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2014**

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# Report:

## *Melville Society—Bezanson Archive Fellowship 2014*

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Melville Society Archive Fellow Jaime Campomar, next to the *Charles W. Morgan* in New Bedford, Mass.

**M**ore than the \$500 stipend and a two-week stay with free accommodations at the Melville Society Archive in New Bedford, receiving the 2014 Walter E. Bezanson Fellowship was proof that the research I was conducting resonated beyond the limits of my desk in Argentina. My short two-week journey into the archives became an expansive and unexpected experience, centering on the homecoming to New Bedford, Massachusetts, of the *Charles W. Morgan* during her 38th Voyage.

My current research project centers on the combined use of French Genetic Criticism and Fluid Text Theory in the study of John Huston's 1956

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adaptation of *Moby-Dick*, most specifically, the use and transformation of metaphors as they are worked into film. As a consequence, going to New Bedford meant gaining access to the Melville Society's wonderful archive, where I would find volumes that I had only read about in books or online. But it also gave me the chance to expand my two-week itinerary into a four-week journey in search of other resources that would prove beneficial in the short term and key in the long run.

The first leg of my journey, before New Bedford, was the Center for Ray Bradbury Studies at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), where I met Jonathan Eller and Robin Condon. They kindly gave me a tour of the Center's collection of Bradbury's first editions and limited editions, as well as the typewriter on which he usually wrote his stories; they also showed me an advance copy of a few chapters from Prof. Eller's soon-to-be-published biography *Bradbury Unbound*, among other pieces of great interest. But the rarest gem came from the Center's archives. I was able to look at—and make digital copies of—facsimiles of the screenplay, organized in twelve folders, which spanned from the first draft pages—begun in September 1953, on a train from Los Angeles to New York—to the release script, dated February 1956.

Before incorporating these sources into my dossier, I had mainly worked with two published versions of the script: one published by Bradbury himself in 2008 through Subterranean Press and a screenplay marked "Final," published electronically by the Alexander Street Press in 2007, which belongs to Warner Bros. Studios. There was already evidence of a sequential relationship between the versions, but the collation with the versions found at the Center's archives opened up new possibilities for interpretation and analysis. Even though these new sources cannot be immediately included in my present research, they widen the spectrum for future work.

The next leg of my journey led to New Bedford. At Robert K. Wallace's suggestion, I arrived there on June 26, just in time for the arrival of the *Charles W. Morgan*. I couldn't help but wonder what the celebration would be like. Shortly enough, I found out that whatever my expectations had been about the *Morgan's* homecoming, they could not come close to what the town had prepared. The moment Professor Wallace and I walked on to the State Pier, during that clear, crisp New England morning, my mind was entirely moved by the view.

The ship itself was an enigma. Smaller than I had imagined, it had a just-out-of-the-oven look because of its restoration that made me question the diagrams of the *Pequod* so heavily carved in my mind. Later that day, as I walked on and below deck, amid the multitudinous artifacts that make the

nineteenth-century Yankee whaler, I couldn't help but touch every item or peer down every crevice. The undiscovered anatomist in me had breached, and it spouted curiosity through every pore. Once below deck, the stifling atmosphere made me wonder at Ahab's seemingly quiet moments in his locked cabin and at the thick odors from the distillation of blubber that would have inundated the whole ship, only to ooze into the welcoming timber. After that first visit, I boarded the *Morgan* one other time, and I can say, after only two tours, that my reading of *Moby-Dick* can never be the same.

On the pier and all around the *Morgan*, a variety of interesting whaling events ensued. Mary K. Bercauw Edwards operated the whaleboats and led everyday land-crawlers like me in a bracing regatta. At the same time, streaming down from the *Morgan* in a straight line, you could see a series of tents holding exhibitions on whale-watching, a chorus performing a wide variety of sea shanties, followed by an exhilarating performance of *Moby-Dick in Minutes*, and an interactive experience with both a shipsmith and a cooper, who beat their mauls to show the creative forces behind two unavoidable items aboard whaling ships: harpoons and casks.

The next few days were focused on another *Morgan*-related event: the Whaling History Symposium, held at Building 2 on the State Pier, right next to the ship. It was a gathering of speakers from the Melville Society, Mystic Seaport Museum, Nantucket Historical Association, and the New Bedford Whaling Museum, among other local and international institutions.

Because the Melville Society had invited me to participate in the event as a speaker, my experience at the Symposium was twofold. As a member of the audience, the Symposium allowed me to dive deeper into the world of whaling and whales, whether fictionalized or real. As a speaker, I was able to put my research to the test in front of a completely new audience of Melville scholars and whaling aficionados. The comments I received after the presentation reassured me that I was on the right track and encouraged me to carry on with greater enthusiasm. Over time, the experience has also helped me reassess my work's strengths and weaknesses as I finish my dissertation.

Thanks to Professor Wallace, during the Symposium, I met Jeffrey Levine, a collector of all things *Moby-Dick*, who was incredibly kind and invited me to his home, where he showed me an enormous collection of items related to Huston's film. Mr. Levine's collection proved revealing, especially in terms of the marketing aspect of the film's theatrical release. He showed me posters and lobby cards of all sizes, prints, prearranged advertising sent by Warner Bros. to the theaters for the promotion of the film, an LP record of the musical score, a number of magazines reviewing the film, tickets for the premiere together with the opening night's program, and two drawings of the white whale: the first by

John Huston, the second by Ray Bradbury. Although this facet of the film adaptation is not contemplated in my current research, the sources presented to me by Mr. Levine suggest the development of further studies.

After the excitement of the *Morgan's* homecoming, it was time to stride up Williams Street and into the Melville Society Archive on the second floor of the Whaling Museum's Research Library. During my stay there, I was able to consult an essential bibliography otherwise unattainable at home, which included Hershel Parker's two-volume biography of Melville, Merton M. Sealts's *Melville's Reading*, John Bryant's *Companion to Melville Studies*, and Christopher Sten's *The Weaver God, He Weaves*, among others. Still more important for my research was the discovery of another copy of the final script for the film, together with a folder containing research from the pre-production stage entitled "Extracts from the Whalemens, Vessels and Boats, Apparatus, and Methods of the Whale Fishery By James Templeman Brown."

By the end of the second week, the journey moved beyond New Bedford and into the Boston area, where I visited Harvard University's Houghton Library. In its archives, I found a few materials related to my research, but the most interesting item I perused was the American first edition of *Moby-Dick*. I must admit that dedicating my last few years to the study of textual criticism had slowly built within me an admiration for such artifacts, an admiration I became fully aware of when finding myself face to face with the sources of my research during this trip.

A few days later, at the New York Public Library's Schwarzman Building, I found hints as to which edition of *Moby-Dick* Bradbury used when writing his script. These hints would prove to be a very important find, and I strongly believe that I will be able to answer the question of which edition Bradbury used very soon. The Schwarzman discoveries would prove to be the closing find in an extraordinary voyage.

The 2014 Walter E. Bezanson Fellowship has been an expansive experience. What started as a sedentary stay in New Bedford grew into visits to Indianapolis, Cambridge, and New York, and consequently, into the unexpected exploration of new sources and venues connected to my research. I fear, however, that I have somewhat underplayed the most important aspect of the trip: the chance I have been given to meet an array of wonderful people. I wish to thank the Melville Society for the opportunity they have given me; the New Bedford Whaling Museum for providing the splendid apartment at Wamsutta Mills and for their assistance during my stay at the archive, especially the assistance of Robert Rocha, Mike Dyer, and Mark Procknik; Gail Coffler for her strong support of the Walter E. Bezanson Fellowship; Jennifer Baker, Mary K. Bercaw Edwards, Timothy Marr, and Christopher Sten for their

encouragement, suggestions, and friendship; Jon Eller and Robin Condon at the Center for Ray Bradbury Studies for their kindness and guidance through the Ray Bradbury papers; Jeffrey Levine for his warmhearted hospitality and generosity of spirit; and Dennis Marnon at the Houghton Library who granted me access to the wonderful collections kept at Harvard University. I would also like to extend a very special thank you to John Bryant, who supported me when I first started my research and who suggested I apply for the Fellowship; to Robert K. Wallace who acted as liaison during the whole experience and who was always attentive to anything I needed; and, finally, to Wyn Kelley and Dale Peterson, who selflessly opened up their home when I had difficulties with my lodgings. To all of them, I wish to extend my gratitude and friendship, and I hope to meet them again soon.