not to point out the faults of others without recognizing one's own (Matt. 7:1–5). For after telling Blandmour that despite his comfortable life, the narrator would not classify him as a wealthy man, he concludes: "I do not include *you*, when I say, that if ever a Rich Man speaks prosperously to me of a Poor Man, I shall set it down as—I won't mention the word" (296).

The first sketch of "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs," then, shows the fallacy of attitudes to the poor among the middle and upper classes in an allegedly classless United States. The message of "Poor Man's Pudding" is thus premised on a contrast between republican ideology and socioeconomic reality; in this case, the contrast between Blandmour's misleading representations of the natural comforts of the Coulter family versus the actual painful reality of their condition, as the narrator discovers it firsthand. The sketch demonstrates that the middle and upper classes in America psychologically insulate themselves from the reality of poverty, overlooking its suffering through willful denial and a distortion of the teachings of their faith.

The second sketch of "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs" picks up a few months after the visit of the narrator to the Coulters, when he has come to England on a recuperative voyage. The narrator mentions one memorable experience he had while being shown some

of the “noble charities” of the city by a friendly “civic subordinate” whom he meets on the streets of Cheapside. The man proposes that the two of them go to the site of one of the most “interesting” charities of all, the annual Guildhall Banquet by the Lord Mayor of London, which has taken place the day before and on this particular occasion involved a dazzling array of “emperors, regents, and kings” (297) of Europe celebrating the final defeat of Napoleon by Wellington and the Allies at Waterloo. Although it does not affect his larger point, Melville’s date for the sketch of 1814 is erroneous, for the battle of Waterloo occurred in 1815 following the emperor’s escape from Elba. The historic event that Melville is actually describing in the sketch was a gathering in London on 18 June 1814 to celebrate the Peace of Paris and the (temporary) end of hostilities in Europe in the summer of 1814, an event he had read about while visiting the site of the famous banquet in London in November 1849.<sup>14</sup>

In “Rich Man’s Crumbs,” the narrator’s guide is full of wonder and admiration of the costly magnificence of the Guildhall banquet, noting that “the dinner was served on nothing but solid silver and gold plate, worth at least £200,000—that is, 1,000,000 of your dollars; while the mere expenditure of meats, wines, attendance and upholstery, &c., can not be footed under £25,000—125,000 of your hard cash” (297). Puzzled by these statistics, the narrator asks his new friend whether “feeding kings at that rate” (297) is indeed an act of charity; and only then is he informed that the charity event came after the royal feast, and that the two of them can visit it as it was about to take place nearby. Already we find an ethical disconnection between the ironically minded narrator and his English friend, who is full of crass statistical information about the cost and magnificence of the recent aristocratic feast while failing to appreciate the insult to the poor in the charitable event he is showing, just as Blandmour had inadvertently insulted the Coulters in his distorted view of their impoverished situation. In this second sketch, the narrator is being given a tour by an equally obtuse individual who fails to understand the true nature of the phenomenon he is describing; indeed, the English guide is beholden to as many self-serving national and cultural clichés as the narrator’s friend in America.

The fact that the sketch is set when such an assemblage of kings, nobles, and generals is concentrated in London suggests the idea that this is an archetypal image of Old World aristocracy, as does the existence of a hungry urban mob who seem to inhabit a separate universe, and not just a separate class, from the assembled aristocrats. Although the Christian ideal of charity is superficially enacted by the allowance of the London poor to eat the leftovers of the feast, the poor here are

degraded into vengeful beasts, demonstrating the failure of charity in its essential meaning as an attitude of caring or brotherly love towards the unfortunate. Melville's harsh portrait is in keeping with the many contemporary critiques of England's vast social and economic inequalities, which the New Poor Law of 1834 only seemed to exacerbate; so in an 1844 address to the Boston Society for the Prevention of Pauperism, the Unitarian minister W. C. Waterston noted the negative transatlantic example: "The Reports of the Poor Law Commissioners are filled with the most painful details, showing a land where wealth is contrasted with wretchedness, and splendor with sloth and sin; where the poor clan and club together, and grasp with a curse, what is given with a grudge."<sup>15</sup>

The narrator and his English guide in Melville's sketch thus go to a "grimy" backyard to the rear of Guildhall where they find "a mass of lean, famished, ferocious creatures, struggling and fighting for some mysterious precedence, and all holding soiled blue tickets in their hands" (298). These famished urban poor are then allowed to enter the Guildhall to feed on the leftovers, and the narrator and his guide join the seething mob, who are depicted as dehumanized savages: "The beings round me roared with famine. For in this mighty London misery but maddens. In the country it softens. As I gazed on the meagre, murderous pack, I thought of the blue eye of the gentle wife of poor Coulter" (298). The narrator thus finds a rationale for the degraded physical condition of these poor in the extreme misery of contemporary London, at the same time thinking of their contrast to the innocent Martha Coulter, whose poignant suffering and rural poverty aroused a more ready sympathy.

Caught in an unruly urban mob as part of his tour of the charity banquet, the narrator is protected by his friend who flourishes a steel truncheon over his head to keep any attackers away; in the meantime, he and the packed crowd of the poor enter into a cavernous room and the narrator now imagines that, like Dante, he is with a contingent of the damned in hell: "As we drove, slow and wedge-like, into the gloomy vault, the howls of the mass reverberated. I seemed seething in the Pit with the Lost" (298). The crowd eventually enters the "famous Guildhall" where the narrator wonders at the contrast between the "thronged rabble" (298) and the galaxy of royalty and aristocracy—notably, the Emperor of Russia, the King of Prussia, the Prince Regent of England, and the Duke of Wellington—who feasted in the same room only twelve hours before. Equally incongruous is the contrast between the spectacle of conquerors' flags on the walls and the foul culinary debris on the floor of the hall, which was "strewed with the smaller and more wasteful

fragments of the feast” while two long rows of “dirty pine-tables were piled with less trampled wrecks” (299) of food. The contrast brings to the narrator’s mind the parable of Dives and Lazarus, for it seems as though the “banners looked down upon the floor as from his balcony Dives upon Lazarus” (299). In this ironic allusion to the familiar New Testament parable, the poor have no privileged moral status in heaven but are instead trapped in the hellish condition of the beggar Lazarus, “desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table” (Luke 16:21). Another irony here in relation to Christ’s well-known parable is that in the story Dives goes to hell at his death where, despite his petitions to Abraham, he remains, while the beggar Lazarus has a secure place in “Abraham’s bosom”; for between rich and poor “there is a great gulf fixed” (Luke 16:6). In Melville’s sketch, by contrast, there is a great gulf fixed to the exclusive advantage of the rich; for the poor seem to be the denizens of a hell on earth while the invisible rich feast lavishly and then get credit for their charity by leaving their scraps for poor. There is no sign of a heavenly afterlife for the poor.

In the Guildhall, meanwhile, a “line of liveried men kept back with their staves the impatient jam of the mob” to prevent them from pillaging the premises, while another group of “gowned and gilded officials” (299) handed out the leftover meats to the poor ticketholders. Immune to the dehumanized aspects of the scene, the narrator’s guide is carried away by the thought of the noble folk who ate there the day before, and we accordingly hear a series of grotesque vignettes of some of the noble personages who ate a particular kind of meat during the feast, as opposed to the impoverished individuals eating the same meat now. As in his earlier conversation with Blandmour, the narrator keeps a more detached and ironic attitude, in this case making oblique comments about the well-known vices of the royal or aristocratic personages being mentioned. Thus, the guide suggests that a “pasty” currently being consumed by a “pale girl” was eaten by the Emperor of Russia, to which the narrator replies that “it looks as though some omnivorous Emperor or other had had a finger in that pie” (299). The ruthlessly expansionist policies of the czar are thus highlighted, as in the multiple Partitions of Poland, not to mention the current rearrangement of the chessboard of Europe by the Great Powers following the defeat of Napoleon. The narrator also makes an ironic joke on the Prince Regent’s reputation for lechery when the guide speculates that the Prince might have dined off a pheasant in which the “two breasts were gouged ruthlessly out,” for the narrator wryly notes: “‘I don’t doubt it,’ murmured I, ‘he is said to be uncommonly fond of the breast’” (299). Thinking of the historical reasons behind

the feast, the narrator goes on to facetiously note that he expects to see “Napoleon’s head in a charger” like the head of John the Baptist at Herod’s birthday feast (Matt. 14:1–11)—demonstrating his detachment from the guide’s obsequious remarks and indicating his private estimate of the degrading scene before him.

The guide’s subsequent attempts to make Platoff, a well-known Cossack chieftain, into a benevolent agent of charity for leaving a “fat pork-pie” for later consumption by the poor is especially obtuse, given the legendary ruthlessness of these mounted fighters; and indeed, when the pork-pie falls to the floor in a dispute between two hungry men, it turns out to be empty of meat. Despite this glaring disproof of his claim, the guide persists in calling the scene before them a “noble charity” and even improbably claims that “even Gog and Magog yonder, at the other end of the hall, fairly laugh out their delight at the scene” (300), while the narrator more perceptively suggests that their expression is really a “sardonical grin.” The guide’s allusion to the famous fourteen-foot statues of these twin monsters in the historic Guildhall is appropriate to the lurking threat of violence from the poor against the powerful as found in Melville’s sketch. For in keeping with the savage mood of the degraded poor in the Guildhall and the images of Gog and Magog that ornament the hall, the biblical context of the scene here shifts from Luke’s parable of Dives and Lazarus to the Ezekiel’s Old Testament vision of an end-time battle between Israel and the armies of Gog and Magog, after which the wild birds and beasts and beasts will feast on the carcasses of the enemy—a meal of vengeful carnage, not charity.<sup>16</sup>

Ezekiel accordingly described his instructions from God:

And, thou son of man, thus said the LORD GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood.

Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. (39:17–18)

Such a promiscuous feast resembles the anarchic scene of scattered meat and food in the Guildhall in that the poor are symbolically degraded into birds and beasts of prey. If the flesh of the mighty is literally incarnated in the various meat dishes in the hall, the image of drinking the blood of the noble princes of the earth is obliquely represented when the guide proudly points out a “golden-hued jelly” consumed in one gulp by a

famished beggar—a form of food that the guide thinks is a sign of exemplary generosity but that the narrator rightly thinks is inappropriate to the needs of the poor: “Would not plain beef and bread, with something to do, and be paid for, be better?” (300).

The narrator, however, is unable to continue his pointed critiques of the leftover feast, as he is ironically now taken for one of the poor by a “red-gowned official” and is reprimanded for loitering; only the intervention of his guide rescues him from further verbal abuse. The official advises both of them to leave the premises before the crowd grows even more unruly after all the leftovers had been consumed; and sure enough, the mob soon begins to get out of hand:

It seemed to me as if a sudden impotent fury of fell envy possessed them. That one half-hour’s peep at the mere remnants of the glories of the Banquets of Kings; the unsatisfying mouthfuls of disembowelled pasties, plundered pheasants, and half-sacked jellies, served to remind them of the intrinsic contempt of the alms. In this sudden mood, or whatever mysterious thing it was that now seized them, these Lazaruses seemed ready to spew up in repentant scorn the contumelious crumbs of Dives. (301)

A spontaneous revolt breaks out in reaction to the disparity between the culinary luxury of the rich and powerful, and the paucity of leftovers given to the starving London poor. As the crowd threatens his personal safety, the narrator is led by the guide out of the hall: “This way, this way! stick like a bee to my back” (301). However, when the narrator is attacked by the furious mob, the guide instructs him to retaliate: “Wedge—wedge in—quick—there goes your bunged hat—never stop for your coat-tail—hit that man—strike him down! hold! jam! now! now! wrench along for your life! ha! here we breathe freely; thank God! You faint. Ho!” (301). In effect, the two have to fight their way through a hostile resentful crowd who rough up the narrator and tear his clothes in the process.

In keeping with the narrator’s earlier assertion that the “howls” of the famished crowd made him think he was in a Dantean scene “seething in the Pit with the Lost,” the description of his subsequent exit is partly based on comparable events in Dante’s *Inferno*.<sup>17</sup> For just as the narrator is mistaken for one of the starving poor by a “red-gowned official,” so Dante the pilgrim at the entry to the City of Dis in Canto VIII is momentarily mistaken by the boatman Phlegyas for one of the damned. And just as the narrator and guide are threatened by the unruly crowd of famished poor, Canto XXIII of the *Inferno* describes a comparable scene in which Virgil and Dante pass between the fifth and sixth “pouch”



(*malabolia*) of the Eighth Circle of Hell; here Dante worries about the resentful anger of the group of “barrators” (i.e., perpetrators of fraud) in pools of pitch whom he and Virgil have encountered in the previous canto:

For thus I reason'd: “These through us have been  
 So foil'd, with loss and mockery so complete,  
 As needs must sting them sore. If anger then  
 Be to their evil will conjoin'd, more fell  
 They shall pursue us, than the savage hound  
 Snatches the leveret [rabbit] panting 'twixt his jaws.”  
 Already I perceived my hair stand all  
 On end with terror, and look'd eager back.  
 “Teacher,” I thus began, “if speedily  
 Thyself and me thou hide not, much I dread  
 Those evil talons. Even now behind  
 They urge us: quick imagination works  
 So forcibly, that I already feel them.”<sup>18</sup>

Virgil immediately responds to Dante's concern by sliding down the embankment with the poet in his arms (“Carrying me in his bosom, as a child, / Not a companion”), and the two escape the incensed denizens of that section of Hell, just as the guide facilitates the narrator's escape from the hellish Guildhall. The literary echoes from the *Inferno* reinforce the image of human savagery and baseness among the hungry hordes in the Guildhall, exacerbated by the paltry remnants of food left over from the previous day's banquet. Yet if the poor are depicted as beasts in their final frenzy, the aristocratic diners in the Guildhall—who include a rapacious czar, a lecherous prince regent, and a brutal Cossack general—are also revealed to be equally vicious in this quasi-Dantean grotesque tableau.

The scene at the Guildhall ends with the narrator escaping from its hellish purlieus, and the guide subsequently helps him get into a cab, making sure to tell the driver that the passenger is a “*gentleman*” despite his torn attire. Amazingly, the guide is still convinced that the scene they have just witnessed is an admirable British tradition, for he tells the narrator that “when you get back to your own country, you can say you have witnessed the greatest of all England's noble charities. Of course, you will make reasonable allowances for the unavoidable jam” (301). What the guide doesn't realize is that for the narrator the banquet is more of a warning of the apocalyptic violence of the poor than an exercise in Christian charity. By feeding the poor their leftovers, the Guildhall nobles may be inadvertently acting in accordance with the Old Testament

injunction to leave the gleanings of the field to the poor (Lev. 19:9–10); but in most cases the food on the tables and floor is already picked clean of nourishment. Within a New Testament context, moreover, the event is a gross violation of St. Paul's emphasis on charity as a caring attitude, not a generous act, while it also contradicts the apostle's insistence that charity "suffereth long, and is kind" and should not "behave itself unseemly" (1 Cor. 13:4, 5). We can well understand the narrator's final wish at the conclusion of the sketch, after he has returned "bruised and battered" to his lodgings, that "Heaven in its kind mercy" save him from future experiences of both "Poor Man's Pudding" and "Rich Man's Crumbs" (302) since they are both travesties of true Christian charity.

"Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs," then, offers an ironic view of two scenes of poverty in America and England, showing in each case how the scene subverts key New Testament teachings on charity. In America, it is nature itself that is misrepresented as being charitable to the poor, while in England it is traditions of aristocratic largesse; but in both cases, the benefit is imaginary or downright fraudulent, unlike that form of charity coming "out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (1 Tim. 1:5). In both sketches, moreover, the glib interlocutors of the narrator, who act as spokesmen for the national attitudes concerning the poor, are comparable to the "sounding brass" and "tinkling cymbal" of those who speak fluently but lack charitable dispositions in St. Paul's well-known image (1 Cor. 13:1). Both America and England thus fail to aid the poor, contradicting Christ's injunction to feed the hungry or be condemned to divine judgment (Matt. 25:32–46). In addition, in Melville's diptych we find an ironic opposition between the narrator's compassionate attitude towards the rural Coulters in America, and his dismayed reaction to the crowd of London beggars at the Guildhall banquet, which is rendered more ironic when he is mistaken for one of the beggars by the authorities. But in both cases, the narrator effectively conveys his awareness of the cultural and institutional prejudices that have impeded genuine help for the needy, as mandated by the New Testament.

Read within the larger context of the print culture of the antebellum era, "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs" bears a generic resemblance to the form of the religious tract, but it is manifestly too allusive, subversive, and ironic to fully qualify for this didactic medium. Indeed, in its implicit and explicit reliance on New Testament proof texts, Melville's diptych confirms the strategic division in his use of the Bible in his fiction between a critique of the metaphysical foundations of the Christian faith, and his reliance on Christian moral paradigms and

parables from the New Testament—notably Luke’s twin parables of the Great Feast and Lazarus and Dives—to reveal the shortcomings of his culture. Critics have examined Melville’s persistent use of the Bible as a formal and thematic template for his fiction, especially in *Moby-Dick*, even as his Christian faith waned in the early 1850s. So although Melville was increasingly skeptical of the larger metaphysical truth claims of Christianity, he remained committed, like some of his mid-Victorian peers such as Dickens, Kingsley, and Gaskell, to an outspoken fictionalized mode of social criticism that showed the glaring contradictions between New Testament ideals and historical realities in representative Anglo-American sites of impoverishment. The final message of Melville’s first diptych, then, is that both nature and culture conspire against both rural and urban poor, and neither democratic nor aristocratic political systems, nor the tenets of Christianity as practiced in each society, can relieve those in most need. For despite their evangelical Protestant heritage, both the United States and Britain do not practice the principles of charity taught by their faith—a conclusion in keeping with Melville’s increasingly disillusioned view of the dominant social and economic order of the mid-1850s.<sup>19</sup>

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## NOTES

1. On Irving’s development of the literary sketch, see Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky, “Washington Irving and the Genesis of the Fictional Sketch,” *Early American Literature* 21 (Winter 1986–87): 226–47. For discussions of poverty and relief in early and mid-nineteenth-century America, see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Religion and the Rise of the American City: The New York City Mission Movement, 1812–1870* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971); David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), chs. 7–8; and Rothman, ed., *The Jacksonians on the Poor: Collected Pamphlets* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1971). For a comprehensive overview of economic and social conditions relating to the poor in England in the early nineteenth-century and their representation in English fiction and non-fiction, see Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (New York: Vintage, 1983).
2. For a review of critical approaches to “Poor Man’s Pudding and Rich Man’s Crumbs” through the mid-1980s, see Lea Bertani Vozar Newman, *A Reader’s Guide to the Short Stories of Herman Melville* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986), 325–40. Notable interpretations of the story include Richard Harter Fogle, *Melville’s Shorter Tales* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 40–45; Ray B. Browne, *Melville’s Drive to Humanism* (Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Studies, 1971), 209–19; R. Bruce Bickley, Jr., *The Method of Melville’s Short Fiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1974), 80–86; Marvin Fisher, *Going Under: Melville’s Short Fiction and the American 1850s* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 61–70; William B. Dillingham, *Melville’s Short Fiction, 1853–1856* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1977), Ch. 5; Carol

- Collatrella, *Literature and Moral Reform: Melville and the Discipline of Reading* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 63–64; and Gavin Jones, *American Hungers: The Problem of Poverty in U.S. Literature, 1840–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 48–50. For a contemporary journalistic analogue to Melville’s diptych, see James Duban, “Transatlantic Counterparts: The Diptych and Social Inquiry in ‘Poor Man’s Pudding and Rich Man’s Crumbs,’” *New England Quarterly* 66 (1993): 274–86. Aaron Winter denominates the structural principle of Melville’s first-published diptych as “reiterative doubling” to distinguish it from the other two, “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids” and “The Two Temples”; see “Seeds of Discontent: The Expanding Satiric Range of Melville’s Diptychs,” *Leviathan* 8 (June 2006): 17–35.
3. Melville, *Correspondence*, ed. Lynn Horth (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1993), 190. For a useful overview of Melville’s depiction of poverty in his fiction, see Jones, *American Hungers*, 38–61. On the religious themes and satirical range of *The Confidence-Man*, see Jonathan A. Cook, *Satirical Apocalypse: An Anatomy of “The Confidence-Man”* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996).
  4. On general notions of obligations to the poor in the Christian Bible, see Richard A. Batey, *Jesus and the Poor* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Conrad Boerma, *The Rich, the Poor—and the Bible*, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978). All subsequent quotations from the Bible are from the King James (Authorized) Version.
  5. Beryl Rowland, “Sitting Up with a Corpse: Malthus According to Melville in ‘Poor Man’s Pudding and Rich Man’s Crumbs,’” *Journal of American Studies* 6 (1972): 69–83, argues that Melville’s dating of the sketch was related to the publication of Thomas Malthus’s *Observations on the Effects of the Corn Laws* (1814); but the implications of Melville’s sketch are far wider than any topical response to Malthus’s conservative warning of the likely starvation of the poor because of drastic increases in their population in relation to the food supply. Dillingham (*Melville’s Short Fiction*, 139–42) more plausibly asserts that the date of Melville’s story coincides with a larger transatlantic debate on the reasons for New World versus Old World poverty taking place in the early nineteenth century.
  6. *The Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces 1839–1860* (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1987), 289. All references from this edition will be cited hereinafter in the text.
  7. As Emerson claimed in the section on “Commodity” in *Nature*, “Nature, in its ministry to man, is not only the material but is also the process and the result. All the parts incessantly work into each other’s hands for the profit of man. The wind sows the seed; the sun evaporates the sea; the wind blows the vapor to the field; the ice, on the other side of the planet, condenses rain on this; the rain feeds the plant; the plant feeds the animal; and thus the endless circulations of the divine charity nourish man.” *Essays and Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 1983), 12.
  8. Emerson, *Essays and Lectures*, 27. The likely influence of Emerson’s *Nature* here has been noted by Fisher, *Going Under*, 64. Browne, *Melville’s Drive*, 210–12, sees a satire on *Walden* in Blandmour’s comments on nature’s beneficence.
  9. As Dillingham notes, “In reality the verse Blandmour quotes is used by the Psalmist not to illustrate God’s charity but to prove His power” (*Melville’s Short Fiction*, 121). Jones writes of Blandmour’s remarks: “Melville’s tale becomes an extended contemplation of the poetics of social evasion, the linguistic techniques that can twist a state of poverty from scarcity to abundance” (*American Hungers*, 48).
  10. Adam Sweeting, *Reading Houses and Building Books: Andrew Jackson Downing and the*

- Architecture of Popular Antebellum Literature, 1835–1855* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1996), 169.
11. David Paul Nord notes that Doddridge's volume was the first to be stereotyped by the American Tract Society in 1828 for mass distribution in America; see *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishers and the Birth of Mass Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 127.
  12. Quoted in Smith-Rosenberg, *Religion and the Rise of the American City*, 156; Rothman, *Discovery of the Asylum*, 158.
  13. Channing, "An Address on the Prevention of Poverty," in Rothman, ed., *Jacksonians on the Poor*, 20.
  14. On Melville's historical mistake in dating the sketch, see Beryl Rowland, "Melville's Waterloo in 'Rich Man's Crumbs,'" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 25 (1970): 216–21. Interpreting Melville's narrator as complicit in the social injustices illustrated by the sketches, Maurice Lee argues that "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs" incorporates several coded "mistakes" (such as the misdated Waterloo reference) in order to comment on issues of class and race of the 1850s; see "Melville's 'Mistakes': Correcting the Politics of 'Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs,'" *ESQ* 41 (1995): 153–75. A similarly harsh judgment of the narrator is also found in William Cooper, "Melville's 'Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs,'" *The Explicator* 64 (2006): 147–48. Fogle more persuasively notes: "The narrator of the two sketches sees the truth of the matter and refutes Blandmour and the English officials by his ironies, but part of his clear-sightedness lies in his perception of his own helplessness to aid" (*Melville's Shorter Tales*, 41).
  15. R. C. Waterston, "An Address on Pauperism," in Rothman, ed., *Jacksonians on the Poor*, 9. On the extensive debate over the New Poor Law in Britain, see Himmerfarb, *Idea of Poverty*, chs. 6–13.
  16. For another discussion of the significance of Ezekiel 39 to this scene, see Dillingham, *Melville's Short Fiction*, 133–35.
  17. As commentators have noted, the sketch of "Rich Man's Crumbs" is partly based on Melville's London journal entry for 10 November 1849 telling of his visit to the Guildhall the day after Lord Mayor's Day show. See *Journals*, ed. Howard C. Horsford with Lynn Horth (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1989), 14–15. In the previous day's entry, Melville had also noted that the sight of fog-bound London reminded him of the lower reaches of Dante's *Inferno*. In "Rich Man's Crumbs," he accordingly made use of the *Inferno* while evoking a London scene, but it was not of the city's foggy atmosphere but in his description of the riot of the beggars at the Guildhall charity banquet.
  18. *The Vision of Dante Alighieri; or, Hell, Purgatory and Paradise*, trans. Henry F. Carey (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1908), 96–97. This is the translation of Dante that Melville read in the late 1840s; see the listing of Melville's reading at <[www.melvillemarginalia.org](http://www.melvillemarginalia.org)>.
  19. On depictions of poverty in mid-Victorian fiction, see Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*, chs. 16–21. On Melville's use of the Bible in *Moby-Dick*, see Ilana Pardes, *Melville's Bibles* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008); Jonathan A. Cook, *Inscrutable Malice: Theodicy, Eschatology, and the Biblical Sources of "Moby-Dick"* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012). For other examples of Melville's metaphysical and social critiques of Christianity in his short fiction, see Cook, "The Typological Design of Melville's 'The Apple-Tree Table,'" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 40 (June 1998): 121–41; Cook, "Christian Typology and Social Critique in Melville's 'The Two Temples,'" *Christianity and Literature* 56 (Fall 2006): 3–31.