

# 'I Have Seen the Storm Arise': Long Island Whalemen's Lyrical Navigation of Tempests Without and Within

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*I have seen the Storm arise  
Like a giant in his wrath.[1]*

1 There was no regular mail service between the seaports of the northeastern United States and the ships that those ports sent to the Pacific during the mid-19th century peak of "Yankee" whaling. Letters were passed from ship to ship, outward bound or homeward bound, and it was rare for a letter to reach the person to whom it was addressed in anything approaching a timely manner. Even more rarely did the sender receive a timely response, so it was with great excitement that late in 1856 or in 1857, a ten-year-old boy received such a letter. It was addressed to Master Melvin P. Halsey, Water Mill, Southampton, New York, and began:

*Honolulu, January 14, 1856  
My Dear Cousin,  
I received your welcome letter, and was glad to know that folks at home had not forgotten Caddy.[2]*

2 Melvin's cousin, Catherine Benedict, "Caddy," was born on Long Island's South Fork into a venerable family descended from early English settlers. She married a cousin, Jetur Rose, who was also of a long-established East End family. When Jetur achieved a captaincy, he took Caddy with him on a whaling voyage to the Pacific.[3] Her letter to young Melvin described many aspects of her life afloat as a whaling captain's wife, often seasick in the captain's cabin that was her home. She wrote of earthquakes, volcanoes, poisonous scorpions, and the hard life of the Native Siberians she observed when she went ashore at East Cape, the easternmost point on the mainland of the continent of Asia. It was a letter full of wonder.

*We see many strange sights so far from home. For many weeks there is no night here [the Arctic].  
The sun goes around the horizon, and not overhead. At 9 PM I would go to bed, while the sun was  
shining as brightly as midday.[4]*

3 A storm seems to have arisen within young Melvin. Growing to early manhood only a few miles from Sag Harbor, one of the world's leading whaling ports, he could see for himself the physical culture financed through the profits reaped by the owners and officers of the industry: captains' portraits, mansions, and the great churches they erected; and hear tales of men, not yet in old age, of the manly virtue and adventurous bravery of the seafarers of the Island's Twin Forks. Sag Harbor's whalemen were in the forefront of America's sail into the world. Mercator Cooper was first into Japan,[5] and Thomas Welcome Roys, first into the West Arctic. [6]

4 Sag Harbor whaling, and the culture it fostered, were well known to James Fenimore Cooper, the first major writer of American nationalist sea fiction and maritime historiography. Cooper recognized "the significance of the ocean to man in its role as a shaper of American character." [7] A former merchant seaman and naval midshipman, he invested in the Sag Harbor whaling as a partner with his cousin, Charles Dering, one of Sag Harbor's principal whaling owners.[8] Cooper's final maritime themed novel, *The Sea Lions, or The Lost Sealers*, was published in 1849, two years prior to Melville's *Moby-Dick*. In this tale of virtuous Long Island seafarers, contrasted against non-

virtuous Nantucketers, Cooper tells how whaling was central to “the imagination” of the culture of Long Island’s East End. He described Sag Harbor as the center of “the hardy and manly occupation of whaling” filled with “indispensable...*esprit de corps*.” There was, he said:

*scarcely an individual who followed this particular calling out of the port of Sag Harbor, whose general standing on board ship was not as well known to all the women and girls of the place as it was to his shipmates. Success in taking the whale was a thing that made itself felt in every fibre of the prosperity of the town; and it was natural that the single-minded population of that part of Suffolk should regard the bold and skilful harpooner or lancer with favor. His peculiar merit, whether with the oar, lance, or harpoon, is bruited about, as well as the number of whales he may have succeeded in “making fast to,” or those which he caused to “spout blood.”*<sup>[10]</sup>

5 By the time Melvin finished Caddy’s letter, absorbing her adventures in the world beyond Long Island, he may have forgotten her stern warning:

*I suppose you would like to know what I am doing, and how I like whaling. What I have seen of it, it is hard service. Don’t never think of it. You would be turned out of your berth, if you had the good luck to be turned in, and sent aloft to reef topsail. No matter how dark the night, or how cold the storm, poor “Jack” has to shiver through it.*<sup>[11]</sup>

6 In 1863, not yet 20, Melvin traveled to New York City, where he shipped as a hand in the whaling bark *Reindeer*, bound for the waters off Iceland on a “plum pudding voyage,” the whalemens’ term for a whaling voyage lasting only a few months.<sup>[12]</sup> The *Reindeer* and her crew faced the normal dangers of the whale hunt and of sailing in icy water. Added to these was the threat of destruction at the hands of Confederate commerce raiders for which Yankee whaleships were a prime target.<sup>[13]</sup> The whaling fleet was further reduced by the United States Navy, which purchased or confiscated many of the older whaleships, filled them with stone, then sailed or towed them to the entrances to Confederate ports where they were sunk to blockade Southern shipping.<sup>[14]</sup> These losses followed upon those caused by the California Gold Rush, when many Sag Harbor and Greenport whaleships were taken to San Francisco and abandoned, as whalemens, from captain on down, left the sea to go prospecting for gold.<sup>[15]</sup> Despite these dangers and uncertainties, and the decline of Long Island’s whaling fleet, and despite Cousin Caddy’s old warning, “Don’t never think of it,” the storm to go to sea swelled within Melvin; in the historic tradition of the men of Long Island’s East End, he became a whaleman.

7 How good a whaleman did Melvin P. Halsey become? It’s hard to say. He kept a journal for all three of his voyages; the first in the *Reindeer*, a second in the coastal trading schooner *Billow* near the end of the Civil War, and a third, following the Civil War, in a New Bedford whaleship commanded by his cousin, Jetur Rose, who was accompanied by his wife, Melvin’s Cousin Caddy. Although he likely became a good seaman during his many years at sea, Melvin was not a good journal keeper. He made short unrevealing entries concerning mundane routines. He often went days or even weeks without making an entry. He once mentioned sailing past Long Island in view of a hill near his home. He mentioned a woman’s name once, and wrote “Emancipation – Freedom” several times.<sup>[16]</sup> A young man at sea, he thought of home, and of a woman, although he tells nothing about her. He was also a Northerner during the Civil War, and he appears to have favored ending slavery. He also liked songs. He wrote down the words to 12 songs that he heard during his time at sea, all but one being sentimental parlor songs. The attention he gave these songs reveals much about him. He wanted to remember them, perhaps to sing them himself. The words and moods of the songs’ lyrics, taken with the historic melodies that are known to a few of them, reveal something of Melvin’s feelings and longings at the times that he committed them to his journal.

8 Halsey's selections were not the rowdy songs that present a raucous stereotype of seafarers, but rather songs of deep, heartfelt emotion. They captured the feelings of the American public, sailors and whalers included, during the Civil War, a time when notions of masculinity permitted men to express themselves in a melancholy and highly sentimental manner. One need only look at the songs' titles to get the sense that Melvin P. Halsey was a romantic, given to sweet, gentle, and compassionate thoughts. The following selection of first stanzas is typical of the lyrics that Halsey chose to put into his journal.

***Who will care for Mother now***

*Why am I so weak and weary,  
See, how faint my heated breath,  
All around to me seemed darkness  
Tell me comrades is this death  
Ah how will I know your answer  
To my fate I meekly bow  
Can I leave her in her anguish  
Who will care for mother now*[\[17\]](#)

***Touch my Guitar***

*Oh the lone starry hour give me love  
When still is the beautiful night  
When the round laughing moon I see love  
Peeps through the clouds silver white  
And the wind through the low wood sweep low  
And I gaze on some bright rising Star  
And the World is all asleep and in dreams love  
Oh wake while I touch my Guitar*[\[18\]](#)

***Indian Mothers Lullaby***

*Gently dream my darling child  
Sleeping in the lonely wild  
Would thy dreams might never know  
Clouds that darkenest mine with woe  
Could I smile as thou art smiling  
All those...hopeless hour beguiling  
With the hope that thou might see  
Blessing that are hid from me*[\[19\]](#)

***Mother kiss me in my dreams***

*Lying on my dying bed  
Through the dark silent night  
Praying for the coming day  
Came a vision to my sight  
Near me stood the forms I loved  
I[n] the Sun lights yellow gleam*

*Folding me unto her breast  
Mother kissed me in my dreams  
Mother, Mother  
Mother kissed me in my dreams*[20]

9 Taken in total, the songs Halsey chose to write into his journal present an almost melodramatic sentimentality, common to American songs of the 1860s, dealing as they do with Mother, unrequited love, death, widowhood, longing for home, and tender companionship. The men who sang these songs freely exposed strong emotions about leaving home, leaving behind a young woman who might have become one's wife, dying away from home, leaving mother without a protector and provider, and facing the deaths of comrades. For Yankee whalers the possibility of such losses must have engendered very real fear and anxiety as they spent long months or even years at sea, far from their loved ones. Of particular note is Halsey's inclusion of the lyrics to the song he identified as "Indian Mothers Lullaby," that revealed sympathy for Native peoples throughout the United States, including eastern Long Island, at the time that they faced removal, increased warfare, the confiscation of their lands, the continuing decline of their populations, and the destruction of their traditional culture. This, taken with his repeated insertion of the words "Emancipation" and "Freedom" into his journal, gives evidence of Halsey's thoughtful empathy for the sufferings of all his fellow humans.

10 Two of the songs Halsey heard and wrote down entered into the oral tradition of seafarers and shore folk. "The Sailor's Grave" tells of a Union sailor, "the fairest of our gallant band," who dies in his messmates arms and is buried at sea.[21] The other is the almost surreal "Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still."

### ***Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still***

*Tis years since last we met  
And we may not meet again  
I have struggled to forget  
But the struggle was in vain  
Her voice floats on the breeze  
And her spirit comes at will  
In the midnight on the sea  
Her bright smiles haunts me still  
repeat last two lines [Halsey's indication]*

*Every morn when I arise  
And I gaze upon the deep  
Her form first greets my sight  
While the Stars their vigils keep  
When I close my aching eyes  
Sweet dreams my senses fill  
From sleep when I arise  
Her bright smiles haunts me still*

*I have sailed neath alien skies  
I have trod the desert path  
I have seen the Storm arise  
Like a giant in his wrath  
Every danger I have known  
That a reckless life can fill*



Figure 1. Sheet Music for "Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still," composed by W. T. Wrighton (Boston: Oliver Ditson Co.), circa 1870s. Courtesy of Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University.

*But her presence has not flown  
For her bright smiles haunts me still*<sup>[22]</sup>

#### Audio Player

<https://lihj.cc.stonybrook.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/HerBrightSMile.mp3>

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Use Up/Down Arrow keys to increase or decrease volume.

11 Composed and published as a parlor song for middle-class consumption, the sheet music cover is illustrated with an image of a young sailor, dreamily gazing to sea, while the image of a lovely, fashionable young lady drifts above a calm ocean.<sup>[23]</sup> With Pre-Raphaelite charm, it captures the apex of culture in the form of a divinely feminine Victorian daughter of “Laura” or “Beatrice,” perhaps not so much an escape from reality, as a romantic antidote that enabled sailors, such as Halsey, to face the dangers of war and tempest. “Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still” might be taken as a sweet parlor song about a sailor’s remembrance of a lady’s cheerful face, but to those who have faced the physical reality of the tempestuous ocean—“like a giant in his wrath”—and the ever present emotions of separation and loss—“we may not meet again”—“her bright smile *haunts* me”—the lyrics capture lived reality, enhanced by the rising and falling of the melodic setting. Additionally, to those such as Halsey who learned the song by hearing it, without seeing the sheet music image, it is not clear who she is whose bright smile haunts him. Is she a mother? A sweetheart? A wife? A sister? A daughter? Or perhaps some other woman who has done him a kindness? Is she alive, or dead, or an image that he himself has conjured in his own mind as an ideal? We cannot know the answer, other than that Melvin was emotionally susceptible to the song at the time he heard it, whether its affects are soothing or troubling.

12 Life at sea for Melvin was, of course, not all romantic songs and conjured images. During his first and second voyages he faced the possibility of destruction and death at the hands of the Confederate navy and privateers; even in peacetime a seafarer’s work is hard, dangerous, and a struggle for survival. Perhaps the songs Halsey wrote into his journal emboldened him to work in the face of danger, or served as a diversion to soften the brutal reality in which he lived.

13 All but one of the songs that Halsey wrote into his journal was composed as parlor songs shortly before or during the Civil War. The single exception is a traditional seamen’s song that describes the brute reality of life and work at sea. It is included in several collections of songs sung by American seafarers under sail in the 19th century, and is now well known to singers of historic maritime songs. It always begins with “From Boston harbor we set sail,” announces the coming of a storm, and concludes with ill feeling and bad wishes towards the captain.<sup>[24]</sup> Halsey’s version, which has not been found anywhere but in his journal, starts with “From New York Harbor,” New York being substituted in the opening line for the otherwise exclusive setting of Boston. This change indicates the likelihood that Halsey heard it while serving in a New York vessel. He had done this in 1863, whaling off Iceland in the bark *Reindeer*, a square-rigger, such as described in the song. Placed into this setting, the song gives a realistic and detailed account of the strength, stamina, skill, and aerial acrobatics that were required when the crew of a ship faced a sudden storm.

#### ***Description of a Squall***

*From New York Harbor we set sail  
We were blessed with a pleasant gale  
With a ringtail roarer at our mizzen peak*

*Crying luff Boys, luff, we are out to sea.*

*To me right fol di da  
Diddle dol did a  
Right fol de dido  
Diddle dol di da*

*But by and by there came a squall  
Which struck us on our lee quarter with all  
Haul down your stun'sails alow and aloft  
Clew up your royals fore and aft*

*Lay up there Boys and make them fast  
See that the gaskets are right well sassed [passed?]  
Steady taut your braces before that you go  
To keep the yards from swinging to and fro.*

*Clew up you t'gan'sails take them in  
Four hands lay foreward and haul the jib down  
Lay up in the cross tree, you, John Brown,  
Stand by to haul the gaff topsail down*

*Stand by your topsail halyards all  
See that they are ready to let fall  
Haul out reef tackles your halyards let them fly  
Double reef you topsails and aloft let you lie*

*All hands stand by, give your tacks and sheets,  
See they run right single round their cleats  
Haul out your clew garnets, your tacks and sheets let fly  
A reef in each course and aloft let you lie. [25]*

#### Audio Player

<https://lihj.cc.stonybrook.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/DescriptionofSquall1.mp3>

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14 Consider now that this storm-driven action had to be performed many times over to manage the sails on a square-rigged bark, such as the *Reindeer*, which would have carried only about a dozen able seamen. The men had to perform this work in the manner they called “cheerily”—every move quickly—every move correctly—sail after sail. Not to do so was the death of many a ship and many, many a seaman. Their power magnified by the suddenness with which they struck, storms could bring a violent end to even the best of ships and the most able of mariners. For example, a memorial ballad that one of Sag Harbor’s greatest whaling captains, James Pierson, entered into his log describes the loss with all hands of the United States Navy Ship *Hornet* in a squall off Tampico, Mexico.

#### *Lines on the Loss of the U.S. Ship Hornet Sept. 1829*

*Far on the deep where storms and tempests reign*



*And thunders burst terrific o'er the main  
When oceans billows In confusion rise  
And rear their tops contending to the skies*

*Behold the bark as through the mist she's driven  
With meteor swiftness by the blast of heaven  
See how she rides the dismal mountain's verge  
Then stoops he[r] prow and plunges In the surge*

*No canvass now spread out to catch the breeze  
No compass guides her course through trackless seas  
No watch aloft now tells of succor near  
For horror shed her darkest Influence there*

*All reefed and close her ponderous sails are tied  
Her helm Is lashed along her trembling side  
Each yard Is braced each cord Is bound with [care?]  
Each soul on board now stands IN mute despair*

*Surge after surge now roll with fury by  
Black wreaths of clouds now thickens o'er the sky  
Each moment brings new terrors o'er the wind  
Destruction rides In fury on the wind*

*Devoted souls! What now avails your zeal  
Where sleeps that courage you were wont to feel  
Where's none the daring which In conflict tried  
Proclaim'd ye well your dear lov'd country's pride*

*Twould not avail ye In an hour like this  
Nor bear ye safely from the dread abyss  
Your country's tears could not appease the storm  
Nor friendship snatch ye from the power of harm[26]*

15 If a squall could capsize and sink a well-manned sloop-of-war, like the *Hornet*, how much more easily could it sink an aging whaleship, undermanned for such an emergency, and perhaps already listing from the enormous weight of a dead whale hoisted alongside? In the face of such a storm whalemens did what they did best—they worked; but when skill and strength seemed to no avail, and they feared for their lives, many turned to prayer. Isaac Sidney Gould, a teenage green hand on the Sag Harbor whaleship *Fanny* from 1843-1846, described this aspect of whalemens' culture in prose and poetry.

16 Gould (or Sidney, as he identified himself), the son of a Sunday school superintendent, and clearly well-schooled in Protestant Christianity, hailed from New Village, now the area of Centereach and South Setauket, in Suffolk County, New York.[27] He went to sea against his family's wishes, and while in port at Honolulu went so far as to hide in the forecandle of his ship when he saw his brother, a whaleman in another ship, come aboard the *Fanny*. [28] Gould's journal reveals him to have been a polymath. He was a careful observer of the people of the Pacific islands, as well as those islands' flora, fauna, and topography. He gave a detailed scientific descriptions and a diagram of a lunar eclipse. He was an avid reader of fine literature and philosophy, and even wrote several pages in a yet-to-be deciphered system of short-hand, perhaps of his own invention.[29]

17 Gould made several references to storms in his journal, as might be expected for a three-year whaling voyage.

His entries show the challenges of working a ship in a storm, much like Halsey's "Description of a Squall," and Caddy Rose's warning to Halsey about being sent aloft at night to reef sail. Regarding one storm, Gould wrote:

*May 14, 1844 For some days the weather has been very cold with a south wind accompanied by rain or heavy fogs of sleet. For 2 nights past we have taken in sail hove to. Today the wind has hauled around to the northward and is blowing very hard so that the only sail we are carrying are double reefed fore and main topsails and foresail. There is a very heavy sea which is continually breaking over us. The cold is intense and the weather very squally today so that the atmosphere is frequently darkened by hail. We are under the necessity of relieving the wheel and mast head every hour. We of course stand quarter watches during the night and our regular watch below in the day time....[30]*

18 He also described a storm that hit the *Fanny* later in 1844—one that threatened the very survival of the ship and its men.

*Dec. 1, 1844 In the evening we had a most terrific squall of wind and rain and we heard the cry of— All hands ahoy to shorten sails. The wind howled frightfully through the rigging, the rain poured in torrents and for a few moments we were in great danger but fortunately for us the squall passed away without any damage to the ship.[31]*

19 He then turned his thoughts towards the beauty of Nature and the beneficence of God towards seafarers in a moment of need.

*After the squall passed  
The moon arose above the ocean's wave,  
And spread her silvery light around;  
While we, protected by that God who gave,  
At his feet in penitence are found.[32]*

20 But Gould also had a storm within. He was in poor health and, by his own account, the worst seaman in the crew. He could not get along with many of the ship's company, from the captain on down, and he looked upon them as his moral and intellectual inferiors.[33] Beyond the mere grumblings of a malcontent, he contrasted the democratic ideals of the rights of citizens and the virtuous republican social contract against the sufferings that whaling hands endured under the tyrannical hierarchy of the American whalefishery, proclaiming: "We are absolutely in bondage. We are literally slaves." [34]

21 Gould saw himself as a good, though not self-righteous man, holding to Christian values of faith and conduct, while seeing the others aboard the *Fanny* as failing to meet that standard. Yet the bad influence of the ship's company seems to have rubbed off on him. He was appalled when one evening he was "reproved for profanity and immorality by all the crew, at which I am startled if as bad as represented by them.[35] Taken aback by the reprimand from those he considered his moral inferiors, and faced with his own inability to adhere to his religious and moral convictions, he appears to have had a spiritual crisis. His poem recalling the storm at sea, the beauty of Nature, and God's grace, concludes with a chastisement against men—against himself— as hypocritical, penitent on their knees in the face of death, praising God's saving power to calm the storm, but then:



*...when the storm is gone – is past,  
To our old habits we return.  
Nor cast one thought on God at last,  
Except it is on him to spurn.[36]*

22 The storm demanded the utmost of the whaleman's body and skill. It might even cause him to seek mercy from God, but having lived through the storm he might turn his attention against a different object: the captain. This transition is clearly seen in Melvin P. Halsey's "Description of a Squall," the first six verses of which appeared earlier in this article. As the song progresses it moves from a descriptive celebration of brave seamanship in the face of a storm, to a storm of words against an ill-tempered commander.

***Description of a Squall (continued)***

*Now there our captain he goes down below  
Loudly he calls for his boy, little Joe  
Saying mix me up a glass, a good glass quick,  
For its far better weather below than on deck.*

*We poor Shellbacks walking on the deck  
The rain and the sleet a beating down our neck  
Saying, Narry a glass of grog for us poor fellows at all  
But damn your eyes, Jack, at every loud call*

*There is one thing now that I would claim  
May our old Skipper never have a name  
May he be obliged the long boat to jump  
For the want of Jolly Sailors to jig and jowl the pump.*

*There's one thing more that I would crave  
May our old captain never have a grave.  
No parson for to preach, no bells for to toll,  
And the sharks eat his body and the Devil take his soul.[37]*

23 Other than these suggestive verses, Halsey's journal gives no indication of hard feelings on the part of his shipmates or himself towards any of the captains under whom he served. Perhaps his inclusion of these final four verses (which are found in many collected versions of the song) was part of whalemen's and seamen's vernacular of complaint against authority. Still, it is quite a sea change for the romantic Halsey, his songs full of sweetness, love, piety, empathy, and devotion, to have taken down lyrics calling for the crew to murder the captain, send his body to the sharks, and his soul to Hell. Did he choose to write down these verses for fun or daring, as a release of otherwise suppressed emotions, or merely because they are part of the song? This cannot be answered (although I tend towards the third choice). Yet, the murderous lines notwithstanding, the overall impression that Halsey presents through his song selection is that of a young man who was both attuned to the skills and dangers of seamanship, and the emotions of loneliness and yearning wrought by a life at sea and its demand for prolonged separation from loved ones and the comforts of home. In like manner, the deep thought and poetic composition of Isaac Sidney Gould also demonstrate the struggle common to all seafarers, as they exerted all their skill and strength to survive the forces of sea against ship, while struggling for personal tranquility, in the face of ill treatment, discomfort, isolation, and the loss of spiritual comfort—his storm within.

24 There can be no doubt that many whalemen, perhaps the majority, faced with the dangers of the sea and their

own emotional frailties sought comfort in the excessive use of alcohol and tobacco, in bawdy songs and stories, in sex, or through fighting, wrestling, and posturing. Even Halsey and Gould may not have been immune to at least some of these behaviors at times. But Gould and Halsey, as did many other whalers, took to another form of release – expressing their feelings towards storms, external and internal, by putting pen to paper. So too did Caddy Benedict Rose and many other women of the whaling industry, whether captains' wives or daughters at sea, with thoughts of home, or waiting at home, with heart and mind on loved ones at sea. These men and women braved many storms, seeking the calm beyond, but could they ever truly leave those storms behind, be they physical or emotional? The answer may be found in a poem written into the journal kept from 1834 to 1836 by an unnamed whaler in the Sag Harbor whaler *Neptune*.

### ***The STORM***

*Tis pleasant by the cheerful hearth to hear  
Of tempests and the dangers of the deep  
And pause at times and feel that we are safe,  
Then listen to the perilous tale again.  
And with an eager and suspended soul  
Woo terror to delight us. – But to hear  
The roaring of the raging elements  
To know all human skill all human strength  
Avail naught, to look round and only see  
The mountain wave incumbent with its weight  
Of bursting waters o'er the reeling bark; –  
O God; this is indeed a dreadful thing  
And he who hath endured the horror once  
Of such an hour, doth never hear the storm  
Howl round his home but he remembers it  
And thinks upon the suffering mariners.*

*Ship Neptune at sea Lat. 19.26 Long -3.25*[\[38\]](#)

25 The tempest, despite its danger, presents a benefit, demanding the best of each seafarer, as the survival of ship and crew depends on the actions of all. But what happens when the storm passes? Consider this musing of Isaac Sidney Gould:

26 Jan. 29, 1844 A calm. Although so pleasing and sometimes so much desired by persons on the land, to the sailor it is the most disagreeable task imaginable far worse than a gale. To lie upon the ocean perfectly motionless with the mind fixed upon an object several thousand miles distant and making no advancement is actually provoking.[\[39\]](#)

27 “Provoking” But of what? In a calm the sailing ship lies motionless. It loses its purpose. With less duty to perform the whaler’s mind could also become becalmed. Idle time could afford relaxation, found in such diversions as singing, scrimshandering, reading, writing, or playing cards or dominoes, but boredom could ensue, and with it a dwelling upon the anxieties of self-doubt, loneliness, and melancholy. The storm within would linger and grow until the wind brought relief, the tempest of emotion quelled by the performance of seamanship. Facing storms, whalers such as Melvin P. Halsey and Isaac Sidney Gould expressed themselves in verse that, in turn, reveals much about their feelings as whalers, and as men, at the moment in which they wrote into their journals. In the reality of life at sea, they struggled to survive against the calm and the storm.

### **Postscript**

28 Please follow the hyperlink to “Isle of Beauty” to hear the comments of another Sag Harbor whaling hand, Henry A. Harlow, on the oppression of a calm, as he described it in one of his daily journal entries, and in a song whose words he wrote into his journal, “Isle of Beauty,” to which he added the phrase – “Sweet Long Island, Goodbye.”<sup>[40]</sup>

<https://lihj.cc.stonybrook.edu/2010/audio-visual/stephen-nicholas-sanfilippo/>

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## Notes

[1]“Her Bright Smiles Haunts Me Still,” page 45 in Melvin P. Halsey, Journals of Melvin P. Halsey for Voyages in whaling bark *Reindeer*, coasting schooner *Billow*, and whaleship *Trident*, 1863-1868, unpublished journal manuscript, Southampton Historical Museum and Research Center, Southampton, New York, storage box 17, whaling logs. [Please Note: All quotations from whalemens’ journals, including song lyrics and lines of poetry, are given as the whalemens wrote them. The whalemens’ writing is instructive to us, and also more clearly indicates the lyrics as they heard them. Where a word was too garbled to understand, was clearly incorrect, or missing, I have put what I believe to be the correct word into squared brackets. In addition, in keeping with the article’s topic, I wish to dedicate my work to the memory of the 33 men and women, including 5 Maine Maritime Academy graduates, who lost their lives in the sinking of the El Faro during Hurricane Joaquin in October, 2015, and to the students of Maine Maritime Academy, past, present, and to come, as they face the tempests of the sea and of life.]

[2]Letter, Cady B. Rose to Melvin P. Halsey, January 14, 1856, Water Mill Historical Museum, Water Mill, New York. Published in Marlene E. Haresign and Marsha Kranes, editors, *Water Mill, Celebrating Community: The History of a Long Island Hamlet* (Water Mill, N.Y.: Water Mill Museum, 1994), p. 18.

[3]John Griffin, “Historical Comments,” speech delivered upon the 50th anniversary of the dedication of Emma Rose Elliston Memorial Park, Southampton, New York, 2002. Unpublished typed copy. Southampton Historical Museum and Research Center, Southampton, New York (SHM&RC, SH, NY), Document Case 68-1, Rose Family, Griffin Collection. [Emma Rose Elliston was the daughter of Jetur Rose and Catherine Benedict Rose. She was born in Honolulu a few days after “Caddy” wrote her letter to Melvin P. Halsey.]

[4]C.B. Rose to M.P. Halsey, Jan. 14, 1856.

[5]Frederick L. Schodt, *Native American in the Land of the Shogun: Ranald MacDonald and the Opening of Japan* (Berkeley, Cal.: Stone Bridge Press, 2003), pp. 152-155.

[6]Frederick P. Schmidt, Cornelis de Jong, and Frank H. Winter, *Thomas Welcome Roys: America’s Pioneer of Modern Whaling*(Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, for the Mariners’ Museum, Newport News, Virginia, 1980), pp. 22-32.

[7]Thomas Philbrick, *James Fenimore Cooper and the Development of American Sea Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 42, 292.

[8]James Fenimore Cooper [grandson of James Fenimore Cooper, the 19th century author], editor, *Correspondence of James Fenimore Cooper*, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), pp. 37-38. “Crew List of Vessels Owned by Deering of Sag Harbor, 1828-1855,” unpublished ledger, Long Island Collection, East Hampton Library, East Hampton, New York (IC, EHL, EH, NY).

[9]James Fenimore Cooper, *The Sea Lions, or The Lost Sealers* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Fredonia Books, 2002; original American publication, 1849), pp. 42-43.

[10]Cooper, *The Sea Lions*, pp. 9-10.

[11]C.B. Rose to M.P. Halsey, Jan. 14, 1856.

[12]Melvin P. Halsey, *Journals of Melvin P. Halsey*, flyleaf and p. 1.

[13]Alexander Starbuck, *Report of Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries: History of the American Whalefishery* (Secaucus, N.J.: Castle Books, 1989; original publication 1877), pp. 550-559. Starbuck cites 49 instances in which American whaleships, each sailing from Long Island or New England ports, were either destroyed or captured and bonded by the Confederate commerce raiders C.S.S. *Alabama*, C.S.S. *Shenandoah*, and C.S.S. *Florida*, and by one Confederate privateer.

[14]Starbuck, *History of Whalefishery*, pp. 558-579. Starbuck's list includes 16 Long Island and New England whaleships taken out of service and sunk as the "Stone Fleet."

[15]Starbuck, *History of Whalefishery*, pp. 424-461. Starbuck's list includes 39 Long Island and New England whaleships at sea in 1849 that left whaling to sail for San Francisco.

[16]Halsey, *Journals*, pp. 3-4, 6.

[17]"Who Will Care for Mother Now?," in Halsey, *Journals*, p. 36.

[18]"Touch My Guitar," in Halsey, *Journals*, p. 41.

[19]"Indian Mothers Lullaby," in Halsey, *Journals*, p. 42.

[20]"Mother kiss me in my dreams," Halsey, *Journals*, p. 44.

[21]"Sailors Grave," in Halsey, *Journals*, p. 39.

[22]"Her Bright Smiles haunts me still," in Halsey, *Journals*, p. 45. [Halsey writes "smiles" instead of "smile." My thanks to Kris Paprocki, Pembroke, Maine, for recording my performance of this song, and to the Pembroke Historical Society, for the use of its museum as our recording studio.]

[23]"Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still," sheet music cover illustrations, Levy Sheet Music Collection, Sheridan Library & University Museums, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland; illustration #1, box 181, item 122; <https://jscholarship.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/2170>; illustration 2, box 181, item 118; <https://jscholarship.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/2224>. Illustrators' names not given. (accessed November 3, 2015).

[24]For standard "Boston Harbor" version of this song, known as "Boston," "From Boston Harbor," and "With a Big Bow Wow," see Frederick Pease Harlow, compiler and editor, *Chanteying Aboard American Ships* (Mystic, Conn.: Mystic Seaport, 2004; original publication Barre, Mass.: Barre Publishing Company, Inc., 1962), pp. 155-157.

[25]"Description of a Squall," Halsey, *Journals*, p. 29.

[26]"Lines on the Loss of the U.S. Ship Hornet Sept, 1829," in James B. Pierson, Captain, "Log of the *Arabella*, Sag Harbor, 1837-1839," microfilm, Suffolk County Historical Society, Riverhead, New York, final entry in log.

[27]Isaac Sidney Gould, "A Journal Kept on Board Ship Fanny of Sag Harbor," 1843-1846, unpublished manuscript, Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities (SPLIA), Cold Spring Harbor, New York; incomplete typed transcript held by Cold Spring Harbor Whaling Museum, Cold Spring Harbor, New York, January 25, 1844, p. 5 transcript; September 7, 1844, p. 44 transcript; October 12, 16, 19, 21, 22, 26, 28, 29, 1844, pp. 50-55 transcript; February 15, 1845, pp. 88-91 transcript, United States Bureau of the Census. *Census of the United States 1830*, New York State, Suffolk County, Town of Brookhaven, pp. 184-185. *Census, 1840*, Town of Brookhaven. *Census, 1850*, Town of Brookhaven, p. 183. *Census, 1860*, Town of Brookhaven, Village of Port Jefferson, p. 58. Osborne Shaw, compiler and editor, "Brookhaven Cemetery Data Base," (unpublished compilation, Town of Brookhaven Historian's Alphabetical Listing, ca. 1950), p. 156. M. Lewis Gould, "Eighty-three Years of Church Work. Submitted by Deacon M. Lewis Gould of the First Congregational Church of New Village at a Meeting of the Suffolk

Association, November 16 and 17, 1898" (unpublished printed document, New Village Congregational Church File [NVCCF], Suffolk County Historical Society [SCHS], Riverhead, New York [RVHD, NY]. David A. Overton, "First Congregational Church of New Village" (unpublished pamphlet, NVCCF, SCHS, RVHD, NY, no year given, pp. 5-8. [Mr. Overton served as Town of Brookhaven Historian during the last third of the 1900s.] "Historic Sketch of the Congregational Church of New Village" (unpublished manuscript, NVCCF, SCHS RVHD NY, no year given), pp. 5, 8-9. "Preparation and Subscription List building of House of Worship for Congregationalists, Baptists, and Presbyterians at New Village, February 7, 1818" (unpublished transcript dated September 7, 1858, NVCCF, SCHS, RVHD, NY.

[28]Gould, Journal, *Fanny*, February 15, 1845, p. 88, transcript.

[29]Gould, Journal, *Fanny*. Gould makes such observations throughout his journal, most notably see November 6, 1845, p. 149 manuscript; November 16, 1844, p. 62 transcript; February 22, 1845, p. 89 transcript; April 25, 1845, pp. 101-102 transcript; February 16, 1846, p. 170, transcript; sketches of islands and lunar eclipse, and short hand entries on several pages of original manuscript following journal entries.

[30]Gould, Journal, *Fanny*, May 14, 1844, p. 24 transcript.

[31]Gould, Journal, *Fanny*, December 1, 1844, p. 66-67 transcript.

[32]Gould, Journal, *Fanny*, December 1, 1844, p. 67 transcript.

[33]Gould, Journal, *Fanny*, October 30, 1845, p. 146, transcript.

[34]Gould, Journal, *Fanny*, July 4, 1844, p. 34, transcript; November 30, 1844, p. 66 transcript.

[35]Gould, Journal, *Fanny*, May 7, 1845, p. 105 transcript.

[36]Gould, Journal, *Fanny*, December 1, 1844, p. 67 transcript.

[37]"Description of a Squall," in Halsey, Journals, p. 29. [My thanks to Kris Paprocki, Pembroke, Maine, for recording my performance of this song, and both to the members of "From Away Downeast" and the audience at the Pembroke Library's October, 2015 Chantey Sing for singing on the chorus.]

[38]"The Storm," in a journal of the Sag Harbor whaleship *Neptune*, 1834-1836, journal keeper unknown, unpublished manuscript, Southampton Historical Museum and Research Center, Southampton, New York. [The journal's internal evidence strongly suggests that the journal keeper was from Sag Harbor or the nearby area. [My thanks to Andy Chase, Master Mariner, Maine Maritime Academy, for his encouragement in my use of this poem during the hard time at MMA as we awaited the ultimately sorrowful word of the fate of the freighter *El Faro*, with the loss of all hands, including five MMA graduates, in Hurricane Joaquin, October, 2015.]

[39]Gould, Journal, *Fanny*, January 29, 1844, p. 6.transcript.

[40]Harlow, Henry A. "Journal, Ship Acosta of Sag Harbor,"1847-1849. Unpublished manuscript, Long Island Collection, East Hampton Library, East Hampton, New York. Sunday, April 22, 1849, pp. 115-116; Saturday, May 6, 1848, pp. 28-29. [My thanks to Michael Shannon for recording my narration of the entry from Harlow's journal, and for his recording of my performance of the song, accompanied by my wife, Susan Sanfilippo, and to the Cobscook Community Learning Center, Trescott, Maine, for permitting the use of the CCLC's facility and equipment for making the recordings.]





Storm on the Island is a dramatic monologue from the perspective of a villager on a remote island about the storms his community face and their effects. Voice Storm on the Island begins with the resolute determination of someone sure about himself and his people. The very simplicity of the sentence 'We are prepared' speaks of confidence. consonance Repeated consonant sounds within words (stacks and stooks) assonance Repeated vowel sounds within words (mean - leaves). For extra support with poetry analysis, why not book a lesson with one of our experienced GCSE English tutor? With Tutorfair you can browse through a selection of great tutors to find the right one for you.