



# Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land

*Herman Melville*

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## **Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land** Herman Melville

Melville's long poem *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land* (1876) was the last full-length book he published. Until the mid-twentieth century even the most partisan of Melville's advocates hesitated to endure a four-part poem of 150 cantos and almost 18,000 lines about a naive American named Clarel, on pilgrimage through the Palestinian ruins with a provocative cluster of companions.

But modern critics have found *Clarel* a much better poem than was ever realized. Robert Penn Warren called it a precursor of *The Waste Land*. It abounds with revelations of Melville's inner life. Most strikingly, it is argued that the character Vine is a portrait of Melville's friend Nathaniel Hawthorne. *Clarel* is one of the most complex theological explorations of faith and doubt in all of American literature, and this edition brings Melville's poem to new life.

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