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**Col. John Singleton Mosby ~ Herman Melville ~ Col. Charles Russell Lowell**

## **History, Legend, and Poetic Tradition in Melville's "The Scout Toward Aldie"**

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As a product of firsthand observation during an actual combat and reconnaissance operation, Melville's "The Scout toward Aldie," published in his *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866), occupies a unique place in the small roster of Civil War literature by major nineteenth-century writers. Melville's participation in an expedition against the elusive Confederate guerrilla fighter John Mosby and his 43rd Battalion of Virginia Partisan Rangers in April 1864 resulted in a narrative poem that liberally drew on the author's experience on this "scout" and evoked the assiduous but unsuccessful Union campaign to kill or capture Mosby in the latter half of the war. The poem accordingly blends historical fact with the general legendary aura that had grown up around the figure of this undefeated fighter, one of the most hated men in the Confederacy by the end of the war whose theater of operations was within a score of miles of the Union capital (Wert; Ramage; Ashdown and Caudill).

"The Scout toward Aldie" tells the story of a hundred-man cavalry mission against Mosby's Rangers led by an ambitious, newly married young Colonel, assisted by an older and more experienced Major whose prudent counsel is ignored by his superior. For after the scout is initially successful in capturing ten of Mosby's men, the young Colonel insists on making a night expedition to surprise more Rangers allegedly celebrating in a nearby town—a fact gleaned from a letter hidden on the person of an enigmatic young woman whom the Union troops have encountered on their journey. The troops then head straight into an ambush which results in the death of the Colonel, the wounding of several Union soldiers, and the escape of seven captured Confederates. The poem ends with the failure of the scout to inflict any significant damage on Mosby's operations, confirming the Confederate fighter's well-earned reputation as an object of fear and dread: "As glides in seas the shark, / Rides Mosby through green dark" (11. 13-14). (Citations of the poem will be by line number from the edition of Melville's *Battle-Pieces* edited by Cohen.) A major theme of the poem, then, as it is elsewhere in the *Battle-Pieces*, is the contrast between youth and age, vulnerable innocence and wary experience, as embodied in the ambitious Colonel and the more cautious Major; another is the familiar Melvillean theme of the ubiquity and unpredictability of evil, as invisibly embodied in the person of John Mosby.

Like many of the other *Battle-Pieces*, "The Scout toward Aldie" has been relatively slow in gaining attention from critics, who have nevertheless acknowledged the dramatic power of its narrative, Melville's longest poetic

performance before the appearance of Clarel ten years later. On the other hand, critical evaluation of the poem has been hampered by an incomplete understanding of some of its key events as well as confusion over the author's implied moral stance toward the combatants. The present essay will attempt to shed new light on the poem by exploring the way that the realms of history, legend, and poetic tradition all intersect as contributory sources to Melville's haunting depiction of an incident from the irregular border war fought in Northern Virginia between North and South. (1)

In a two-part 1982 article, supplemented by a 1993 book on Melville and the Civil War, Stanton Garner has done valuable spadework in chronicling the historical and biographical basis for Melville's poem in the author's participation in a scouting expedition into Mosby's territory from April 18-20, 1864, while on a visit to his cousin Henry Gansevoort's cavalry unit, the 13th New York, stationed in Vienna, Virginia. Garner has shown the many historical details that Melville drew on for the poem, including similarities in itinerary, personnel, and event, while also showing the areas where Melville diverged from his own personal experience of hunting Mosby ("Scout"; "Scout, Part 2"; *Civil War World* 304-21). In what follows I will briefly review the relevant historical details that Garner has unearthed while also pointing out a few areas where Garner's findings might be challenged or emended. (2)

Melville's April scout was ultimately the result of the author's desire to witness the theater of war while on a visit to the Union capital. Finding that Gansevoort was unexpectedly away seeing to a promotion, Melville, on his visit to the Union camp at Vienna, was invited to join an impending cavalry operation against Mosby's Rangers, a company of whom were rumored to be requisitioning forage in the vicinity of Leesburg. The scout was to be headed by Colonel Charles Russell Lowell of the 2nd Massachusetts cavalry, a nephew of the abolitionist poet and an 1854 Harvard College graduate newly married to Josephine ("Effy") Shaw, sister of the famous Robert Gould Shaw killed with his black troops at Fort Wagner, South Carolina in July 1863. A gallant and intellectually gifted officer, Lowell served as head of operations against Mosby for almost a year before being transferred to the Shenandoah Valley in July 1864 to aid Philip Sheridan's effort to take control of this strategic corridor. (He was killed the following October at the Battle of Cedar Creek during Jubal Early's last-ditch effort to keep Sheridan's forces from controlling the Valley.) For Melville's scout a contingent of about 250 infantry would depart from their headquarters at nearby Fairfax Court House and march west toward Aldie; Lowell's contingent of a comparable number of cavalry would then rendezvous with them at a picketed camp outside Aldie. Second in command of the cavalry unit would be Major Douglas Frazer, Gansevoort's subordinate with the 13th New York and a thorn in the side of his superior officer.

Lowell's troops marched west about eighteen miles towards Leesburg, where, after an ineffectual engagement with a few elusive Rangers, they bivouacked on the night of April 18, after Mosby's commissary officer had left with much of the town's grain supply. The next morning Lowell sent out scouting parties and eleven Rangers--one officer and ten men from a newly formed company--were encircled and captured. One of the captives, attempting to escape, received an apparently fatal head injury when he knocked against a tree while being recaptured and was left where he lay with a flask by his side. The Union troopers continued south to join up with the picketed infantry outside Aldie at mid-day on April 19. Later that day Lowell led his forces in brief pursuit of Mosby when an informant reported the guerrilla leader nearby, but after gathering intelligence in Aldie, Lowell found that Mosby had been shadowing the Federals all along. Revising his original plan to venture farther west into the heart of "Mosby's Confederacy," Lowell instead sent a force of seventy-five dismounted troopers north to Leesburg that evening, having discovered from an intercepted letter that the wedding of one of Mosby's men would occur late that same night. The Federal soldiers arrived in Leesburg not long after the wedding was over, and a brief street skirmish in the dark ensued in which two Federals were killed and three wounded, but with no apparent casualties among the Partisans. The demoralized troopers thereupon returned to their camp at 2 a.m. that morning, leaving their casualties at a Leesburg hotel. At sunrise the Union cavalry returned through the town to pick up casualties and then headed back to their camp in Vienna, their mission unsuccessful except for the ten captured Rangers.

From this brief summary of the expedition against Mosby's Rangers in which Melville was a civilian observer, we can compare the use he made of his experience in his later poem on the same subject. In terms of general itinerary, the troops in both Melville's scouting expedition and in the poem begin their operations at a Union cavalry camp within distant view of the new Capitol dome; both march west toward Aldie (the historical scout proceeding to Leesburg first), where they make camp before embarking on a night-time excursion north to Leesburg in search of Mosby's men, rumored to be attending a celebration. Yet instead of the five hundred troops of the historical scout, half cavalry and half infantry, in the poem Melville presents an operation of only one

hundred cavalry and no infantry. Both the historical scout and the poem include the incidental capture of a small group of Rangers, and the attempted escape of one of them; both involve a nighttime excursion to Leesburg based on the contents of an intercepted letter. Unlike the poem, in the historical scout there was apparently no encounter with a mysterious woman in a wagon (although the exact source of Colonel Lowell's intercepted letters is unknown), while the principal combat took place within the town of Leesburg, rather than at an ambush on the road to the town, as in the poem.

While the principal historical source for Melville's poem was manifestly the three-day expedition into Mosby's Confederacy that the author witnessed in April 1864, Garner also notes that some details of the poem were likely added from the most recent major operation against Mosby previous to Melville's expedition ("Scout, Part 2" 13). This engagement, denominated "Second Dranesville" in the history of Mosby's operations, took place on 22 February 1864 and ended in a bloody rout for the Federals (Wert 312-14). Three companies of Lowell's 2nd Massachusetts and one company of the 16th New York cavalry—127 officers and men in all—had set forth on a "roving commission" to seek out Mosby while under the command of Captain J. Sewall Reed of the 2nd Massachusetts, whose wife was visiting him at the time of the expedition. Reed had led his men west to Middleburg from Vienna, and then headed north to Leesburg. Shadowed by Mosby and his men, Reed turned east at Leesburg to head back to camp following the Leesburg-Alexandria Pike (modern Route 7). At a site two miles west of Dranesville, Mosby set up an ambush behind a stand of pine trees and brush. In the ensuing surprise attack late in the morning, the Federals were badly beaten with a dozen killed, twenty-five wounded, seventy captured, and a hundred horses taken; Mosby had one man killed and five wounded. Among the Union dead was the commander, Captain Reed, whose body was later retrieved and brought back to his widow in Vienna. The parallels between the events of Second Dranesville and Melville's poem include a Union cavalry regiment of about a hundred soldiers, a commanding officer whose wife was visiting him at the time, an ambush by Mosby's Rangers set up behind a stand of trees, and the immediate slaying of the Union commanding officer. It is hard to imagine Melville not hearing about these events, which took place only a few weeks before his own scout into Mosby's territory, involved some of the same cavalry detachments from Vienna, and covered a comparable circuit through Loudoun County. Melville thus would seem to have conflated the events of his own scout with those of Second Dranesville for the creation of his narrative poem.

Despite Garner's doubts on the matter, the Colonel in "The Scout toward Aldie" is probably at least partially based on the personality of Charles Russell Lowell, the leader of Melville's real-life expedition. While there is a basic resemblance between both officers' chivalric bearing and newly married status, the Colonel in Melville's poem is manifestly less cautious than the war-seasoned Lowell, who had served during the Peninsula Campaign and was on McClellan's staff at Antietam. On the other hand, the Colonel's youthful demeanor and professional ambition do suggest elements of Lowell's character. Aged twenty-nine when Melville joined him on the scout for Mosby, Lowell was described by a later eulogist as the picture of youth: "What a bright image arises in my memory of his boyish beauty, his rosy-tinted complexion, his wavy hair, his bright eyes that could flash with merriment or glow with intense conviction" (Emerson 6). As a Harvard valedictorian Lowell had delivered an Emersonian address entitled "The Reverence due from Old Men to Young" (Emerson 7-13). Garner has argued that the Colonel's ambition for promotion in Melville's poem was suggestive not of Lowell but of Melville's cousin Gansevoort, who was taking care of his professional rise to colonel during Melville's visit to his cavalry camp in Vienna (Civil War World 320). Yet again there is some evidence that Lowell projected an image like that of the overly ambitious Colonel of Melville's poem. Lowell's successor as commanding officer of the 2nd Massachusetts, Caspar Crowninshield, for example, wrote to his mother of Lowell in August 1863: "The Colonel & I get along very well together. He is a very brilliant man, but is to[o] hasty in his judgements of men & things. And is so very ambitious, that he sacrifices everything for advancement" (Wert 95). In another letter to his mother that November, Crowninshield again claimed that Lowell was "hasty, inconsiderate and has not very good judgement" (Wert 107).

Unlike the youthful Colonel, the personality of the older Major in Melville's poem seems to have had no real-life counterpart in the officers of the real-life scout, certainly not the young and unsympathetic Major Frazar. But the Major does suggest something of Melville himself as a middle-aged man (he turned forty-five a few months after his Virginia scouting expedition) and as an habitual skeptic toward the more dangerous kinds of enthusiasm and idealism. The minor figures of the hospital steward, surgeon, chaplain, and civilian guide in the poem, in turn, were all apparently based on counterparts who participated in the scout which Melville joined (Civil War World 312-14).

As previously noted, there seems to be no recognizable historical source for a key event in "The Scout toward Aldie," namely, the encounter with the woman in the wagon that leads, via the confiscated letter, to the ambush of Union troops by Mosby's men. Garner points to a possible source for this event in an incident unrelated to Mosby involving two women in a wagon intercepted by Federal troops at Fairfax Court House who were attempting to smuggle supplies into the Confederacy; the incident may have been told to Melville by General Tyler during the author's visit to the general's headquarters at Fairfax Court House shortly after his return from his scout ("Scout, Part 2" 8; *Civil War World* 322-23). (3)

Yet there is no reason to look beyond the purview of "Mosby's Confederacy" for the woman in the wagon in Melville's poem. As historian Jeffry D. Wert has noted, "The most reliable informants for Mosby, perhaps, were young women, who by their flirtations and cajolery extracted plans from Union officers. Mosby based a number of his raids on the intelligence supplied by them" (122). In Melville's poem, the young woman does not act as an informant but is apparently assisting Mosby in the capacity of decoy and collaborator. The "sister-rebel" (1.406), who calls Mosby "that brave man" (1. 462), is clearly a Confederate sympathizer from "Yewton Place, her home./So ravaged by the war's wild play—/Campings, and foragings, and fires—/That now she sought an aunt's abode" (11. 435-38). The woman thus presents herself as a displaced person because of the devastation done to her home on one of the farmsteads of Mosby's Confederacy, a large number of which served as safe houses for Mosby and his men (Wert 117-21).

In a note to the poem introducing the scene of Mosby's operations and the Union expeditions sent against him, Melville had written: "Owing to the nature of the country and the embittered feelings of its inhabitants, many of these expeditions ended disastrously. Such results were helped by the exceeding cunning of the enemy, born of his wood-craft, and, in some instances, by undue confidence on the part of our men" (289). Melville's gloss here provides an outline of the underlying "plot" (in both senses of the term) of "The Scout toward Aldie," for the woman in the wagon is almost certainly one of the "embittered" inhabitants of Loudoun or Fauquier County who was helping Mosby lead Union soldiers into an ambush all the more effective because of Mosby's "wood-craft" as well as the "undue confidence" of the Union commander.

Still another historical event evoked in the poem not attributable to Melville's scout is, as Garner has mentioned, the Major's allusion in conversation with the Colonel to the execution of prisoners by both sides ("did we hang last?—" [1. 235]), based on a notorious but limited phase of the campaign against Mosby's guerrillas that involved two incidents of retaliatory executions, first by the Federals and then by Mosby's Rangers, between late September and early November 1864 (Wert 200-19, 244-58). Melville must have known from his scout in late April 1864 that the execution of prisoners was not occurring that spring, but the savage reprisals of the following fall, and the bitterness this caused in Northern public opinion, apparently caused him to magnify their place in the ongoing contests between Mosby's Rangers and Federal troops. In his note to the poem, Melville showed a vague awareness of the origins of the executions in the bitterness of partisan war, but was not adequately informed how long they continued: "To what extent such deplorable proceedings were carried, it is not easy to learn" (289). The exact details of the executions were in fact slow to emerge, but like all war-time atrocity stories they were magnified and sensationalized in the public mind. In all other respects, however, Melville's poem, which takes place sometime in the late spring or early summer (judging from the details of its setting), accurately reflects the state of the war against Mosby in the spring and summer of 1864 when over a year's worth of guerrilla raids had established his reputation as a fearsome and elusive fighter.

We have seen, then, that many of the basic facts of Melville's experience on an expedition against Mosby in April 1864 contributed to the basic framework of his later narrative poem. Yet it is important to remember that the representation of the hunt for Mosby in the poem also drew heavily on the Confederate guerrilla's legendary reputation in the North. The magnification of Mosby's image among Northern soldiers and civilians was based on a variety of factors, including the audacity and stunning success of many of Mosby's attacks (notably, the daring capture of a Union general early in Mosby's career as a partisan commander); his seeming ubiquity and invisibility in the parts of Loudoun and Fauquier counties where he operated; the Union army's failure to capture him throughout the war; his multiple woundings with seeming miraculous recoveries in each case; and, in general, his remarkable talents as a guerrilla fighter who combined meticulous reconnaissance with charismatic leadership. Educated at the University of Virginia, Mosby had been a lawyer and then, after the outbreak of war, established himself as a highly effective scout for General J.E.B. Stuart. In January 1863, with the approval of Stuart and Lee, Mosby organized his own battalion of Partisan Rangers to harry Union troops and supply trains in Northern Virginia. Fueling the Northern hatred of Mosby and his Rangers in the second half of the war were the raw

statistics of his successes as a partisan commander, for with fewer than 400 men at any one time under his command (and a total of only 1,570 enrolled by end of war), Mosby and his men killed, wounded, or captured at least 2,900 Union soldiers (as opposed to only 640 Ranger casualties), while the Union army dispatched more than seventy missions against him during the two years of his operations without ever capturing or killing him (Ramage 344).

Perhaps the most outstanding aspect of Mosby's career conveyed by Melville's poem is his success at what today would be called psychological warfare, and at the time was related to the aura of fear and dread that Mosby's name produced in Union troops. "Mosby achieved the objective of using fear as a force multiplier, diverting several times his own number from the Union army and creating disruptions and false alarms," writes James Ramage, Mosby's most recent biographer.

Mosby realized that making his name feared would give his warfare greater emotional impact. He insisted that his men make it clear when they attacked that they were "Mosby's men." Rangers learned that the word "Mosby" was so powerful that it was useful in subduing a guard and preventing him from yelling or shooting. "I am Mosby," a Ranger would whisper, and sometimes the captive would go into a daze, bowing his head and trembling in fear. When ordered to walk, one prisoner staggered as if drunk, another became nauseated and vomited, and another fell on his knees and raised his hands, pleading for life. When a Union soldier disappeared, his friends would say, "Mosby has gobbled him up," or "He has gone to Andersonville."

Union opponents said Mosby's men seemed to be "almost intangible" demons and devils, and myth claimed that when they scattered into the mountains the tracks of their horses suddenly disappeared. "Nobody ever saw one;" a Union officer wrote, "they leave no tracks, and they come down upon you when you least expect them." Northern journalists characterized them as "rebel devils," horse thieves, "skulking guerrillas," "these nuisances that go on legs," gang of murderers and highway robbers, accursed poltroons, cutthroats, "picket shooting assassins and marauding highwaymen," "worse than assassins," and "lawless banditti." Union horsemen named their area "a nest of guerrillas," "Devil's Corner," "The Trap," and "Mosby's Confederacy."

By the close of the war he had made himself the single-most-hated Confederate in the North. Northern newspapers designated him "the devil," Robin Hood, horse thief, bushwhacker, marauding highwayman, murderer, rebel assassin, notorious land pirate, and guerrilla chief. Jack Mosby, the Guerrilla, a dime novel published with a yellow paper cover in 1867, described him as a tall and powerful desperado with a black beard, a cruel, remorseless man who enjoyed cutting men apart with his tremendous saber and riddling them with bullets from a varied assortment of pistols in his belt... Mosby was so well hated that into the next generation Northern mothers quieted their children with, "Hush, child, Mosby will get you!" (4-5)

"The Scout toward Aldie" extensively draws on the aura of fear and dread that Mosby had created in the minds of his Union opponents, as echoed by the Northern journalists who covered his war-time career. The two-line refrain at the end of each stanza of the poem, in which Mosby's name is repeated in an incantatory manner, manifestly plays on the fear that his name inspired among Northern soldiers and civilians, as Melville remarked in his note to the poem: "In the verse the name of Mosby is invested with some of those associations with which the popular mind is familiar" (289). In keeping with his Northern reputation, "The Scout toward Aldie" puts into question Mosby's mysterious identity from the beginning of the poem to its tragic finale. Already by the third stanza, Mosby is given a magical aura of invulnerability, together with the multiple identities of a shape-shifter:

All spake of him, but few had seen  
Except the maimed ones or the low;  
Yet rumor made him every thing—  
A farmer—woodman—refugee—  
The man who crossed the field but now;  
A spell about his life did cling—Who  
to the ground shall Mosby bring? (ll. 15-21)

In like manner, just before the ambush takes place near the poem's end, the Major accurately describes the nature of Mosby's operations by calling his partisans "such foes/As seldom come to solid fight:/They kill and vanish; through grass they glide" (ll. 655-57). Shortly thereafter, the Union troops are attacked from behind the fallen tree in their path, and when they dismount to fight the guerrillas, "They go, but find what scarce can please:/Their [the Rangers'] steeds have been tied in the field behind,/And Mosby's men are off like the wind" (ll. 677-79). A

Union soldier thereupon excitedly announces to the Major that the injured Ranger they had compassionately left behind with a flask was in fact Mosby himself:

"Major," burst in a bugler small,  
"The fellow we left in Loudoun grass—  
Sir Slyboots with the inward bruise,  
His voice I heard—the very same—  
Some watchword in the ambush pass;  
Ay, sir, we had him in his shoes—  
We caught him—Mosby—but to lose!" (ll. 687-93)

Another Union soldier reports that the black slave earlier encountered in the wagon with his mistress was also one of Mosby's Rangers in disguise, based on the fleeting impression that one of the attackers in the ambush was hump-backed like the slave and dropped a woolen wig during the skirmish. To both these soldiers, the Major responds with cool-headed skepticism, claiming that the soldiers are probably fantasizing out of sleep deprivation. "A wig! go fetch it:—the lads need sleep;/They'll next see Mosby in a sheep? (ll. 699-700). In a book of Reminiscences published two decades after the Civil War, when he had become a distinguished civil servant for the federal government, Mosby wryly commented that in the eyes of his Union adversaries he was nothing less than a mythical being: "Among the survivors of the Army of the Potomac there are many legends afloat, and religiously believed to be true, of a mysterious person—a sort of Flying Dutchman or Wandering Jew--prowling among their camps in the daytime in the garb of a beggar or with a pilgrim's staff, and leading cavalry raids upon them at night. In popular imagination, I have been identified with that mythical character" (23). Later in his account, Mosby pointed to the Northern press for creating the aura of legend that grew up around his name during the war: "As for myself, it was for a long time maintained that I was a pure myth, and my personal identity was as stoutly denied as that of Homer or the Devil. All historic doubts about my own existence have, I believe, been settled; but the fables published by the Bohemians who followed the army made an impression that still lives in popular recollection" (117). In view of Mosby's mythic magnification, we may assume that the Major in Melville's poem is correct in his skeptical assessment of whether the captive who is injured while trying to escape, or the slave who accompanied the young woman in the wagon, was actually involved in the ambush of Federal troops, after having thrown off their simulated identities; the same skepticism applies to the possibility that the injured prisoner was actually Mosby himself. (4)

Concerning the injured prisoner, it would seem historically unlikely that Mosby would be captured by a previously observed Union force as easily as the captured Rangers in the poem, who are described as young recruits, "love-locks dancing in a maze—/Certes, but sophomores from the glen/Of Mosby—not his veteran men" (ll. 292-94). Moreover, the injured prisoner is professionally examined by the surgeon and the chaplain, who were unable to assist him: "spite the two/Mosby's poor man more pallid grew" (ll. 328-29). The hump-backed slave in the wagon, too, is closely examined by the Hospital Steward and, since it is still daylight, could hardly present himself without detection if he were a white soldier masquerading as a black. The slave does, however, enigmatically respond, "I dun know what I know" (l. 465), to the Hospital Steward's questioning, a likely indication that he is aware of the ploy being executed by his mistress but does not want to reveal it. His subsequent refusal of the Union officer's proffered freedom ("Man, you're free!"/"Well, let we free!" [ll. 471-72]) is made more credible by the fact that the slave is apparently a sickly and partially disabled household servant long attached to the woman's family ("My gal nursed missis—let we go" [l. 469]).

Also confirming the fact that the Major in Melville's poem is probably correct in his skeptical assessment of the identity of the injured captive and the black slave is the postwar testimony of Mosby himself. In his Reminiscences, the latter categorically denied that he or his men ever donned a disguise: "I always wore the Confederate uniform, with the insignia of my rank. So did my men. So any success I may have had, either as an individual scout or partisan commander, cannot be accounted for on the theory that it was accomplished through disguise. The hundreds of prisoners I took are witnesses to the contrary" (24). The Major's verdict that the Union soldiers who think they recognize the injured captive and the slave as participants in the ambush are suffering from sleep-deprivation (the "lads need sleep" [l. 699]) also accords with Mosby's awareness that his frequent night raids and operations were especially exasperating to his adversaries for depriving them of sleep: "no human being knows how sweet sleep is but a soldier. . . I have often thought that their fierce hostility to me was more on account of the sleep I made them lose than the number we killed and captured" (45).

Mosby emphasized in his *Reminiscences* that his whole partisan command had the practical orientation of diverting Union troops away from major campaigns elsewhere and harrying Union supply lines, while his use of surprise and deception had a very practical strategic rationale, namely, to compensate for the limited number of soldiers and resources at his command:

the advantage was generally on my side, notwithstanding the superior numbers we assailed. For this reason, the complaint has often been made against me that I would not fight fair. So an old Austrian general complained that Bonaparte violated all military maxims and traditions by flying about from post to post in Italy, breaking up his cantonments and fighting battles in the winter time. The accusations that have been made against my mode of warfare are about as reasonable. In one sense the charge that I did not fight fair is true. I fought for success and not for display. There was no man in the Confederate army who had less of the spirit of knight-errantry in him, or took a more practical view of war than I did. (79-80)

One of Mosby's most significant "practical" innovations in his manner of warfare was substituting a pair of Colt revolvers for the traditional saber in cavalry charges. "The Scout toward Aldie" does not depict the kind of lethal charge for which Mosby was notorious in the North, but it does illustrate another of his regular tactics, the deliberate targeting of officers in his encounters with Union troops, as seen in Melville's poem in the immediate killing of the young Colonel. Mosby's claims about his strictly pragmatic view of war are confirmed in other respects in "The Scout toward Aldie," for the Union Colonel is clearly a representative of misguided "knight-errantry," from his initial gallant departure with his troops from their camp ("Mounted and armed he sits a king"[1. 51]), to his final and fatal errors of judgment: first, his chivalric inability to believe that the woman in the wagon could be leading them into a trap ("Tut, Major! by what craft or guile—" [1. 624]); second, his refusal to heed the Major's "dark views" of their perilous situation ("Now, Major, now—you take dark views/Of a moonlight night" [U. 631-32]); and third, his insistence on moving swiftly ahead with their excursion to Leesburg even when "a tree athwart the road" [1. 646] should make him more cautious. The ensuing sacrifice of the Colonel and other Union soldiers, in turn, demonstrates the fatal efficacy of the "stratagems, surprises, and night attacks" that Mosby indicated as necessary to his type of warfare. It is important to realize that the Colonel in Melville's poem is not reckless or incompetent in his command, but merely imprudent. Early on in the narrative, his prompt decision to pursue the Rangers visible on horseback results in the capture of ten of Mosby's men, even if the Colonel's resolve may have been fortified by a swig from the Surgeon's flask ("A charm of proof" [1. 281]). The Colonel is undoubtedly "brave" [1. 220], as the narrator acknowledges, but like some of Melville's better-known characters—Starbuck and Amasa Delano come to mind—he has an insufficient understanding of the deviousness and irrationality of evil. The fact that he is fatally shot through the heart during the ambush confirms the ruthlessness of the guerrilla war he is fighting and his likely targeting based on his rank. ("One's buttons shine—does Mosby see?" [1. 644] remarks the Colonel shortly before the ambush.)

Like the Union soldiers who were demoralized by the speed and unpredictability of Mosby's attacks, the soldiers who return to their cavalry outpost at the end of Melville's poem are deeply traumatized by the ambush they have undergone, and their chivalric Colonel's death. The complete destruction of morale is seen in the fact that even the constitutionally cheerful Hospital Steward, whose job exempted him from attack, has been transformed:

The Hospital Steward—even he—  
Who on the sleeper kept his glance,  
Was changed; late bright-black beard and eye  
Looked now hearse-black; his heavy heart,  
Like his fagged mare, no more could dance;  
His grape was now a raisin dry:  
Tis Mosby's homily—*Man must die*. [11. 771-77]

In the last line Mosby becomes a kind of *memento mori* figure, insinuating his partisan message into a universal religious truth. The poem ends, appropriately enough, with the final breaking of the news to the Colonel's widow, who will be haunted for the rest of her life by the ghost of Mosby and his Rangers ("Though the bride should see threescore and ten,/She will dream of Mosby and his men" [11. 790-91]), just as her husband is buried in a graveyard "held in fear for the gleaming ghost!" [1. 789]. We have seen, then, that Melville's "The Scout Toward Aldie" unites elements of the writer's experience of tracking Mosby, together with the strategic use of Northern historical legends that had grown up around the figure of the elusive Confederate guerrilla by 1864. Yet in addition to the biographical and historical dimensions to Melville's poem, there remains the relatively unexplored

domain of what literary forms and influences also contributed to the narrative. As the author's first published book of poetry, *Battle-Pieces* shows Melville as a versatile craftsman who had assimilated a variety of poetic techniques from the mainstream traditions of English verse. "The Scout toward Aldie" may be categorized as a literary ballad, a form dependent on the Romantic-era rediscovery of English and Scottish popular balladry (Friedman). As embodied in such seminal collections as Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry* (1765), Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-1803), and Francis J. Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1854-1857), popular balladry often dwelt on themes of chivalric quests, outlawed passions and personalities, uncanny events, and pathosladen deaths. (Melville acquired and read Child's collection of ballads in 1859 [Parker 408].) According to a standard definition, the popular ballad told a story that focused on a single dramatic incident; often incorporated dialogue into the narrative; featured an impersonal narrative voice; and utilized relatively simple diction. Originally meant to be sung, popular ballads included refrains and incremental repetitions, while a standard ballad meter consisted of quatrains of alternate tetrameter and hexameter lines. Romantic-era "literary" ballads such as Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel" drew on some of the basic formulae of popular balladry while adding more sophisticated literary content.

Given Mosby's preternatural status in Melville's poem, the chivalric personality of the Union Colonel pursuing him, and the general aura of danger that suffuses the narrative, it is appropriate that "The Scout toward Aldie" be cast in the form of a literary ballad; moreover, the poem's subject of irregular border warfare evokes a traditional topic of Scottish popular balladry and folklore. Melville's "The Scout toward Aldie" follows ballad tradition in some basic aspects of its theme and form, except for its sevenline stanza, technically a heptastich or septet, in iambic tetrameter with a rhyme scheme of a-b-c-d-b-c-c. The most familiar septet stanza is "rhyme royal," which uses iambic pentameter in a rhyme scheme of a-b-a-b-b-c-c. Rhyme royal had been pioneered by Chaucer in *The Parlement of Foules*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and four *Canterbury Tales*, and subsequently utilized by a number of poets including Spenser in his *Four Hymns* and Shakespeare in *The Rape of Lucrece*. Melville's octosyllabic line and restricted rhyme scheme were probably intended to tone down some of the verbal music of rhyme royal while substituting frequent alliteration for reduced end rhyme.

If popular balladry probably helped Melville conceptualize certain aspects of his narrative poem, Spenser's poetry, an abiding influence on his writing (Moses), aided him as well. Melville was re-reading his multivolume edition of Spenser in August 1864, a few months after his return to New York from Washington and Northern Virginia, at which time he may have already begun the narrative poem based on his scouting expedition (Parker 578-79). Thus it comes as no surprise that *The Faerie Queene* apparently contributed to several aspects of setting, theme, and characterization in "The Scout toward Aldie." To begin with, the aura of strange enchantment that hangs over the sylvan setting of Melville's poem may be considered a latter-day version of the enchantment that informs the world of Spenser's romantic epic. Already by the fifth stanza of the poem, we learn of the Union cavalry in their woodland camp:

They lived as in the Eerie Land—  
The fire-flies showed with fairy gleam;  
And yet from pine-tops one might ken  
The Capitol Dome—hazy—sublime—  
A vision breaking on a dream[.] (11. 29-33)

The "Eerie Land" with its "fairy gleam" here is evocative of Spenser's fairy land on the edge of the familiar world, the latter represented by the newly constructed Capitol Dome symbolizing the realm of law and civic order. It is a noteworthy feature of the ensuing narrative that the landscape in which the Union cavalry hunt Mosby is characterized by a malign magic in which woods and trees play a significant symbolic role. The enchanted wood or forest is a recurrent motif of the Renaissance epic found in Ariosto, Tasso, and Spenser. In Book I of *The Faerie Queene* ("The Legend of Holiness"), for example, when Red Cross Knight is about to blunder in his moral choices, he is often depicted as straying in a wood. Red Cross first enters "Error's Den" when wandering amidst "the thickest woods" (Canto I, Stanza 11, 1.7), while the "Hermitage" of the disguised Archimago is located "hard by a forests side" (Canto I, Stanza 34, 1. 2). The Union soldiers in Melville's poem are clearly traveling through a malign enchanted wood, a dreary and deserted "forest land" in which nature exhibits the desolations of war: "On, right on through the forest land,/Nor man, nor maid, nor child was seen—" [11. 134-35]; "By wornout fields they cantered onto/Drear fields amid the woodlands wide" [11. 141-42]; "They leave the road and take the wood./And mark the trace of ridges there—/A wood where once had slept the farm—" [11. 162-64]. When the Union soldiers



camp that evening, the Colonel and Major discuss their mission, the Major insisting on the need for definite information about Mosby's whereabouts: "Any sure news about Mosby's crew?" [1. 224]:

He smoked and smoked, eying the while  
A huge tree hydra-like in growth--  
Moon-tinged—with crook'd boughs rent or lopped—  
Itself a haggard forest. [11. 225-28]

The Major's observation of the "hydra-like" tree hints at his hard-won knowledge of the evils of war, gained in the prolonged and bloody Seven Days' battles [11. 221-22] fought northeast of Richmond in June 1862. Later in the poem the Major rightly suspects "some trickery is here" when his horse shies in front of the tree blocking the road; and when the shooting immediately begins, the Federal troops "fall from their saddles like plums from trees" (1. 674). The narrator comments on the seeming complicity of nature with the guerrillas: "Maple and hemlock, beech and lime/Are Mosby's confederates, share the crime" [11. 685-86]. The observation evokes a line in the song earlier sung by one of the Confederate prisoners: "I'm for the South! says the leafage green" [1. 526]. Trees and woods are thus cast as malign influences that charm and then kill the Union soldiers. Another likely Spenserian borrowing in Melville's poem involves the matter of characterization. In general terms, the relationship of the youthful Colonel and the more prudent older Major in "The Scout toward Aldie" is comparable to that between Sir Guyon and the Palmer in Book II of *The Faerie Queene* ("The Legend of Temperance"), the Palmer acting as a wiser older guide to the overeager knight. On the other hand, we may find more specific evidence of Spenserian prototypes for the characterization of Mosby himself at one point, and, more extensively, the woman in the wagon who helps send the Union soldiers into a deadly ambush. Near the beginning of the poem, just before the evocation of the enchanted realm of his operations, Mosby is described as a "satyr's child" because of his close identification with the sylvan setting of the poem: "Memory's self is so beguiled/That Mosby seems a satyr's child" [11. 27-28]. The "satyr's child" of Books I, III, and IV of *The Faerie Queene* is, of course, Sir Satyrane, the offspring of a satyr and a court lady. Raised in the woods by his wild father and then polished in the world of his civilized mother, this "natural" knight becomes a votary and defender of Una after her attempted rape by Sans Loy in Book I, Canto VI. The implied association in Melville's poem of Mosby with the world of Greek pastoral and Spenser's Sir Satyrane complicates the guerrilla leader's moral identity, but it is ultimately only a trick of the landscape that allows for this transformation.

Another characterization probably influenced by *The Faerie Queene* is that of the young woman in the wagon, who has a literary prototype in Spenser's arch-villainess Duessa (Fidessa), an embodiment of female duplicity (and Catholic hypocrisy) in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*. The woman in the wagon and her slave are picked up while making their way through an adjacent wood, ostensibly to avoid encountering the Union troopers; when she shows her face from under her veil, her appearance bespeaks an ambiguous mixture of disdain and beauty, pride and resignation: Slowly the stranger drew her veil,

And looked the Soldier in the eye—  
A glance of mingled foul and fair;  
Sad patience in a proud disdain,  
And more than quietude. A sigh  
She heaved, as if all unaware,  
And far seemed Mosby from her care. (11. 428-34)

After interviewing this alleged damsel-in-distress, the Colonel confiscates the letter she is carrying, and then in compassion for her plight eventually has one of his soldiers escort her to a nearby house for the night. While the "mingled foul and fair" of her glance evokes the language of the witches of *Macbeth*, it also suggests the strategic duplicity--the illusory beauty and covert deceit—of Duessa/Fidessa. Duessa is in fact repeatedly characterized as both physically "fair" and morally "foul" in Book I of *The Faerie Queene* (that is, until her eventual exposure as physically repulsive in Canto VIII). For example, in the description of the personified sins at Lucifera's House of Pride in Canto IV, "Emongst the rest rode that false Lady faire,/The fowle Duessa, next unto the chaire/Of Proud Lucifera, as one of the traine" (Stanza 37, 11. 4-6). At the beginning of Canto VII, Duessa subsequently speaks "fowle words tempting faire" (Stanza 3, 1. 9) to Red Cross just before he is made captive by the giant Orgoglio.<sup>5</sup> Another potential association between the image of the mysterious, proudly disdainful woman in Melville's poem and Spenser's Duessa arises from the fact that the former character uses a mode of conveyance employed by Duessa in Book I, Canto V of *The Faerie Queene*, when, in order to save the life of her associate

Sans Joy (who has been grievously injured in combat by Red Cross), Duessa seeks out the witch-like goddess of Night. The latter figure, derived from Hesiod's Theogony, takes off with Duessa in an "iron wagon":

Then to her yron wagon she [Night] betakes,  
And with her beares the fowle welfavoured [beautiful] witch [Duessa]:  
Through mirkesome aire her readie way she makes.  
Her twyfold Teme, of which two blacke as pitch,  
And two were browne, yet each to each unlich,  
Did softly swim away, ne ever stampe,  
Unless she chaunst their stubborne mouths to twitch;  
Then foming tarre, their bridles would they champe,  
And trampling the fine element, would fiercely rampe.  
(Canto V, Stanza 28)

Traveling in their magical wagon, Duessa and Night proceed to Avernus (hell) to seek out the physician Aesculapius for Sans Joy. While the initial appearance of the mysterious woman in the wagon and her slave is hardly presented with the malign enchanted aura of this scene from Spenser, the depiction is nevertheless associated with various shades of darkness, as conveyed by the dinginess of the woman's horses, the color of her slave, and the veil hiding her face:

While echoes ran, a wagon old,  
Under stout guard of Corporal Chew  
Came up; a lame horse, dingy white,  
With clouted harness; ropes in hand,  
Cringed the humped driver, black in hue;  
By him (for Mosby's band a sight)  
A sister-rebel sat, her veil held tight. [11. 400-6]

Later in the poem we find an allusion to the mythological figure of Night that would seem to confirm a potential connection between the woman in the wagon with her faithful slave, and Duessa seeking out the figure of primeval Night in her iron wagon in order to save Sans Joy:

Meantime the lady rueful sat,  
Watching the flicker of a fire  
Where the Colonel played the outdoor host  
In brave old hall of ancient Night.  
But ever the dame grew shyer and shyer,  
Seeming with private grief engrossed—  
Grief far from Mosby, housed or lost. [11. 568-74; emphasis added]

The woman's melancholy reticence is almost certainly part of a ploy to make the Colonel let her and her slave go on their way; and sure enough the Colonel soon tells a soldier to escort her to a nearby house and leave her there for the night. How can we be sure that the woman arrives on the scene in order to help set up the ambush for Mosby and his Rangers with her concealed letter, thus acting as an implied Duessa figure to the chivalric young Colonel? The possibility of collusion is hinted when the woman is first brought before the Colonel, since one of the captured Rangers is singing a song at this time with a likely double-entendre: "O we multiply merrily in the May,/The birds and Mosby's men, they say!" [11. 398-99]. The woman in the wagon would seem to be just such a "bird" in strategic alliance with Mosby's men. The "sister-rebel" is also ambiguously described as "for Mosby's band a sight" [1. 405], hinting that their sight of her is a welcome sign of likely future deliverance (seven of the nine remaining prisoners actually escape during the ambush). Later in the poem we witness the Major's reaction to the Colonel's decision to go on a night mission to Leesburg based on contents of the letter that the woman was carrying:

The Major hemmed. "Then this night-ride  
We owe to her?—One lighted house  
In a town else dark,—The moths, begar!  
Are not quite yet all dead! How? how?"

"A mute, meek, mournful little mouse!—  
Mosby has wiles which subtle are—  
But woman's wiles in wiles of war!" [11. 617-23]

To a challenge from the Colonel to explain what might happen if they go on their night mission, the Major replies, "Can't tell! but he'll be found in wait" [1. 625], a prediction that proves accurate soon enough. The Major, in short, is intuitively right about the need to distrust the woman, just as he is right about the need for caution during the scout generally. Final proof of the woman's complicity comes from the fact that the house where she and her slave were earlier escorted fails to yield a trace of her, and the house is burned according to the Major's orders: "fire the cage/If the birds be flown" [11. 739-40]. The reference to "birds," coming after earlier references to Mosby's men in conjunction with birds [1. 399] and robins [1. 527], is suggestive, to say the least. To argue that the woman in the wagon is a Duessa figure is not to say that Melville is demonizing women in the poem, since the wife of the slain Colonel is represented as a model of conjugal devotion at the narrative's beginning and end. Rather, the anonymous woman illustrates the fact that Mosby's operations were supported by much of the local population of "Mosby's Confederacy," and certain strategically placed individuals were sometimes able to contribute to his deadly strikes against Union soldiers and supply trains.

Melville's "The Scout toward Aldie," we may conclude, provides an historically informed account of the Union attempt to thwart John Mosby's notorious guerrilla operations in Northern Virginia, an account based on Melville's firsthand experience of an expedition in search of Mosby and his Rangers in the spring of 1864, but which also reflects the mythic aura that had grown up around this legendary fighter in the North. That Melville did not personally share in the mythic magnification of Mosby is evident from his note to the poem in which he praises the partisan leader as a "shrewd, able, and enterprising" officer who extended humane treatment to wounded or captured Union soldiers—an estimate probably learned from Colonel Lowell, who had himself gained Mosby's respect as an adversary (289; Emerson 35, 313). "The Scout toward Aldie" accordingly dramatizes the Northern public view of Mosby as a ruthless, deadly menace whose fearsome reputation is amply confirmed by the events of the poem. Melville in fact shaped the first—and probably the most artistically distinguished—literary response to Mosby, who would go on to inspire an extraordinary number of memoirs, novels, short stories, movies, and even a television series (in the 1950s), as recently chronicled in Paul Ashdown and Edward Caudill's *The Mosby Myth: A Confederate Hero in Life and Legend*. Melville astutely recognized the mythic potential latent in Mosby's career and consecrated the longest poem in *Battle-Pieces* to its elaboration, in the process drawing on the varied poetic traditions that would enrich his poetry from his Civil War volume onwards.

#### Notes

(1) In an early evaluation of Melville's Civil War poetry, Richard Hart Fogle wrote: "Despite vigorous narrative, sardonic humor, and vividly realistic description the poem does not quite manage to stand on its own feet..." (81). Edmund Wilson offered a similarly mixed evaluation: "This is one of Melville's most ambitious pieces in verses, and, as a poet, he is not quite up to it... But, as a story, *The Scout toward Aldie* is tightly organized and well contrived, and it effectively creates suspense" (324). In the first fully positive evaluation of the poem, Aaron Kramer somewhat counterintuitively asserted Melville's underlying admiration for Mosby ("the brilliantly triumphant hero of the poem") and his men because of their "largeheartedness," while the Union Colonel was "worse than unvigilant: he suffers from the blind, vainglorious mania of a Custer"; the poem also dramatized "the battlefield as a grim classroom" and "nature's uninterested continuity after a human catastrophe" (23, 24, 26, 28). More recently, Edward W. Goggin has argued that the "deprivation of resolution in Melville's 'The Scout toward Aldie' helps to evoke a world of misperceptions, mistaken identities, fatuous notions, and lethal misunderstandings: the world of war" (5). Clark Davis has characterized the poem as the story of a young officer killed "because his own immaturity and inexperience have prevented him from questioning the rhetoric of heroism" (114). James Ramage notes that "Melville's poem is a fictional tribute to Mosby's success in creating fear in the minds of the enemy" (174). Finally, Paul Ashdown and Edward Caudill assert that the image of Mosby in Melville's poem is that of "an infernal spirit who lures men to their own destruction" (73).

(2) For a brief firsthand account of Melville's scout by the chaplain who accompanied it, see Charles Humphreys 24-33. Writing long after the events he was describing, Humphreys seems to have misremembered the exact itinerary of the scout, asserting that Lowell led his troops west of Aldie into the area around Middleburg, a supposition not supported by Garner's archival research. In the second volume of his recently completed Melville biography, Hershel Parker (apparently relying on Humphreys) offers a slightly different account of the author's scout than that provided by Garner; see Parker 564-72.

(3) The story involved two women traveling through Fairfax Court House in a two-wagon caravan with a black driver. The women had an official pass to travel south, but there was no mention of the large amount of baggage in their wagons. After a search, the baggage turned out to be clothing and medical supplies; further search revealed correspondence with individuals in Richmond and Confederate officers. After impounding their vehicles, General Tyler sent the two women back to Washington.

(4) In Wilson's estimation, "The lady and her driver were Mosby's men; the crippled soldier was Mosby" (325). Kramer also believes that the black slave was one of Mosby's men in disguise (31). Davis asserts that Mosby himself is one of the "infiltrating Confederates" (116).

(5) In reference to the woman's "glance of mingled foul and fair," which evokes both the first act of Macbeth and the first book of *The Faerie Queene*, it is interesting to note that in his copy of Spenser's poem, Melville annotated Cantos IV and V of Book I with quotes from Macbeth; see Carole Moses 197-98. In her otherwise valuable study of Spenser's influence on Melville, Moses does not include the Renaissance poet's influence on Melville's poetry except for a brief discussion of Clarel.

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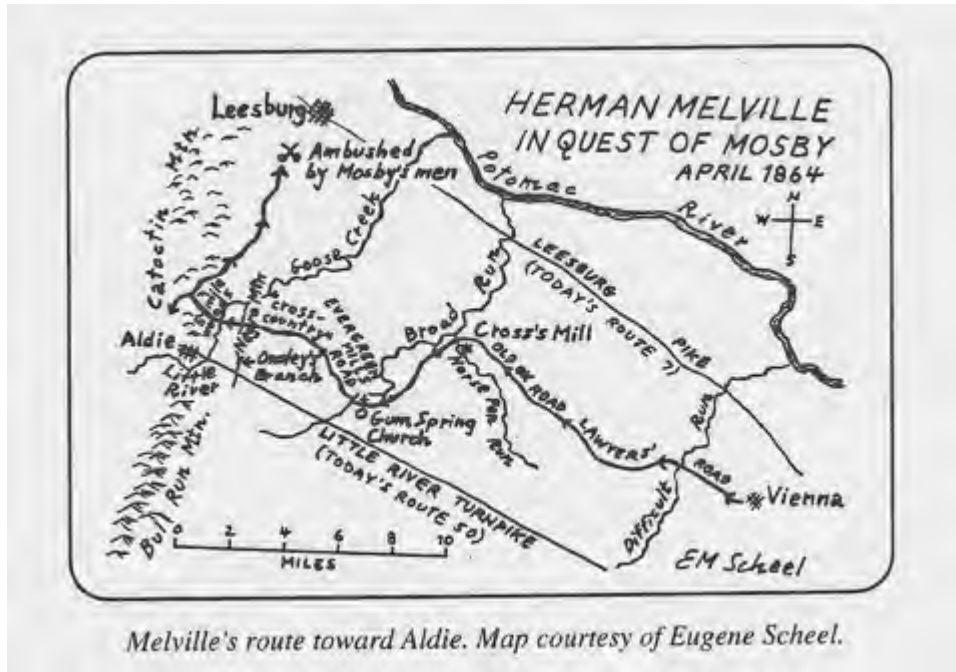
JONATHAN A. COOK is the author of *Satirical Apocalypse: An Anatomy of Melville's The Confidence-Man* (Greenwood Press, 1996), and articles on Irving, Hawthorne, and Melville in *ESQ*, *Melville Society Extracts*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, *Leviathan*, and *Prospects*. He teaches English at Notre Dame Academy in Middleburg, Virginia.

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Your editor wishes to thank Professor Cook for allowing us to print, unedited, his masterly assessment of Melville's famous poem. Mosby aficionados often speak with interest about this work and it is for those members as well as others not conversant with Melville's epic poem to whom most of this issue is directed. Also included is the map created by noted Virginia cartographer Mr. Eugene Scheel regarding the probable sites mentioned in the poem and for this, we also thank Mr. Scheel for his gracious and generous contribution.

**Eugene Scheel's Map of Melville's Route**  
[Courtesy of Eugene Scheel and The Washington Post]



**The Passing of Charter Society Member Walter Minnick**

Walter David Minnick, Jr. ("Wally"), a longtime resident of Laurel, Maryland, passed away on Sunday, March 12, 2017 at the age of 91. Walter was born on February 1, 1926 in Washington, D.C. to the late Walter David Minnick, Sr. and Martha Edith (Salyards) Minnick. He graduated from McKinley Tech High School and attended the University of Virginia. He was a member of Our Lady Queen of Poland parish in Silver Spring and a charter member of the Stuart-Mosby Civil War Society. A WWII veteran, Walter actively served in the U.S. Air Force, the Air Force Reserves and was retired from government service.

Walter is survived by his beloved wife of 63 years Mary Jo Minnick and loving daughters Carol Ann Skinner and her husband Richmond and Karen Lynn Huguley and her husband Robert.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 262 Danny Thomas Place, Memphis, Tennessee. Interment with military honors will be held at Arlington National Cemetery on Wednesday, July 19, 2017 at 3 pm.



**A Message from the President**

As my two-year term as President of the Stuart-Mosby Historical Society comes to an end, I would like to look back at the past two years and reflect on what the Society has been able to accomplish.

In May 2016, more than a year of fund-raising came to fruition with the restoration of the statue honoring Major General J.E.B. Stuart on Monument Avenue in Richmond. Past President and Vice President Susan and Lei Hillier got the ball rolling back in 2013 with a proposal for the Society to raise the \$40,000 needed for the project, and their leadership helped us accomplish that goal in less than 18 months. Thank you for a job well done!! And

an additional special “Thank You” goes out to Steve Roy and his associates for doing an outstanding job in making the statue a gleaming tribute to Gen. Stuart for many years to come.

Two SMHS members have published books within the past six months, with proceeds from each benefitting the Society. Newsletter editor Val Protopapas published a book titled “A Thousand Points of Truth: The History and Humanity of Col. John Singleton Mosby in Newsprint,” which documents newspaper reports mentioning Mosby throughout his life. In addition, member Carl Sell has published a book about Gen. Stuart, which will go on sale for the first time at the Society’s Annual Meeting at the Stuart-Mosby Civil War Cavalry Museum in Centreville on June 25. Both books will be on sale at the Museum, and the authors have generously allowed all proceeds to go to the Society, with the Stuart book sales to fund future maintenance of the Stuart Statue. Thank you Val and Carl!!

In addition, the Society has been a viable participant over the past 18 months in attempting to secure the continued existence of the Mosby Museum at “Brentmoor,” Colonel John Singleton Mosby’s most prominent post-war home in Warrenton. Working side-by-side with the Brentmoor Trust, a group set to raise funds and manage the use of the building and grounds, the Society hopes to become a partner with the Trust in operating the Mosby Museum. The Society would assist with fund-raising operations in addition to staffing, operating and planning programs to make the museum a successful enterprise. Both groups continue to lobby the Warrenton Town Council to release the administration of Brentmoor and allow the Mosby Museum to be one of the anchors of tourism in this historic community. As the process develops, we will continue to update our membership.

The success of our Museum in Centreville – housed in a building constructed from the remnants of the house where Stuart and Mosby first met – gives us the strength to believe we can expand our reach to help in the administration of the Mosby Museum at Brentmoor. Our ever-expanding collection of artifacts—including a pistol worn by Mosby and a sword carried by Stuart—are the jewels in a collection we hope to rotate between the two venues.

Meanwhile, the Society has enjoyed steady membership and even a slight increase over the past year, thanks to the excellent job done by Matt Reynolds as our new Membership Chairman. We encourage all members to invite people you believe share the goals of the Society – to further historical research, to preserve accurate history and to perpetuate the memory and deeds of General Stuart and Colonel Mosby. With a solid membership base of nearly 100, the Society has shown its strength through the support of various fund-raising efforts and participation at Society events such as the Mosby Birthday Celebration (held each December in Warrenton), the Lee-Jackson-Maury Day Celebration (each January in Richmond) and the Stuart Birthday Celebration (each February in Richmond).

As I wish you farewell as President, I am sure you will give your support to your new slate of Officers, which will be elected at the Annual Meeting on June 25. Please help to continue to make the Stuart-Mosby Historical Society a significant player in the local and statewide historic communities. Let us hope that never changes!

Sincerely,



President, Stuart-Mosby Historical Society

### **SMHS Annual Meeting – June 25, 2017**

The 2017 Annual Meeting of the Stuart-Mosby Historical Society has been set for **Sunday, June 25, in Centreville, Va.**, and each member of the Society is invited to attend.

We will meet at 1 p.m. at the **Stuart-Mosby Civil War Cavalry Museum** in Centreville (directions listed on separate page). We will begin the day with the Society’s annual **picnic lunch** consisting of grilled hamburgers and hot dogs, potato and macaroni salad, chips and bottled water. **There is NO COST to participate in the lunch.** Attendees wishing to bring their own lunch or a different beverage are welcome to do so.

Following the picnic, at approximately 2:15 p.m., we will begin the Annual Meeting. This will allow extra time for those travelling from distant locations and for those attending church services.

The Agenda will feature a vote to accept the Slate of Officers recommended by the SMHS Nominating Committee. Nominations will also be open from the floor at the meeting. In addition, a vote will be held on the Membership Dues level for 2017-18, and there will be further discussion of the Society possibly becoming a managing partner for the Mosby Museum at Brentmoor, John Singleton Mosby’s post-war home in Warrenton. We encourage all those interested to attend and discuss the options.

**Each of the items up for a vote is discussed below.** Other items will be discussed in Old Business, and new items are welcome to be addressed during a call for New Business.

If you will be unable to attend the Annual Meeting but would like to participate in the election of the Officers and the vote on the Membership Dues Level for 2017-18, please return your Vote on the attached sheet BY U.S. MAIL with a postmark no later than June 17. Please sign the ballot yourself, and have someone sign as a witness to your vote.

Mail the Vote to the following address:

Stuart-Mosby Historical Society, 307 Appletree Drive NE, Leesburg, VA 20176

We hope you will be able to attend the Annual Meeting on June 25. As always, we value and need your input, and we appreciate your membership!

### Agenda

#### SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR 2017-18 & 2018-19

President – Eric Buckland Vice President – David Goetz  
Secretary – Matt Reynolds Treasurer – Janet Greentree

#### MEMBERSHIP DUES LEVEL

According to Article IX of the Stuart-Mosby Historical Society Bylaws (Revised – 2014), the Officers of the Society are required to notify the Membership of the proposed Membership Dues level for the upcoming membership year with the notice of the Annual Meeting, and it shall be voted upon at the meeting.

The proposed Membership Dues for 2017-18 is \$25 for all members (no separate levels for Families, Senior Citizens, Students or Handicapped persons). THIS REFLECTS NO CHANGE FROM 2016-17.

#### MAIL-IN VOTE (Please vote once in each category)

##### SLATE OF OFFICERS

President – Eric Buckland Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
Vice President – David Goetz Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary – Matt Reynolds Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
Treasurer – Janet Greentree Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

##### Article IX – DUES – Announcement of proposed Member Dues level for 2017-18

\_\_\_\_\_ I DO accept the proposed Membership Dues level for 2017-18  
\_\_\_\_\_ I DO NOT accept the proposed Membership Dues level for 2017-18

MEMBER NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_ Mail your Vote to the following address:  
MEMBER SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ Stuart-Mosby Historical Society  
WITNESS NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_ 307 Appletree Drive NE  
WITNESS SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ Leesburg, VA 20176  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE RETURN THIS SHEET BY JUNE 17, 2017

#### STUART-MOSBY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2017 ANNUAL MEETING

June 25, 2017 -- Centreville, Va.

Stuart-Mosby Civil War Cavalry Museum

1 - 2 p.m. Luncheon (picnic at Museum)

2:15 – 3:30 p.m. SMHS Annual Meeting

If you plan to attend the luncheon, please RSVP to Ben Trittipoe ([britt1@gmail.com](mailto:britt1@gmail.com) or 571-274-2467) by June 17<sup>th</sup> so we can plan for the amount of food

#### DIRECTIONS to the STUART-MOSBY CIVIL WAR CAVALRY MUSEUM

(13938 Braddock Road, Centreville, VA 20120)

From the East: Most natives and longtime Northern Virginia residents know how to take U.S. 29/Lee Highway (or I-66 and U.S. 29) into Centreville from the east. Once in Centreville (you can tell by the view of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west), turn right just after the small shopping center on your right with the 7-11, and go northwest on the old (Pre-Revolutionary) Braddock Road. In the second block you will see on your left the stone Methodist Church (now Anglican Church of the Ascension) so familiar from the Matthew Brady photographs. Just prior to reaching that church, with the ante-bellum Havener house across the street, is the small stone museum building recessed from the road with its small parking lot. There will be signage.

**If you come from the east on I-66**, take Exit 53 for Route 28 South toward Centreville/Manassas and be prepared to take the exit for U.S. 29 North/Lee Highway. Proceed a short way to the top of the hill and turn left on the old Braddock Road. (Avoid anything that says “New Braddock Road.”)

**From the West:** Proceed east on I-66 and take Exit 43 for U.S. 29 North/Lee Highway through the Manassas Battlefield. Proceed into Centreville and cross Route 28, then at the top of the hill (Walgreens on your left) turn left on Braddock Road and go north two blocks to the old stone Methodist Church that you see in the Brady photographs (now Anglican Church of the Ascension). Just prior to the church, turn right at our sign and park where available.

**From the South:** Avoiding I-95, take U.S. 15 or your favorite route to Warrenton and proceed east from Warrenton on U.S. 29 North/Lee Highway. Get off on I-66 if you are in a great hurry (taking Exit 52 for U.S. 29 North in about 10 miles), but it is better to stay on 29 going east through the Manassas Battlefield and up the hill to Centreville. [It is best to avoid I-95 and I-395, but if you must use it, take I-495, the Capital Beltway, toward Tyson’s Corner and exit at Braddock Road West. Follow until you reach Route 286/Fairfax County Parkway and go North a few miles to the exit for U.S. 29 South/Lee Highway, which will lead you to Centreville. Then follow above directions.]

**From the North:** Take U.S. 15 South out of Pennsylvania and/or Maryland and proceed to I-66 East at Haymarket, or stay on 15 a few more miles and turn left onto U.S. 29 North/Lee Highway and follow into Centreville, going through the Manassas Battlefield on the road that the Armies used in both battles. For rest, see above directions.

### **The Civil War World of Herman Melville**

By Stanton Garner

A book by this title is available for those who would look further into Melville’s “encounter”—at least in the literary sense—with John Mosby. In Garner’s book in Chapter 7—A Portrait of the Artist as a Man of War: 1864—is devoted to the activities that brought forth Melville’s work about John Mosby, The Scout Toward Aldie. Garner felt it necessary to differentiate Melville’s view of Mosby the man with his creation as it appears in the poem. He also insinuates the author’s much better known work, Moby-Dick and both the setting and the characters of that work into Melville’s poetic picture of a mythic “scout” by federal troops after the ghostly guerrilla, a scout in which Melville actually participated but with less disastrous results than that of his own imagination. For those interested in this work and also John Mosby, Garner’s book is a must have resource.

“It is a small-scale version of Moby-Dick adapted to the events Herman had witnessed. In place of the infinite sea, the travelers wind through the eerie forest, as ambiguous in its tangled fertility and its peril as the whiteness of the whale. In place of the whale, at once hunted and hunter, there is Mosby, the figure who, without ever appearing in the poem, dominates it. As the cetological chapters of Moby-Dick enlarge the idea of the whale through iteration, so does the repetition of Mosby’s name in nearly every stanza enlarge the idea that he represents. But this Mosby is so clearly not the historical warrior that Herman felt obliged to explain the difference between art and life in a foot-note. Mosby, he said, was “shrewd, able, and enterprising, and always a wary fighter. . . . To our wounded on more than one occasion he showed considerable kindness. Officers and civilians captured by forces under his immediate command were, so long as remaining under his orders, treated with civility.” This is the warrior whom Herman respected: the Mosby of his poem is the infernal spirit whose homily is that “Man must die.”

“He is a mythic figure, the principal avatar in the book of the Satan of “The Conflict of Convictions.” He is a shape-changer, of no certain form. Perhaps he is the wounded prisoner or perhaps the bent slave—or perhaps, in another time and in another wilderness, the inscrutable whale. Certainly he is the shark, the Nemesis of Herman’s later poems. It is he who mocks Michael and Raphael, he who knows that war belongs not on the heights but in the depths of the wilderness, he who lures the young braves into his snares, he who fires sudden death out of the darkness. Who pursues Mosby pursues his own destruction.”

Editorial

*Have a blessed and safe Summer!*



# The Southern Cavalry Review

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