

I strongly recommend the publication of *Black Blood: Moby-Dick and the Fugitive Slave Hunt* in Palgrave Macmillan's American Literature series.

This monograph is the most significant reading of the anti-slavery allegory at the subtextual core of *Moby-Dick* since Sidney Kaplan broached the topic in his 1951 publication "The Moby Dick in the Service of the Underground Railroad."

Over the intervening 65 years surprisingly few scholars have followed Kaplan's lead. Carolyn Karcher gestured at the reading of *Moby-Dick* that *Black Blood* has accomplished in her 1981 monograph *Shadow Over the Promised Land: Race and Violence in Melville's America* when she described scenes in *Moby-Dick* as adumbrations of the slave rebellion in *Benito Cereno*. Toni Morrison conducted a suggestive contrapuntal reading of Pip's resistance to the novel's white supremacist thematic in her 1989 essay "Unspeakable Things Unspoken". In 1994, Michael Berthold uncovered the structural devices and formal resemblance between the novel and fugitive slave tracts in "*Moby-Dick* and the American Slave Narrative". *Black Blood: Moby-Dick and the Fugitive Slave Hunt* builds on the insights of these precursor works. But unlike them, it convincingly demonstrates how the anti-slavery cause saturates the action, events, and narrative intentionality of Melville's masterwork.

The author of *Black Blood: Moby-Dick and the Fugitive Slave Hunt* has drawn on unpublished papers, letters, reviews, and family memorabilia to explain the fact that Melville's father-in-law, Lemuel Shaw, was the Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court responsible for adjudicating the statutes of the Fugitive Slave Law as the chief motive for the author's decision to cast his anti-slavery convictions in the form of a literary allegory. With Melville's discussion of hermeneutic stratagems for the interpretation of allegory as warrant, the author deciphers the significance of key terms, events symbols, body parts, and characters: "ship of state", Calhoun's cords, the equator, Prometheus, Narcissus, the thirty member crew, Santa Ana's missing leg, Bulkington (the silent partner to the anti-slavery narrative), Starbuck's coffee, Melville's conversion into Ishmael, the George Latimer case, Ecuador's 8 Escudos coin, St. Paul's shipwreck in *Acts*. After clarifying the hidden allegory interconnecting black slaves and black whales, the author spells out the interpretive stakes of this insight with sentences like the following: "What Melville is really saying is black men or fugitive slaves(symbolized by those black whales) congregate like nations or leagues out of protection and, in fact, should do so to protect themselves from the Slave traders/hunters of American and the world." (84) The author's specification of Captain Austin Bearse's understanding of Melville's anti-slavery allegory as the

basis for his decision to name his fugitive slave schooner the “Moby Dick” turns the book’s final chapters into a scholarly *tour de force*.

An indispensable reader’s guide to *the* Great American Novel, *Black Blood: Moby-Dick and the Fugitive Slave Hunt* will become required reading in undergraduate and graduate courses in American literature.