

NORFOLK ISLE
&
THE CHOLA WIDOW

HERMAN MELVILLE



Wood Engravings by Rik Olson with an Introduction by John Bryant

NAWAKUM PRESS SANTA ROSA 2011



Announcing a Limited First Edition from Nawakum Press

Norfolk Isle and the Chola Widow first appeared in the May, 1854 issue of *Putnam's Magazine*, as the eighth of a ten-sketch work, set in the Galapagos Islands and titled *The Encantadas*, or *Enchanted Isles*. It is the longest by far of the ten Encantadan sketches, and it is the work's climax and heart. It has been described as an "ignored gem" for its sparse narration, feminist focus, and complex position on faith. It is the tale of the young Peruvian widow Hunilla, who when marooned on an island after her husband and brother perish, finds a way to survive for years while awaiting rescue. She is discovered by the crew of a whaling ship, who taking pity on the widow return her to her homeland.

A cherished assumption among those who love *Moby-Dick* is that this masterwork is all that Melville wrote, or needed to write. When reminded that Melville also wrote smaller novels like *Typee* and familiar tales like "Bartleby" and "Benito Cereno,"—all quite different from the whaling book, and each a masterpiece of concision—readers who love the massive *Moby-Dick* will soon enough marvel that this writer of the sea also wrote shorter works, for the magazines. Postwar readers, especially since the 1960s, have come to learn that this writer of America's greatest sea-epic could write quite impressively on a small scale.

Melville had already been to sea when on January 3, 1841 he sailed again, this time from New Bedford, Massachusetts onboard the whaler *Acushnet*. The *Acushnet* was bound for the South Pacific and the Galapagos Islands, home to his future Hunilla. He would not return to Boston for almost another four years. He was later to comment that his life began the day he left. *The Chola Widow* wasn't published until 1854, some three years after *Moby-Dick*, during a period when Melville was struggling with public acceptance of his writings. It had been suggested at the time that he get back to writing based on his island adventures, and not delve into more metaphysical inquiries. *The Encantadas* were the result.

It has been said that Melville wrote to find out what he wanted to write about. And that much of his writing genius lies in his creative building of character and landscape into something so unique that his often sparse dialogue only teases rather than informs. This is very much the case in *The Chola Widow*, where the reader often learns more from silence than through dialogue. The narrator of the tale spins his magic, and the reader like Hunilla, is held captive by an isolated island, surrounded by an all encompassing sea, and left frequently alone in thought.

About this Edition

Norfolk Isle and The Chola Widow is 38 pages and measures 9 x 11½ inches. The introduction is by Melville scholar John Bryant. The Press commissioned artist Rik Olson to create 12 wood engravings to illustrate the text. The engravings are printed letterpress directly from the blocks by master printer Patrick Reagh. The edition paper is mould-made Rives Heavyweight, with Bugra endsheets, and a letterpress printed patterned paper cover designed by the artist. The cover paper is handmade Old Masters from David Carruthers of La Papeterie Saint-Armand paper mill in Montreal. The typeface is Bembo. The book was designed by Patti Buttitta, and printed letterpress from polymer plates by Patrick Reagh in Sebastopol, California. The book binding, slipcase, and drop spine box were produced at BookLab II. Printed in an edition of 100 copies. Each copy is signed by the artist.

Deluxe Version /25 Copies – Out of print

Quarter bound in black goatskin with artist designed, patterned paper covers over archival boards. Title is gold stamped on the spine. Housed in a drop spine box of black and green Japanese book cloth, with stamped goatskin spine label. Additional signed and numbered wood engraving of Herman Melville, printed by the artist in two colors, housed in a foil stamped paper chemise. The books are numbered 1–20 and each is signed by the artist on the colophon page. Five lettered copies are reserved for the Press.

Slipcased Version /75 Copies

Quarter bound in black Japanese book cloth with artist designed, patterned paper covers over archival boards. Paper label affixed to spine. Housed in a slipcase of black and green Japanese book cloth. The books are numbered and each is signed by the artist on the colophon page. Five lettered copies are reserved for the Press. Price: \$450.00

About the Artist

Published with original, commissioned wood engravings by Rik Olson, California illustrator and fine artist. He is acknowledged as a living master of wood engraving and studied under such artists as Barry Moser, John DePol, Richard McLean, and Ralph Borge. He has lived, studied, and exhibited in Italy, Germany, and the United States. He teaches wood engraving at the San Francisco Center for the Book.

About the Author of the Introduction

Published with an introduction written by leading Melville scholar John Bryant, professor of English at Hofstra University. He is the author and editor of numerous published books on Melville, and is the general editor of The Melville Society, one of the oldest and largest single author societies in America. He is currently at work on a soon to be published new biography of Herman Melville.