

THESIS

HERMAN MELVILLE'S USE OF ANIMALS: THE CHAIN OF NATURAL
SCIENCE, ANTHROPOMORPHIC SYMBOLISM, AND LITERARY NATURALISM
IN *MOBY-DICK* AND "THE ENCANTADAS"

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ABSTRACT

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In *Moby-Dick* and "The Encantadas," Herman Melville's narrators often assume the role of a naturalist, in the mode of natural history. Beginning with careful and realistic explication, Melville understands different animals in terms of their physical characteristics and behavior, in a manner influenced by Charles Darwin. After establishing an accurate picture, he proceeds to take the animals and transform them to concepts related to literary naturalism in a process of anthropomorphic symbolism. Melville's ambiguous stance on animal awareness and pain further clarifies his project of using animals to be representative of mostly human concepts. *Moby-Dick* and "The Encantadas" illustrate this chain with Melville's naturalistic treatment of whales and tortoises, respectively. With the precision of a scientist and the spirit of an artist, Melville uses animals as symbols of concepts that anticipate literary naturalism, most notably determinism. Melville's utilization of natural science as a means to symbolism made him a precursor to literary naturalism, which itself grew out of the influence of Darwinian ideas.

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INTRODUCTION

Herman Melville was more of an artist than a scientist, and never acquired any scientific credential. His modest background is apparent in his texts. A student of the wider world, with a whale-ship as his “Yale College and Harvard,” Melville largely knew firsthand what he wrote about in his career as a writer (Melville 122). While a young man in his twenties, he did spend substantial time on a whaling boat; he did visit French Polynesia; and he did spend some time on the Galápagos Islands.¹ And so he practiced the adage that writers should “write what they know.” He produced works that dealt with the canvas of the remote places he visited. It has been well-documented that Melville had a stout scientific sensibility.² As a result, natural science played an important role in his texts—a role that intimately intertwined itself with the whole of his artistic endeavors in producing literature.

Melville's use of natural history is complex and exists mostly as an organic outcropping of his ability to expound detail, supply background information, or, as in the case of *Moby-Dick*, to be explicitly naturalistic, even if sarcastically, in the vein of Charles Darwin. His naturalism plays an intermediary role between artistry and subject matter when it is implemented, hardly ever being the primary focus, but being vastly important to his larger project. I will complete a reading of *Moby-Dick* and “The Encantadas” showing them as sophisticated works which connect natural science to literary naturalism. Both *Moby-Dick* and “The Encantadas” contain striking natural realism and passages focused on animals. Moreover, the presence of the animals is essential to the texts, with the creatures functioning as complicated symbols.

¹ On January 3, 1841, Melville began the most important voyage of his life when he joined the crew of the whaleship *Acushnet*. He would not set foot on the soil of the Continental United States again until October 3, 1844. During the voyage, Melville hunted whales, visited the Galápagos Islands, deserted his ship at the Marquesas Islands, was imprisoned on Tahiti, and became a crew member of American Naval frigate *United States*.

² The most comprehensive look at Melville's affinity for and use of science is Richard Dean Smith's *Melville's Science: 'Devilish Tantalization of the Gods!'*

The study of Melville in relation to literary naturalism is a mostly neglected angle to understanding works like *Moby-Dick*. The connection between these two senses of ‘nature’ (scientific and literary) will be put in conversation with each other (and Charles Darwin, to a degree) in order to better understand the use of natural history within *Moby Dick* and “The Encantadas,” in addition to Melville’s larger achievement. I argue Melville uses anthropomorphic symbolism (via natural science, and more specifically, natural history) to explore themes inherent to literary naturalism. The process of using animals as signifiers for signified concepts not directly related to animals, but related to humans, I call *anthropomorphic symbolism*. This concept, normally used to describe people personifying their deities, can also be seen in a different light. If a symbol is used to signify a human phenomenon or feature, this too is a form of *anthropomorphic symbolism*, though in reverse. A symbolism alien to animals is assigned to animals much like the features of humanity are assigned to gods.

Moby-Dick and “The Encantadas” show this principle at work with Melville’s scientific treatment of whales and tortoises, respectively. With the precision of a scientist, Melville transforms these creatures into symbols of concepts that anticipate literary naturalism by being symbolic of themes prevalent in literary naturalism. The term *naturalism* can mean different things, and there are two senses of the word that are of principle importance to Melville: scientific naturalism (as a practice of making use of natural science and natural history) and literary naturalism (realistic writing with a philosophical orientation to determinism). It is precisely Melville’s use of scientific naturalism as a means of symbolism that made him a precursor to literary naturalism, which itself grew in part out of the influence of Darwinian ideas circulating in nineteenth century scientific discourse.

MELVILLE AND LITERARY NATURALISM

Though Melville's literature enjoyed a revival during the early modernist period, it would have been more fitting had it come earlier—at the outset of American literary naturalism. Whatever combination of circumstances led to Melville's works being rediscovered by the critics of the 1920s—and to what extent it reflected a similarity between Melville and the newest forms of the time—this rediscovery should have come earlier given his work also anticipated American naturalism. Louis Budd writes, “In the pre-Darwinian United States the boldest novelists, especially Herman Melville, had sensed most of these ideas [literary naturalism], but nobody could combine these loomings into an integrated vision and technique. Melville came close because he resonated to some of the same ideas that educated Darwin” (Budd 29). Melville was indeed of such a complex mind as to anticipate many of the principle themes that would come to denote literary naturalism as a genre, not only thematically, but also in the context of the Darwinian concept of natural selection, as will be shown.

Descriptive terms such as romanticism, naturalism, and realism (any period or ‘ism’) impose limitations on continued thinking of topics as complex as writers like Melville but nonetheless offer a “useful frame of reference” (Pizer 1). American naturalism has been given substantial treatment, particularly by Donald Pizer. His work surrounding the definitions of realism and naturalism illuminate Melville's complexity. What Pizer establishes as being core elements of literary naturalism are present in both *Moby-Dick* and “The Encantadas;” these texts contain and confront naturalistic themes before scholars in later years decided upon genres and their place in literary history. These themes and characteristics are the presence of contradictions and tensions in the text related to theme and form, a focus on lower class characters, pessimistic determinism, and harsh settings.

Literary naturalism can be defined in part by internal clashes. Pizer writes that, “the naturalistic novel usually contains two tensions or contradictions...the two constitute the theme and form of the naturalistic novel.” He continues, stating “The first tension is that between the subject matter of the naturalistic novel and the concept of man which emerges from this subject matter” (Pizer 10). In short, according to Pizer’s definition of American naturalism, this can be summarized as the tension that arises from the “qualities of man” that emerge in contrast to the humdrum and dull commonalities of life that are very prominent in works of realism (Pizer 11). The “qualities of man” are usually associated with the “heroic or adventurous, such as acts of violence and passion” (Pizer 11). The second tension arises from the clash between characters “conditioned and controlled by environment,” and a “humanistic value in his characters or their fates which affirms the significance of the individual and of his life” (Pizer 11). This creates the ultimate impression that the literary naturalist is seeking “to say that although the individual may be a cipher in a world made amoral by man’s lack of responsibility for his fate, the imagination refuses to accept this formula as the total meaning of life and so seeks a new basis for man’s sense of his own dignity and importance” (Pizer 11). Pizer views these tensions as the main source of aesthetic effect in naturalistic novels. Moreover, they inform larger beliefs inherent to literary naturalism; the tensions suggest “that even the least significant human being can feel and strive powerfully...and that no range of human experience is free of the moral complexities and ambiguities which Milton set his fallen angels to debating” (Pizer 12).

Melville’s *Moby-Dick* and “The Encantadas” can also be defined by their respective internal clashes. *Moby-Dick* in particular is a beautiful mess of themes and forms, marking its nearly infinite capacity for new interpretation. Scholars are singularly in agreement over this fact: *Moby-Dick* is an unapologetic mixture. In “The Truth of the Thing: Nonfiction in *Moby-*

Dick.” Betsy Hilbert writes that "*Moby-Dick*, after all, is just as much a book about whaling as good and evil.” In fact, the novel is many things, including "a massive conglomerate of fable and textbook, epic, allegory, zoologic treatise, philosophic exploration, essay, romance, and guidebook" (Hilbert 4). Furthermore, "The Encantadas" also established a clash of categories between a scientific approach to narration and one that is absorbed with the isles' cursed nature (Tanyol 254). This serves to illustrate that works of Melville supplied mixtures of form and theme, given their complexity, like much of the literature usually denoted in literary naturalism. Furthermore, both works possess Pizer's "tensions." Melville finds extraordinary in the ordinary, and presents the detailed commonalities of life aboard a ship alongside robust moments of the human spirit acting according to its nature, good or bad. Ahab's final confrontation with the White Whale is anything but common or normal, but such strings of mundane events are what take the *Pequod* to that fateful point. Moreover, a strong humanistic virtue shines through in Ahab's obsession. In his undertaking to understand the world he cannot control, he still clings to his inability to accept such a world. "The Encantadas" also presents such tensions. Melville sees a great deal of transcendental meaning in the animals of the Galápagos—Darwin did not, or at least he did not bother to write about it, which would be expected. Furthermore, the animals and people of the islands possess depth despite their fallen environment of determinism: Hunilla is silently admirable as are the tortoises that struggle for centuries as they carry their weight up and down from the highlands.

Poor characters are also of chief interest to literary naturalism. Pizer establishes that "the naturalist populates his novel primarily from the lower middle class or the lower class. His characters are the poor, the uneducated, the unsophisticated" (Pizer 11). Here again, the works of Melville resound. Ishmael informs readers at the outset of *Moby-Dick* that "having little or no

money” he prefers to go to sea as a “simple sailor” (Melville 6). Overall, *Moby-Dick* and “The Encantadas” are preoccupied with the lives of commoners. The crew members of the Pequod are all of humble backgrounds, and reflect a multicultural array of “isolatoes”—“an Anacharsis Cloutz deputation from all the isles of the sea, and all the ends of the Earth, accompanying Old Ahab in the *Pequod*” (Melville 132). On the same note, “The Encantadas” presents readers in diverse sketches with all types of people, virtually all of whom live at the edge of civilization. “Hence the Enchanted Isles become the voluntary tarrying places of all sorts of refugees; some of whom too sadly experience the fact that flight from tyranny does not of itself ensure a safe asylum, far less a happy home” (Melville 249). It is hard to imagine a lower class than the outcasts that populate the Galápagos Islands. Interestingly, Melville also references “The Enchanted Isles as being a place for the lower classes of animal life: “Birds light here which never touched mast or tree; hermit-birds, which ever fly alone” (Melville 195). Furthermore, “the Encantadas refuse to harbor even the outcasts of the beasts” (Melville 183). Melville is so preoccupied with this concept that he applies it to animal life. The conflation of animals with human concepts shows Melville’s willingness to invoke animals in his presentation of human concepts.

Lastly, literary naturalism also features “pessimistic determinism” that is often related to “extreme settings.” As Pizer explains, “The major distinction between realism and naturalism, most critics agree, is the philosophical orientation of the naturalists, therefore it is essentially realism infused with a pessimistic determinism” (Pizer 9). Furthermore, literary naturalism “refers to works of literature which contain an emphasis on extreme settings, and crises of the story that offer no chance of escape, inevitably and completely destroying the characters” (Realism and Naturalism 1746). Even a cursory look at *Moby Dick* and “The Encantadas”

demonstrates the presence of “pessimistic determinism” as well as its symbolic connection to animals. The tortoises of the Galápagos are doomed to relentless toil. The crew of the Pequod is fated for death by the White Whale. The harsh determinism of the sea is a naturalistic theme in line with Jack London and Stephen Crane, further demonstrating Melville’s place as an artist ahead of his time. Pip quickly realizes as he floats alone, in Melville’s world, and perhaps Darwin’s, that the ocean is a “heartless immensity” (Melville 453). Furthermore, Melville views the ocean, and by extension nature, as a battlefield: “consider, once more, the universal cannibalism of the sea; all whose creatures prey upon each other, carrying on eternal war since the world began” (Melville 299). The Galápagos get similar treatment: “In no world but a fallen one could such lands exist” (Melville 183). The pessimistic determinism and harsh settings are intimately connected because in naturalistic literature it is often the settings that supply the determinism. Characters are equally powerless against the brutal Bowery (Crane’s *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*) and the Alaskan wilderness (London’s “To Build a Fire”). Pip is powerless when abandoned in the ocean; Hunilla is powerless while marooned on her little island. Characters in such places cannot contend against an unassailable reality of nature.

This is not an assertion that some works of Melville, if they must live in a home, must be placed in the arena of literary naturalism, as opposed to romanticism, or any other ‘ism.’ It is simply the observation that Melville has more in common with the canonized naturalist novelists than is frequently supposed, and that both senses of naturalism interact with other elements of his works in a manner necessary to his artistic projects. Simply put, *Moby-Dick* and “The Encantadas” could not have been what they are without Melville’s orientation towards natural science. It is pivotal.

MELVILLE AND NATURAL SCIENCE

Scholars have demonstrated the depth of Melville's knowledge concerning the Earth Sciences. Bruce Harvey succinctly states that "he had a solid layman's acquaintance with what we today call the earth sciences (geology, geography, meteorology, zoology, and botany)" (Harvey 71). Though merely a "layman" of the sciences, Melville's scientific sophistication is apparent throughout virtually all of his texts. Richard Dean-Smith's *Melville's Science: 'Devilish Tantalization of the Gods!'* is a full length study that analyzes the scientific components of *Typee*, *Omoo*, *Mardi*, *Redburn*, *White-Jacket*, *Moby-Dick*, *Pierre*, *Clarel*, *Billy Budd*, *The Confidence Man*, and Melville's short stories and poetry. In short, all of Melville's works contain some contact between his artistry and elements of science. In "The Function of Cetological Chapters" J.A. Ward argues this is the central duality of *Moby-Dick*: "In his double role as scientist and poet, Ishmael-Melville seeks truth simultaneously from two antithetical points of view" (Ward 183). The discourse surrounding Melville and science is unequivocal: science is indispensable to understanding his overall artistic project; it works within the matrix of Melville's craft to serve his literary purposes.

Melville worked many threads of science into his texts, mostly natural science, and by extension, can be regarded as a naturalist in the context of mid-nineteenth century United States. A naturalist, such as Charles Darwin, is a scientist who studies natural history, a broad branch of science that relies more heavily on an observational rather than experimental approach. It encompasses scientific research but is not limited to it and has historically been understood to be the craft of scientists who are out in the field instead of a laboratory. Grouped among the natural sciences, natural history is the systematic study of any category of natural objects or organisms.

As this definition would suggest, a naturalist is a scientist but not all scientists are naturalists. In the nineteenth century, when Melville was writing, the pre-eminent scientists were the naturalists and biologists whose work was eagerly received by the public, including by Melville himself (Smith xv).

Natural history, or more broadly, natural science, is a realistic and scientific approach to describing natural objects or organisms, which, in Melville's case, are the natural environment and animals in his literature. In two of his major works, *Moby-Dick* and "The Encantadas," Melville employs scientific naturalism in describing the settings and developing complicated symbolism for animals in the text: sperm whales and tortoises, respectively (among other creatures that I will not analyze in detail, though such an analysis would be possible). This sense of scientific naturalism is used to make the animals anthropomorphic symbols, wherein the representation of animals comes to symbolize human concepts and modes of experience. The content of such symbolism illustrates literary naturalism themes at work in *Moby Dick* and "The Encantadas." Though the relationship between the symbolism and naturalism is complicated, Melville's use of scientific and literary naturalism is a key layer to his literature, particularly in *Moby-Dick* and "The Encantadas." Such a study will require careful analyses of the natural science apparent in *Moby-Dick* and "The Encantadas" to consider how deep this sensibility went in these writings.

NATURAL SCIENCE AND *MOBY-DICK*

In Chapter 74, "The Sperm Whale's Head—Contrasted View," Ishmael asks the reader, "where, I should like to know, will you obtain a better chance to study practical cetology than here [aboard a whaling boat]?" (Melville 359). If a reader takes Ishmael's invitation, they too

will receive an education in whale science—sophisticated for its depth and knowledge even to modern readers.

Moby-Dick is a scientifically sophisticated novel that deals with science as much as metaphysics. Betsy Hilbert in “The Truth of the Thing: Nonfiction in *Moby-Dick*” states that *Moby Dick* is many things, including "a massive conglomerate of fable and textbook, epic, allegory, zoologic treatise, philosophic exploration, essay, romance, and guidebook" (Hilbert 4). Contained in the fray of genres is an earnest scientific naturalism and encyclopedic realism for the purpose of granting readers a detailed explanation of the various components of whaling.

The first chapter of *Moby-Dick* that explicitly gives itself over to realistic explication at the expense of moving the narrative forward is Chapter 24, “The Advocate.” The chapter “advocates” the contributions of whaling to the world, while stating the occupation is an honorable and glorious one. From this point on, *Moby-Dick* often goes back and forth between the narrative and chapters dedicated to factual expositions. Such chapters do not contain any dialogue between characters or events that move the *Pequod* towards its destiny. In the whole of *Moby-Dick*, there are thirty-four such chapters, all which serve the subject matter of the narrative, but not the narrative itself.³ These chapters are also similar but separate from other sections that contain sizeable portions of realism side by side with narrative events. For example, Chapter 59 “Squid,” mostly gives an account of giant squid, but in the context of the crew of the *Pequod* observing one. Overall, the amount of detailed, instructional, scientific, and encyclopedic sections almost take over *Moby-Dick*. Yet, Melville does not weave vast amounts of realism into his work without a purpose, especially the sections regarding natural science.

³ The chapters primarily dedicated to expository realism are: 24, 25, 32, 44, 45, 46, 55, 56, 60, 65, 67, 68, 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 82, 83, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105.

Chief among Melville's accomplishments of naturalistic writing were his ventures to offer readers a nearly complete scientific understanding of whales in mid-nineteenth century America. Melville sought not only to correct information about whales but to also upgrade it. In so doing, Melville relied heavily on his own experience in addition to numerous naturalistic texts available to him that were especially concerned with whales.⁴ The tone of such chapters of *Moby-Dick* is mostly expository, signaling to readers that they are on a break from the narrative. Given Melville's constant factual interludes, "Generations of publishers have persistently tried to simplify *Moby-Dick* into 'easy reading' versions by scissoring out the sections on cetology" (Hilbert 824). In fact, cetology, and the larger picture painted by naturalism and realism, is essential and the removal of such chapters would greatly inhibit Melville's project of presenting to the public a complicated mixture of genres and themes. Yet, because *Moby-Dick* can be effectively partitioned out, its constituent components are apparent, especially Melville's "science of whales."

Melville's use of natural science is at its apex in Chapter 32 of *Moby-Dick*, "Cetology." Though clearly not strictly naturalistic, the chapter's sophistication can be gauged by Melville's level of accuracy for his time and its relative knowledge of whales. Though Melville declares that he takes "the good old fashioned ground that whale is a fish," he enumerates all the key biological characteristics of whales which would later have scientists classify all cetaceans as mammals. Melville's definition of "fish" merely means a creature of the sea and nowhere does he deny to whales any of their mammalian traits. Rather, Melville's naturalism showcases knowledge of what precisely makes a whale a mammal, namely "lungs and warm blood" (Melville 148). Furthermore, in Chapter 87, "The Grand Armada," Melville references the

⁴ Melville made particular use of British surgeon Thomas Beale's *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale to Which Is Added a Sketch of a South-Sea Whaling Voyage in Which the Author was Personally Engaged*

"nursing mothers of the whales" (Melville 423) and goes on to describe their maternal behavior as well as the flavor of their milk—"very sweet and rich...it might do well with strawberries" (Melville 424).

Melville also understood the whale's unique place among "fish," stating, "a whale is a spouting fish with a horizontal tail" (Melville 148). This understanding of the distinct properties of whales among other sea life has not changed in modern zoology. Cetaceans are still described in zoologist volumes as creatures with forelimbs modified as fins, a tail with horizontal flukes, and nasal openings (blowholes) on top of the head. However, not all of Melville's musings are correct and though he offered in *Moby-Dick* the best information available in the mid-nineteenth century, there continued to be holes in the understanding of whales. In "The Grand Armada" the gestation of sperm whales is given as around nine months, though it is actually much longer, 14–16 months (Whitehead 1094). Similarly, Melville puts the natural life span of sperm whales at a "century and more" when sperm whales generally live a little more than half that span (Whitehead 1094). Yet, Melville is quite aware of the whale science's inability to pursue the leviathan into the depths for study. He opines at the outset that "it is no easy task" and "of real knowledge there be little" (Melville 145). Respectable errors aside, Melville offers a classification system for cetology, while offering no promise of anything infallible but necessary all the same: "the various species of whales need some sort of popular comprehensive classification, if only an easy outline one for the present, hereafter to be filled in all its departments by subsequent laborers" (Melville 147).

The classification system employed by Melville places all whales in one of three "books." The three books—Folio, Octavo, Duodecimo—are categories of size, with the largest whales being placed in the Folio (sperm whales included), and the smallest whales being placed

in the duodecimo (porpoises). In the printing world, since the 1450's, when the Gutenberg Bible became the first book with movable type to be produced, folios have been the largest of books. Octavos are smaller, a more customary size, and are created by folding a large sheet three times to make eight leaves. Duodecimo is a fraction of an octavo, as an octavo is a fraction of a folio; they are the smallest page size. In addition to these three categories, in an effort to be all encompassing and honest with his readership, Melville includes a brief section called "Beyond the Duodecimo" for whales which are "uncertain, fugitive, [and] half-fabulous" (Melville 157). Not much was known of such whales at the time, but Melville did believe that once they were caught, they could "readily be incorporated into this System" (Melville 157). Melville's naturalistic system of classifying whales was an attempt at science in literature, though it does vary from the established classification system for cetaceans in modern zoology. Like Melville's system, the current classification structure consists of three sub-orders: Mysticeti, Odontocetti, Archaeoceti. The sub-order Mysticeti contains whales which possess baleen rather than teeth; they have two blowholes for breathing. The largest animal in the history of the planet is in this sub-order, the blue whale, and it contains humpback whales, right whales, and bowhead whales, among other species (Mead 723). The sub-order Odontocetti contains whales which possess teeth and have one blowhole. All dolphins and porpoises are in this sub-order, along with sperm whales and killer whales, among other species (Mead 723). The sub-order Archaeoceti, "ancient whales," contains extinct animals that modern day whales descend from. The difference between Melville's classification system and the modern one is that Melville categorized according to size while the current structure categorizes according to whether a whale has baleen or teeth. Incidentally, the sub-order Mysticeti contains the largest species of whales—in general but not across the board—so a classification system based on size almost does occur as a result of

categorizing species in terms of baleen versus teeth. Nevertheless, in this modern taxonomy, sperm whales are actually classed with porpoises, a marriage of Melville's Folio and Duodecimo books. Size as a metric is not a common standard of classification in modern zoology, though it is often correlated in sub-orders or smaller divisions. For example, in the order Chiroptera (bats), the sub-orders are Megachiroptera and Microchiroptera, and generally these sub-orders correspond to the size of species in their respective zoological families, almost universally. Size is not the primary categorization principle at work; it just corresponds, as would be expected of species on similar evolutionary tracts. This does little to discredit Melville's scientific sensibilities. In the mid-nineteenth century, the systematic study of the oceans and their contents was an endeavor without the reliable technological means for accurate and complete observation—in contrast with today. As Melville bluntly notes by quoting others, they (naturalists) were in a state of "Unfitness to pursue our research in the unfathomable waters," and further understood that there was an "Impenetrable veil covering our knowledge of the cetacean" (Melville 145). The explication of Melville's classification versus the model in contemporary usage serves to illustrate the genuinely scientific approach that Melville treated whales with in *Moby-Dick* rather than to argue his classification system was flawless and therefore the mark of a flawless naturalist. Few systems in science have not been replaced as time relentlessly drags on.

In his classification system, Melville equates whales and books, inviting his audience to "read" the whales alongside Ishmael as creatures to be scientifically studied and to wonder about metaphysically as "pasteboard masks" (Melville 178). The choice of "books" is a deliberate one which enters the whales into a universe of texts as texts—unwilling participants in signification. This impression is only strengthened as *Moby-Dick* unfolds: "Read it [Moby Dick's wrinkled brow] if you can" (Melville 380). Moreover, in his quest to right the wrong that

“the sperm whale, scientific or poetic, lives not complete in any literature,” Melville makes the whale the symbolic center of his work (Melville 147). In Chapter 104, “The Fossil Whale,” he writes that “to produce a mighty book, you must choose a mighty theme” (Melville 497). Moreover, “by good rights he [the whale] should only be treated of in imperial folio” (Melville 496). Hence Melville’s epic treatment of whales in his novel, to fully engage “the overwhelming idea of the great whale himself” (Melville 7).

Melville's positioning of "Cetology," is essential to his intentions for the whale, Moby Dick. The White Whale is not mentioned until Chapter 31, “Queen Mab,” mere sentences before the chapter concludes and “Cetology” takes over. However, the White Whale is not specifically named until Chapter 36, "The Quarter Deck," when Ahab calls the entire crew of the *Pequod* together to inform them of their primary mission, four chapters later. Here Ahab begins to bestow upon the enigmatic Moby Dick metaphysical qualities—traits outside of the sphere of scientific naturalism. However, the draining of the symbolic force of whales, creatures laden with cultural myths, in Chapter 32 is necessary so that when the White Whale enters the narrative, it can be represented as a clean slate onto which Melville can inscribe symbolism. Here is also why Chapter 42, “The Whiteness of the Whale” comes shortly thereafter “Cetology.” The clean slate is presented after scientific inquiry. It is what has made the slate clean. This is also Melville’s reason for equating whales with books; the symbolism of the White Whale is about to start; attempting to “read” the whale is commencing.

The process of heaping symbolism onto a special whale would not be possible without the naturalistic undertaking applied to whales with “Cetology.” And this is precisely why Melville begins his chapter “Cetology” with these words: “soon we shall be lost in its unshored, harborless immensities. Ere that come to pass...it is but well to attend to a matter almost

indispensible to a thorough appreciative understanding of the more special leviathanic revelations and allusions of all sorts which are to follow” (Melville 145). Melville nearly states something explicitly here of great importance, and a restatement with emphasis is needed to flush it out: “to attend to a matter [cetology] almost indispensable to a...understanding of...revelations and allusions which are to follow.” *Moby Dick*, the White Whale, is to follow, not just as a creature of zoology but as a monster of symbolism—an incarnation of an impossible-to-read book.

NATURAL SCIENCE AND “THE ENCANTADAS”

To a lesser degree, if only due to its relatively short length, Melville takes on a similar and condensed procedure for the tortoises in "The Encantadas" as he does for the White Whale in *Moby-Dick*. Melville showcases an in-depth affinity for naturalistic writing and animals in "The Encantadas," and devotes an entire chapter, out of ten, to tortoises, though they appear throughout some of the various sketches. Other animals are mentioned in the sketches as well: varieties of bird life (including penguins), iguanas, packs of dogs, and schools of fish. Though the birds of Rodondo Rock receive a full sketch, numerous birds are included with scant detail. Melville's treatment of the tortoises is set apart in "The Encantadas." It is no wonder that Melville referred to the work-in-progress as his "Tortoise Hunting Adventure" when writing of it to his publisher in 1854 (Deblanco 222). “The Encantadas” also features a close dialogue between Melville and Darwin, the import of which has in part been fleshed out by scholars. However, the degree of influence that Darwin had on “The Encantadas” and the extent that the

sketches anticipate the biological theories popularized by *On The Origin of Species* has not been adequately undertaken and will be here.⁵

In modern zoology, tortoises are of the order Testudines, along with turtles, and are more ancient than snakes, crocodiles, and lizards. They are characterized by a hard, protective shell developed from their ribs (Hickman 540). It is no surprise that such creatures would leave a lasting impression on Melville. Tortoises call forth a unique balance of mystically ancient and evocatively exotic effects that trigger people, even young children, to contemplate the world as both. The shelled reptile appears wise and calm, and formidably patient, as it sagaciously lumbers like a moving rock. They have the feeling of tree: old and hard, in addition to being eminently harmless. Tortoises are perhaps the ultimate pacifists of nature and seem to want little to do with survival of the fittest. If they could talk, then they might whisper (or rather hiss) that life is best when it most resembles a dreamy coma, full of steady slowness and soft sounds.

Melville first writes about tortoises in a partially scientific vein, though he is not overtly attempting a sort of in-depth naturalistic account like with the cetology of *Moby-Dick*. Yet, a strong flavor of naturalism is diffused around the tortoises. The narrator comments on "their strictly physical features" (Melville 186). He even equates himself with a scientist: "I seemed an antiquary of a geologist, studying the bird tracks and ciphers upon the exhumed slates trod by incredible creatures [tortoises]" (Melville 190). As a result, the description of the tortoise is rich and paints a scientifically accurate picture of the creature. "Behold these really wondrous tortoises...black as widower's weed, heavy as chests of plate, with vast shells medallioned and orbed like shields, and dented and blistered... shaggy...with dark green moss, and slimy with the

⁵ A list of publication dates of both Melville and Darwin's work are as follows: *The Voyage of the Beagle* (1839), *Moby-Dick* (1851), "The Encantadas" (1854), *On the Origin of Species* (1859). These dates are further proof that Melville was influenced by *The Voyage of the Beagle*, but also that he anticipated *On the Origin of Species*, in part, though it is dubious to assume Darwin was influenced by Melville, at least in the context of my study.

spray of the sea" (Melville 190). He goes on to claim that he believes them to be the longest living creature on the planet: "And, in fact, that any other creature can live and breathe as long as the tortoise of the Encantadas, I will not readily believe," a statement that would later be verified (Melville 190). In fact, Galápagos tortoises are among the longest living land animals in the world (with other species of tortoises), with one recorded to have lived for 176 years. In 2006, Harriet the Galápagos Tortoise died of a heart attack at Steve Irwin's Australia Zoo. It is believed she once belonged to Charles Darwin ("Harriet Finally Withdraws After 176 Years").

Despite his pulse of scientific naturalism, the world painted in "The Encantadas" is a mysterious one, as is evidenced in his ongoing theme of an enchanted and accursed set of islands as opposed to a strictly grounded and realistic appraisal. Moreover, Melville's insistence on painting the Galápagos Islands as a section of hell spilled out onto the earth's surface in a round rejection of the notions of nature inherent to Romanticism. In fact, the *Piazza Tales* was Melville's final prose publication, and contained his most subversive work, politically and to romanticism. Douglass Furrh writes "more than any other work Herman Melville's understudied collection of stories serialized in the antebellum period, *The Piazza Tales* (1856), dismisses previous romanticisms" (Furrh 7). Thus, "The Encantadas" operates within an unusual treatment of nature—one that does not present it as a spiritual haven for every individual but also one that does not offer any sort of strict realism. This treatment pushes the "The Encantadas" more toward literary naturalism than romanticism; nature is a place of cruel determinism rather than idyllic transcendentalism. Still, Melville never commits to any particular presentation that is easy to characterize—it is as Melvillian as *Bartleby* on a whaleboat and defies easy categorization.

Throughout "The Encantadas," Melville strikes a moderate tone of skepticism of both supernaturalism and naturalism, as is often his mode: "Whereas Melville's descriptions of the

islands are in certain way encyclopedic, they are in others amorphous" (Tanyol 254). And though such a contrast is at work in both *Moby-Dick* and "The Encantadas," an identifiable pattern of influence can be illustrated between the texts of Charles Darwin and Melville.⁶ While writing "The Encantadas," Melville was clearly influenced by Charles Darwin, but in a conflicted manner. Darwin, the most famous naturalist to have ever lived, visited the Galápagos Islands six years before Melville did, in 1835 (Howarth 99). Darwin would eventually state his visit to the Galápagos Islands was the important event in his life (Smith 205). His experiences on the Galápagos are included in *The Voyage of the Beagle*, a book which became famous before Melville wrote "The Encantadas." As would perhaps be expected, there is the strongest of possibilities that Melville read it (Tanyol 250). The assumption is almost solidified to truth when it is considered that Melville quotes Darwin in his "Extracts" at the beginning of *Moby-Dick*: "On one occasion I saw two of these monsters (whales) probably male and female, slowly swimming, one after the other, within less than a stone's throw of the shore (Tierra Del Fuego) over which the beech tree extended its branches" (Melville 1).

The relationship between Darwin and Melville is multifaceted and highlights Melville's broader relationship to natural science. In the book's chapter on the Galápagos Islands, Darwin included a small table that gives "approximate" figures for the number of flora species found on the various isles (Darwin 342). In a similar manner, but in jest, Melville incorporates a small table in Sketch Four of "The Encantadas," "The Pisgah View from the Rock" that gives the numbers of various types of animals on one of the islands included in Darwin's table: Albemarle. Melville's list adds up to "a clean total of 11,000,000" (Melville 203) that includes his estimates

⁶ The clash of supernaturalism and naturalism is prevalent throughout the novel. For example, Melville discusses the physical features of the whales only to then develop the concept of the "spirit spout"—the idea that the *Pequod* is in the presence of a sort of ghost-whale.

for the number of lizards, snakes, and spiders. His table also contains listings for "ant-eaters, man-haters, salamanders, and devils" but gives their totals as "unknown" (Melville 203).

In addition, Melville adopted a similar diction as Darwin in his portrayal of tortoises. Consider this passage from *The Voyage of the Beagle*:

As I was walking along I met two large tortoises, each of which must have weighed at least two hundred pounds: one was eating a piece of cactus, and as I approached, it stared at me and slowly walked away; the other gave a deep *hiss*, and drew in its head. These huge reptiles, surrounded by the black lava, the leafless shrubs, and large cacti, seemed to my fancy like some *antediluvian* animals (Darwin 323).

Melville uses similar language in "The Encantadas:" "The chief sound of life here is a *hiss*," declares the narrator (Melville 183). In Sketch Two, Melville writes, "ropes were dropped over, and presently three huge *antediluvian*-looking tortoises...were landed on deck" (Melville 189). Both Darwin and Melville comment about the tortoises' "antediluvian" appearance, the inevitable look for creatures that "seemed newly crawled forth from beneath the foundations of the world" (Melville 190). Like Darwin, the narrator of "The Encantadas" takes on the role of an observer, though his thoughts are inescapably philosophical. All the same, the narrator, in an act of "studying" spends substantial time curiously staring at the three tortoises that are left to roam the ship's deck (Melville 190).

Various other sections of *The Voyage of the Beagle* are touched on by Melville, indicating a relationship of influence. Similar to Sketch Six of "The Encantadas," Darwin also notes the presence of buccaneers in the islands' history as well as the outcast nature of the inhabitants: "This archipelago has long been frequented, first by buccaneers...but it is only within the last six years that a small colony has been established here. The inhabitants...have been

banished for political crimes from the Republic of Ecuador" (Darwin 324). Sketch Eight describes the bitter story of a Chola woman named Hunilla, who is left on the island with her husband and brother to hunt tortoises. The two men later die while fishing as Hunilla watches from the shore. Darwin mentions similar circumstances when he discusses Charles Island, where "a hovel had been built in which two men lived, who were employed in catching tortoises, whilst the others were fishing on the coast" (Darwin 325). The connections do not cease. Melville's narrator comments on eating tortoise soup, while Darwin comments that he lived for days off of tortoise meat and that they "make excellent soup" (Darwin 325). One of the principle preoccupations that the narrator of "The Encantadas" has with tortoises is their monomaniacal behavior of only moving in a straight trajectory, despite immovable objects that might hinder them. Likewise, Darwin fully explores the tortoises' movements and their patient tenacity, cataloguing that "The tortoises, when purposely moving toward any point, travel by night and day, and arrive at their journey's end much sooner than would be expected" (Darwin 332). He also describes how the tortoises migrate back and forth between the high and coastal areas of the islands to such a degree that various paths are cut through the rocks and vegetation: "When I landed in Chatham Island, I could not imagine what animal traveled so methodically along well-chosen tracks" (Darwin 331). Yet another connection concerns how the animal-life of the Galápagos did not possess a fear of people—a fatal weakness. Darwin wrote of the bird-life: "it would appear that the birds of this archipelago, not having as yet learnt that man is a more dangerous animal than the tortoise or the *Amblyrhynchus*, disregard him, in the same manner as in England shy birds, such as magpies, disregard the cows and horses grazing in our fields" (Darwin 345). Melville focuses on the fish rather than the birds: "poor fish of Rodondo! in your victimized confidence, you are of the number of those who inconsiderately trust, while they do

not understand, human nature" (Melville 108). And lastly, Melville comments on the bruised shells of the tortoises, a result of falling amongst various rock structures, as does Darwin, who concludes that falling is their primary cause of death (besides people). "The old ones seem generally to die from accidents, as from falling down precipices: at least, several of the inhabitants told me, that they had never found one dead without some evident cause" (Darwin 332). The only exceptions are the newly hatched tortoises, which fall victim to various species of birds.

Yet, complementary to the clear influence *The Voyage of the Beagle* had on "The Encantadas," Melville anticipated Darwin's evolutionary ideas prior to the release of *On the Origin of Species* and incorporated allusions (unrealized, perhaps) to natural selection in his texts. In his chapter specifically concerned with explicating natural selection, Darwin wrote "it follows that any being, if it vary however slightly in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving, and thus be naturally selected" (Darwin 80). This phenomenon derives from an inescapable doctrine of nature: life is characterized by a "struggle for existence," wherein "each organic being...at some period of its life, during some season of the year, during each generation or at intervals, has to struggle for life, and to suffer great destruction" (Darwin 67).

Melville begins to echo these concepts in Sketch Three of "The Encantadas" when the bird-life of Rock Rodondo becomes the focus. At the outset, the narrator again declares his semi-scientific intentions: "I know not where one can better study the natural history of strange sea-fowl than at Rodondo" (Melville 195). The varieties of sea-fowl are represented in a hierarchy of "thrones, principdoms, powers, dominating one above another in senatorial array" (Melville 197). The different levels are vastly important to Melville's project of understanding the animals as

being parts of naturally occurring strata. This invokes the idea of lower species being preyed upon by higher, the natural result of which is continued natural selection. The sense of hierarchy was inescapable, even to Darwin, causing him to see in such a pattern its own replication: "Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows" (Darwin 88).

Melville continued to explore this idea in the context of natural selection. The highest bird of Rodondo is the "Boatswain's Mate," commonly referred to today as the Red Billed Tropicbird, or simply the Boatswain Bird. Melville comments on its color and its other attributes of distinction, including its "bugle-like" call (Melville 197). Such a bird would be at the top. At the bottom of Rock Rodondo are the penguins, of which Melville writes, in a manner anticipating natural selection:

Their bodies are grotesquely misshapen, their bills short, their feet seemingly legless; while the members at their sides are neither fin, wing, nor arm. And truly neither fish, flesh, nor fowl is the penguin; as an edible, pertaining neither to Carnival nor Lent; without exception the most ambiguous and least lovely creature yet discovered by man. Though dabbling in all three elements, and indeed possessing some rudimental claims to all, the penguin is at home in none. On land it stumps; afloat it sculls; in the air it flops. As if ashamed of her failure, Nature keeps this ungainly child hidden away at the ends of the earth, in the Straits of Magellan, and on the abased sea-story of Rodondo (Melville 196).

Melville critiques penguins as outcasts by nature, given what he sees as their biological shortcomings—namely, a lack of legs and wings, and a short bill. As a result, Melville is wondering about natural selection before the theory is popularized. The "enchanted isles" come

to be a place for outcast people and animals, the lower classes of men and beast. What he comments on as failures of nature are what he sees as making the penguin a vulnerable creature. It is plausible that he was not aware of the great speed at which penguins can swim (their redeeming factor, made possible by the torpedo-shaped body); however, he still contemplated penguins in terms of their biological features in the context of survival. The penguin is a "failure" because it appears to Melville as helpless and ill-equipped. This helplessness of the penguin is important to Melville because he understands that creatures must survive and they can be judged as a "failure" or not based on their ability to survive.

Melville approaches natural selection in another passage, but in *Moby-Dick*. In Chapter 59, "The Squid," Ishamel states, "they fancy that the monster [the squid] to which these arms belonged ordinarily clings by them to the bed of the ocean; and that the sperm whale, unlike other species, is supplied with teeth in order to attack and tear it" (Melville 302). The phrase "is supplied with teeth in order to" is reminiscent of natural selection; the statement understands that sperm whales have teeth, and likely developed them, for a specific purpose, "in order to," eat the giant squid. It sees sperm whales as having teeth (rather than baleen) as a result of environmental factors. It is possible Melville intended that it was God which supplied the sperm whale with its teeth, but recalling that it is "Nature" which ought to be "ashamed of her failure," this is likely not the case. Melville recognized in the wilderness a relationship of physical traits coming as a result of local environment and in this manner anticipated Darwin, albeit in an abbreviated manner.

It is highly doubtful Darwin would think that Melville's figurative hierarchy of birdlife was an adequate representation of the theories from *On the Origin of Species*. It is not, but Melville was not making an attempt to illustrate scientific principles, but rather he intuitively

intertwined diffused shadows of biological theories into his writing. Melville's hierarchy fails to fully illustrate natural selection primarily because his superficial device of defining what species are more "fit" (in the context of survival of the fittest). The simple relative location of birds on a tower-like rock cannot be thought to be sufficient for such a purpose. A penguin is not a "lower" creature simply because it spends more time close to the water. An albatross is not "higher" simply because it roosts in nests off the ground and can boast the ability to fly. In fact, Darwin's definition of "Struggle for Existence" was deliberately and inherently far more complicated. Writes Darwin: "I use the term Struggle for Survival in a large and metaphorical sense, including dependence of one being on another, and including (which is far more important) not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny" (Darwin 62). This definition demonstrates the various ways in which "fittest" can be defined. If Darwin believed progeny to be a "far more important" determiner of success, then it must be noted bacteria are more advanced than human beings. The essence of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was to offer a way of understanding how species became different species over time via an "accumulation of successive slight favourable variations" (Darwin 480). On this front, Melville only scratched the surface of Darwin's theories.

Nevertheless, Melville's treatment of natural science in "The Encantadas" is certainly multi-faceted, like *Moby-Dick*. A direct influence of *The Voyage of the Beagle* is observable within the text and it also anticipates *On the Origin of Species*, in part. Moreover, Melville's observations of the tortoises and their descriptively realistic introduction made it possible for him to take the tortoises and to load them with symbolic significance. The relationship between scientific naturalism and symbolism is unique with the tortoises in that Melville introduces their

physical traits and behaviors to serve as symbols (not just the mere animals), deepening the complete and complex representation of the tortoises.

THE PAIN AND CONDITIONS OF PEOPLE AND ANIMALS

That Melville intended the animals in his narratives to serve as symbols is predicated in part on the supposition that Melville did not intend the animals to be symbols for their own experiences, but rather as symbols for spheres of experience that animals like whales and tortoises do not have access to. In short, Melville intended them to be symbolic of concepts that humans can understand and experience. Without this reservation it is entirely possible that tortoises and the White Whale were simply in the narrative to represent themselves, that the drudgery of the tortoise only means that tortoises spend a lot of time in a slow trek, that the White Whale's whiteness is only the color of a particularly frightening sperm whale, but just a sperm whale all the same. A disassociation between the animals and their symbolic pains and conditions is necessary before they can be applied to people. Melville's program of anthropomorphic symbolism depends upon seeing the pain and conditions of animals as being connected to humans. However, like most subjects approached by him, there is no clear resolution to this question, just as there has not been an answer in Christian theology for centuries as to the content of animal pain and its purpose to divinity. Melville's portrayal of animals takes an ambiguous stance to the question of animal pain, but does so in such a fashion to deepen the anthropomorphic symbolism because it connects the animals to humans while not completely allowing both groups to eclipse one another.

Did Melville intend animals to be symbols for humans? The content of Melville's symbolism is related to the pain and the natural condition of humans, philosophical and

otherwise. Therefore an analysis of animal pain and their natural condition, philosophical and otherwise, is necessary. It will be established in later sections that the White Whale is symbolic of different concepts, but that all of the symbolism is innately human. The White Whale is viewed as being manifest evil by Ahab; furthermore, the “whiteness” of the whale relates to humankind’s inability to know the pressing answers to the deepest of philosophical questions. *Moby Dick* is also laden with a heavy sense of supernatural luster and providential purpose. On the same note, the tortoises will be shown to represent a meaningless (and endless) struggling and the duality of human nature (the dark and bright sides of human action). But can the animals be said to be aware of these conditions in themselves? To what degree do they feel mental and physical pain?

The complexity of the brain is related to the capacity of self-awareness and abstract thinking. Melville never explicitly relates the brains of animals to their ability to feel pain. In the chapter dedicated to the brain of the sperm whale, he comments on the “comparative smallness of his brain,” though he finds happy reassurance in the size of the whale’s spinal cord, which he views as a worthy substitute (Melville 383). Melville was not aware that sperm whales actually have the largest brain of any animal, though its size is not remarkable in proportion to its mass (Whitehead 1094). Moreover, there is no direct information on the sperm whale’s cognitive attributes, “although its complex social system is consonant with those found in other cognitively advanced mammals” (Whitehead 1094). Melville was indeed aware of whale social behavior and explored it in “The Grand Armada,” though he did so without commenting on how it related to whale intelligence. That aside, the inaccessibility into the sperm whale’s thinking, and the size of the brain, does not detract from the physical pain felt by whales. In *Moby-Dick*, a few graphic scenes depict whales being brutally killed and feeling terrible pain. Take this passage from

Chapter 61, “Stubb Kills a Whale,” much akin to the heartbreaking passage from Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* when an aged mare is beaten to death by a crowd of drunks:

The red tide now poured from all sides of the monster like brooks down a hill. His tormented body rolled not in brine but in blood, which bubbled and seethed for furlongs behind their wake...all the while, jet after jet of white smoke was agonizingly shot from the spiracle of the whale...the monster horribly wallowed in his blood, overwrapped himself in impenetrable, mad, boiling spray...at last, gush after gush of clotted red gore, as if it had been the purple lees of red wine, shot into the frightened air; and falling back again, ran dripping down his motionless flanks into the sea. His heart had burst! (Melville 311)

It is clear that whales feel physical pain in *Moby-Dick*. The tortoises are not given a similar account of painful death, even though three of them are killed and eaten at the end of Sketch Two. The manner of their death is never commented on. But, like virtually all creatures, the tortoises quite obviously felt physical pain when the sailors killed them, though one would hope decidedly less than the unfortunate whale killed by Stubb. Overall, in Melville, the physical pain of animals is not a controversial subject. However, the animals’ capacity to view themselves and understand their pain is another matter.

Melville’s view on the mental and spiritual state of whales and tortoises is ambiguous, especially in how it compares to humankind’s. Though the character Stubb directly references a dead whale as a “carcass,” to denote a dead animal, Ishmael describes dead whales as leaving corpses, which normally references a dead human: “eyeing the vast corpse he had made” (Melville 312) and “the whale’s unharmed corpse” (Melville 337). Melville also describes whales as leaving ghosts—the supernatural remains of a life (Melville 336). In addition, in the

famous chapter “The Grand Armada,” a baby whale is said to be “spiritually feasting upon some unearthly reminiscence” (Melville 423). The young whales, and it can be supposed all the other whales, can have transcendental experiences of their own. These instances demonstrate Melville’s capacity to write of whales as more than mere animals, but as entities connected with a spirituality. Similarly, it is the “ghost of a gigantic tortoise” that occasionally haunts the narrator of “The Encantadas” (Melville 187).

However, the spirituality inherent to the creatures, particularly whales, and how Melville references them in isolated instances, does little to delve into their capacity for mental anguish or abstract thinking. In the texts *Moby-Dick* and “The Encantadas,” little is said about the animals having experiences or demonstrating the propensities of the sort that they are symbolic of. Given the texts, it is doubtful that either whales or tortoises have an understanding of evil or determinism. Life is brutal in nature; animals live by preying off each other. In *Origin of the Species*, Darwin writes that “the structure of every organic being is related, in the most essential yet often hidden manner, to that of all other organic beings, with which it comes into competition for food or residence, or from which it has to escape, or on which it preys” (Darwin 64). In this natural sense, animals are accustomed to violence. Yet while a cheetah may stalk and kill an antelope on the African savannah, there would never be a cheetah that wanted to kill all antelopes. Genocide is not part of the animal kingdom; it is human enterprise—a human evil. Furthermore, there does not seem to be any evidence that at this phase in evolution, species like tortoises and sperm whales are philosophically tormented by the mysteries of the universe, that they believe in God, or loathe their place in the world as being predestined and full of toil. If Melville thought otherwise, it is not discernable from *Moby-Dick* and “The Encantadas.”

This overall lack of similar conditions creates a gulf between humanity and animals and it has been commented on by other literary figures. A scientist himself, Vladimir Nabokov stated that animals, including advanced mammals, lack an extra layer of awareness that humans possess. When asked what separated people from animals, Nabokov responded:

Being aware of being aware of being. In other words, if I not only know that I am, but also know that I know it, then I belong to the human species. All the rest follows—the glory of thought, poetry, a vision of the universe. In that respect, the gap between ape and man is immeasurably greater than the one between amoeba and ape. The difference between an ape's memory and a human memory is the difference between an ampersand and the British Museum Library (Nabokov 111).

From Nabokov's perspective, no animal possesses the same depth of self-awareness as humans. C.S. Lewis offers a similar explanation in his book *The Problem of Pain*.⁷ In the chapter "Animal Pain," Lewis first specifies that there must be a distinction of "sentience from consciousness" (Lewis 134). He points out that for a being to experience pain, there must be a consciousness to recognize the "succession of perceptions [painful experiences]" that the self is experiencing. This consciousness "is not itself a mere succession of states, but rather a permanent bed along which these different portions of the stream of sensation [sentience] roll, and which recognizes itself as the same beneath them all" (Lewis 135). Without this consciousness, the self does not know the self exists in time, and therefore cannot know that it is in pain beyond the moment that pain is occurring. Lewis does not say that all animals lack this self-awareness; in fact, he postulates that

⁷ I make use of Vladimir Nabokov and C.S. Lewis's views of animals because they are more closely associated with literature than science. In the strictest sense, the question of animal pain is a scientific one, but it is also inescapably philosophical. However, I am not here endeavoring to clarify scientifically whether animals feel the same metaphysical pain that humans do. That is entirely outside the sphere of literary criticism. I am only building on the opinions of literary figures to understand the literary approach of Melville to animal pain.

some of the higher mammals besides humans do possess a sense of self, though it exists at a more shallow level.

Therefore, animals feel pain but lack a deep self-awareness, while some species lack self-awareness all together. For an entity to be aware that it is in pain and has been in pain, for it to carry that burden of acknowledgment, to understand its pain as something that is not only happening in the present but as a sphere of awareness that carries itself backwards and forwards in time, this “awareness of being aware” offers (or rather inflicts) a deeper and more acute sense of pain. This is not simply memory, but rather it is the ability to be aware of the self in linear time. To say “I am sad” is not the same thing as stating that “I am aware that I am sad.” There is the emotion and the additional layer of awareness. You feel the pain and you think of yourself in pain. For humans it is combined. Other animals, though they feel pain, cannot experience this at the depth of humans.

The connection of self-awareness to the conceptualization of the self in linear time is important to both Nabokov’s sense of “memory” and Lewis’s philosophical explanation of the consciousness being a riverbed that the self views itself in. In Chapter 104 “The Fossil Whale,” Ishmael envisions the world before humanity with “the shuddering glimpses into those Polar eternities” (Melville 498). Here he writes a profound statement: “I am, by a flood, borne back to that wondrous period, ere time itself can be said to have begun; for *time began with man* (emphasis mine)” (Melville 498). According to Ishmael, if time began with humanity, then whales cannot view themselves in time, which makes the notion of a full self-awareness quite impossible. In timeless places, sentient beings merely “are.” Hence whales, in their own way (and perhaps not inferior way), cannot be troubled by the universe in the same acute fashion that humans are. The pain of the robust human condition cannot shake the foundations of their minds,

because, according to Melville, their minds do not view themselves in time. As a result, I conjecture Melville understood sperm whales and tortoises have different senses of awareness (and perhaps different from each other) and that he therefore intended them to be symbols for human experience, not animal experience, though there is certainly overlap. Had this not been the case, he would have explored the metaphysical component to animal pain, rather than just their physical pain.

None of this is to say that pain inflicted upon animals cannot be wrong, because they cannot feel it as deeply. Certainly there is no passage of *Moby-Dick* or "The Encantadas" that would suggest animal pain is irrelevant though it appears that Melville viewed the deepest forms of pain as being strictly the purview of humanity and as a result, reserved the symbolism of his animals for those cursed creatures called humans. Therefore, Melville's view of animal pain stands in contrast with human pain.

An illustration is required. In Captain Ahab, Melville supplies a picture of human pain that demonstrates the importance of time and self awareness to heightening the acuteness of affliction. Ahab is traumatized by the "agonizing bodily laceration" supplied by the White Whale (Melville 200). However, it takes time for his despair to germinate: "It is not probable that this monomania in him took its instant rise at the precise time of his bodily dismemberment" (Melville 200). The ultimate result of his injury, the monomania, required time to grow, as Ahab's sense of self and awareness tried to make sense of the event, its meaning, and what it revealed about the universe. And with time to himself to consider his pain, and its indecipherability, Ahab transformed: "for long months of days and weeks, Ahab and anguish lay stretched together in one hammock...then it was that his torn body and gashed soul bled into another" (Melville 200). He soon crossed a mental threshold and "at intervals during the passage,

he was a raving lunatic" (Melville 200). Eventually, as the ship sails north into the tropics, Ahab's condition appears to stabilize and the crew releases him from his strait jacket. In this passage, Ahab's journey of pain falls nicely in place with Lewis's concept of the consciousness as the riverbed through which sentience travels, but the vast longitudes and latitudes of the ocean replace a river. It also conforms to Nabokov's view of self awareness: Ahab's torments mount as he spends more and more time with his pain and his awareness of pain. The pain of Ahab is also heightened by his depth and intelligence; Melville establishes Ahab as a "deep" man (Melville 201). And once he emerges from the violence of his initial crazed delirium, he stabilizes but remains maddened and eminently intelligent: "Ahab in his hidden self, raved on...[though] not one jot of his great natural intellect had perished" (Melville 201). Melville seems to be making the comment that the deeper and more intelligent a being is, the deeper they feel pain and try to understand it, including their relation to their pain through self awareness.

The varying levels of animal self-awareness and their propensity to feel pain must remain an ambiguous zone. I have attempted to demonstrate the ambiguity of animal pain in the texts because such an ambiguity directly affected the symbolic force of the creatures and reinforces the concept of anthropomorphic symbolism, the content of which will now be discussed.

THE ANTHROPOMORPHIC SYMBOLISM OF *MOBY-DICK*

In *Moby-Dick* and "The Encantadas" animals come to represent elements of the human condition or human nature. Melville takes the forms established in part in a naturalistic study of animals and transforms them into symbols of things not related to sperm whales or tortoises. While it is perfectly true that animals have long been used as symbols for a variety of concepts, people not the least of which (consider the image of a caged bird), Melville's use of animals is

unique in that he treats them with a thoroughly naturalistic eye before establishing their roles in his complex texts. Furthermore, it is also of great interest that the concepts he explores with animal symbolism are in fact ideas that will further blossom into full-fledged literary naturalism some years later. The bridge between Melville's scientific naturalism and his anticipation of (and participation in) literary naturalism occurs through his utilization of anthropomorphic symbolism.

With the scientific naturalism of *Moby-Dick* explored, it can be considered how it functions to heighten and accentuate the symbolism of the White Whale. It is immediately the intention of Melville to make Moby Dick something far beyond a mere whale—mere whales have already been explored with scientific intimacy, and will continue to be so treated throughout the text, with the exception of the White Whale. The explosion of Moby Dick in the narrative is positioned in contrast with the careful naturalism that Melville had constructed in previous chapters. Melville's cetology describes, in scientific terms, all whales known to him. It discusses the creatures in terms of their properties, thereby as mere animals. By giving the reader the view of a naturalist, Melville ensures that there will be no lingering aspect of a false cultural image of whales to taint the heaps of symbolism that will be placed on Moby Dick. Later in the novel, Melville devotes Chapter 55, "Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales" to an exposition of mistaken ideas of whales that survive in history, culture, and print, all for the expressed purpose of setting "the world right in this matter" (Melville 285). Cetology, in addition to other chapters, serves this purpose more organically. The naturalism is in place to function as a way to clean the slate for whales in the public eye, in order to accentuate the symbolism. Hence, it is no wonder that the mystical whale is a white creature—such a color calls to mind a stark blankness, a physical incarnation of *tabula rasa*. Yet naturalism also is part of the overall project Melville is

attempting by understanding the whale as both a physical creature and a metaphysical creature, as two approaches to understanding objects. "As yet, however, the sperm whale, scientific or poetic, lives not complete in any literature" (Melville 147). The marriage of science and the metaphysical within the totality of the White Whale was a deliberate attempt by Melville to merge the physical with the spiritual in a manner that echoed Emerson's "every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact" (Emerson 13). In his article, "The Function of the Cetological Chapters," J.A. Ward argued that this merging was the central objective of the novel:

Melville constantly attempted to arrive at an understanding of spiritual reality through an understanding of physical reality. It was possible for him...to link all reality with one reality, to manufacture a network of relationships which could enable him to know everything by knowing one thing fully...never before in Melville's fiction had there been such a complete union between physical object and spiritual truth; with the whale as object, as the central force and symbol in the universe from the point of view of Ahab and Ishmael, it was possible for Melville to explore the physical dimensions and spiritual implications of the whale without hindering the movement or digressing from the theme of the book (Ward 167)

This provides the additional chain that links the overt scientific treatment of the White Whale with the symbolic significance that Melville placed on it, the content of which will now be explored.

The symbolism of the sperm whale Moby Dick is complicated, and deliberately so. Ishmael remarks in "The Prairie," chapter 79: "if then, Sir William Jones, who read in thirty languages, could not read the simplest peasant's face in its profounder and more subtle meanings, how may unlettered Ishmael hope to read the awful Chaldee of the Sperm Whale's

brow? I put that brow before you. Read it if you can" (Melville 380). Melville invites a sort of "reading" approach to the White Whale—an attempt to understand it. This is also implicit in his cetology, where the whales are classified into categories he designates as reading materials (the Folio, Octavo, Duodecimo), a further indication that he wanted to connect his albino leviathan with a sense of readability, or, as will be argued, *unreadability*.

The symbolism of the White Whale shifts frequently, with different characters having different interpretations. Starbuck, at first, thinks of the whale merely as a "dumb brute" (Melville 178). Other crew members are familiar with the legend of the White Whale, but seem to regard it as a mystical monster—the stuff of legends, though they are soon frantic to destroy the beast. Ishmael is principally affected by the whale's whiteness, causing him to ascribe to *Moby Dick* the ramifications the color white has on him, which are numerous. Ishmael begins by admitting that "in many natural objects, whiteness refiningly enhances beauty" and further offers that it is associated with "royal pre-eminence" and that it is the "imperial hue" (Melville 204). Continuing on, Ishmael lists "noble things" that it is made an emblem of, including the "innocence of brides," honor amongst Native Americans, and perhaps most importantly, holy divinity, in both Christianity and Greek mythology (Melville 205). The connection of whiteness to God is further touched on by Ishmael when he tells of observing an albatross on the main hatches, and thus peeping into "secrets which took hold of God" (Melville 206).⁸ Yet, whiteness also terrifies unlettered Ishmael. It makes terrible objects more terrible, and when coupled with divinity, whiteness enforces a "certain and nameless terror" (Melville 207). Though whiteness is not a deformity, it makes albinos "strangely hideous" and is associated with ghosts and death,

⁸ The albatross is also touched on in "The Encantadas," in a manner that reveals more of Melville's use of the color white. The albatross of the Galapagos is gray, and is therefore "an unsightly, unpoetic bird" unlike its white "storied kinsman" (Melville 196). The only difference between the birds is their color, which makes all the difference to Melville.

mostly due to the “supernaturalism of this hue” (Melville 208). Ishmael then attempts to resolve the mystery of whiteness by looking for instances where whiteness, stripped of all the “direct associations” still exerts the same “sorcery,” and ultimately concludes that even some animals possess the “instinct of the knowledge of the demonism in the world” (Melville 211). Perhaps most importantly, Ishmael discusses how whiteness and blankness are supremely unknowable and affect every perception given the same attributes of light—the medium through which all sight occurs:

It is that by indefiniteness it shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation...Or is it, that as in essence whiteness is not so much a color as the visible absence of color, and at the same time the concrete of all colors; it is for these reasons that there is such a dumb blankness, full of meaning in a wide landscape of snows...and when we consider...that all other earthly hues...are but subtle deceits, not actually inherent in substances, but only laid on from without...and consider that the mystical cosmetic which produces everyone of her hues, the great principle of light, forever remains white or colorless in itself...of all these things the Albino whale was a symbol (Melville 212)

All this is, admittedly, quite a burden for a symbol. In the context of “whiteness,” the meaning of *Moby Dick* is free to be many things, and is, though Ishmael takes this as being sinister.

Ishmael's prolonged rhapsody on whiteness demonstrates his inability to adequately understand the object under scrutiny. The whiteness is many things but only from different perspectives. It would not appear that the whiteness of pearls would cause Ishmael's mind and heart to shudder. But when attached to other objects, animate objects especially, the hue indicates a blankness that makes the ability to understand it impossible. And it is such objects that humans try to

comprehend. Therefore, whiteness highlights (literally) the metaphysical qualities and effects that defy understanding. Doubtless, this is partially attributable to the fact that understanding itself is metaphysical. All the same, the qualities and effects of whiteness shout out to the observer, and as they approach, they cannot grasp anything tangible, as if they were suddenly in the midst of a heavy fog dense with pure light. The wall cannot be broken through. It is unreadable, mostly due to its transparency and the complexity of its parts, but also perhaps because there is actually nothing there.

Ahab understands this too—"sometimes I think there's naught beyond"—but instead of feeling a humbled sense of awe and fear, as Ishmael does, he only finds indignation (Melville 178). Somewhere in him, an indestructible force of defiance boils as a result. Ahab's view of the White Whale is equally complex, and it corresponds to Ishmael's in so far as both views share the common denominator that the beast correlates to an *inability to know*, or *unreadability*. In the "Quarter Deck," Ahab begins to bestow upon the enigmatic Moby Dick metaphysical qualities, describing him as the wall between "some unknown but still reasoning thing" and the "unreasoning mask" of all "visible objects" and "man" (Melville 178)—all in the very scene that the White Whale is introduced. In this sense, Moby Dick is synonymous with the burden of unknowing and the elusiveness of meaning that plagued Ahab since his maiming. The symbol of the White Whale encompasses the vastest of unanswerable human questions. And so, Ahab bellows, perhaps resigned but still with intense fervor: "That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate" (Melville 178). He loathes his inability to understand what he desires to know. Somehow, Ahab contemplates that destroying the whale will somehow give him peace and answers. If he can conquer the "inscrutability," then it follows he will have discovered something resembling truth.

Beyond the symbolic force of the unreadability of the whale, and by extension, the universe, Ishmael understands the whiteness as inherently supernatural while Ahab views the whale as part of a barrier between mankind and the beyond—ideas that point to the connection of the whale to a sense of deity. As the narrative progresses, various characters throughout *Moby-Dick* come to believe that the White Whale is an instrument of providence, and therefore supernatural—an absolute departure from the scientific naturalism. Yet the narration is explicit concerning the White Whale's agency and connection to providence: "that every dismembering or death that he caused, was not wholly regarded as having been inflicted by an unintelligent agent" (Melville 200). In the tale of the Town-Ho, the narrator remarks, "Gentleman, a strange fatality pervades the whole career of these events, as if verily mapped out before the world itself was charted" (Melville 281). The creature Moby Dick operates according to determinism, almost as its author. Eventually, the White Whale is deemed a god, with another character "pronouncing the White Whale to be no less a being than the Shaker God incarnated" (Melville 344).⁹ Hence Starbuck's proclamation that "God is against thee, old man; forbear! 't is an ill voyage!" (Melville 552). In the final scenes, the connection between the White Whale and providence is more overt, given the whale has finally entered into the narrative. Now the whole affair is governed by fate: "The wind that made great bellies of their sails...this seemed the symbol of that unseen agency which so enslaved them to the race" (Melville 606). All the while, "glorified White Whale as he so divinely swam" (Melville 596) as if "possessed by all the angels that fell from heaven" (Melville 618). Overall, the narration makes it clear: "This whole act's immutably decreed" (Melville 611). And so Moby Dick kills Ahab, sinks the *Pequod*, and swims off,

⁹ In "Calvinism and Cosmic Evil in *Moby-Dick*" T. Walter Herbert Jr. clarifies that "The Shakers, as Melville knew, were a group of zealots who renounced sexual relations because of their fanatical preoccupation with original sin" (Herbert 1615).

doubtless symbolic of the enduring enigmas the White Whale represents, which will never be overcome or understood by people.

The White Whale's supernatural presence in the narrative is further solidified by Ahab's view that it is sheer evil. This signification is crucial because it is Ahab's obsession that propels the narrative—his understanding of the whale as evil incarnate drives the crew to their ultimate destruction. "All evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in *Moby Dick*. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all general rage and hate felt by his whole race" (Melville 200). Here we get a sense of anthropomorphic symbolism: Ahab believes the White Whale represents, or is symbolic of, the things that harm and hunt humanity. It is a stand-in for the cosmos—God, the universe, the "whole show," as it were.

In "Calvinism and Cosmic Evil in *Moby-Dick*" T. Walter Herbert Jr. argues that the symbolism of evil surrounding the White Whale is a subtle portrayal of the Calvinist God, at least to Ahab, who Melville named after an Israeli King of the Old Testament whose demise is predestined by God, but who was also explicitly utilized by Calvin in his theology "to illustrate God's treatment of the reprobate and to support his doctrine of providence" (Herbert 1616). Herbert clarifies that Father Mapple's sermon casts Ahab into a similar situation as Jonah, but whereas Jonah repents, Ahab becomes enraged. He sees the universe as being controlled by malevolence. As a result, Herbert asserts that Melville employed "discernible elements of the attack on Calvin's God" (Herbert 1615). The claim of evil charged against the God of Calvinism is the predestination of souls to perdition, without the souls having any sort of power over their fate. R.S. Foster, who lived in the mid-nineteenth century, is quoted by Herbert. A passage from Foster's *Objections to Calvinism* levels the overall charge against this theology:

When the conduct of the wicked shall be revealed in that day, another fact will stand out...namely, that God himself hath placed these beings where but one course of conduct was possible to them ... and that, for having pursued this course...they are now to be punished... Heaven and hell would equally revolt at it, and all rational beings conspire to execrate the almighty monster capable of such a procedure (Foster 50)

Thus, in the Calvinist portrayal of God, some people are created for damnation. There can be no higher level of pessimistic determinism than this. Other elements of Calvinism have been equally scrutinized, including the doctrine of total depravity, for what becomes the ultimate result of its doctrines. In *The Problem of Pain*, C.S. Lewis demonstrates that, like the Calvinist concept of Predestination, the Calvinist concept of Total Depravity equally makes God a cosmic evil:

And an utterly unknown quality in God cannot give us moral grounds for loving or obeying Him. If He is not (in our sense) "good" we shall obey, if at all, only through fear—and should be equally ready to obey an omnipotent Fiend. The doctrine of Total Depravity—when the consequence is drawn that, since we are totally depraved, our idea of good is worth simply nothing—may thus turn Christianity into a form of devil-worship (Lewis 19)

Lewis points out that God can only be seen as evil if Calvinist principles are held to be true because such doctrines reduce the relationship between God and man into mere tyranny over the fearful. With this in mind, Melville establishes that Ahab is not totally depraved, but rather that he is totally enraged by the reality that maims him. Ahab's condition compels him to see the White Whale as totally depraved because of its sinister role in predestination; the total depravity of the White Whale is synonymous with the evil that Ahab sees in it. It is a malevolent monster. Melville only further deepens the symbolic connection of the whale to Calvinism as the climax

unfolds. Notes Herbert, “Calvin was accused of having envisioned a monster God who put into effect, through pre-destination, an eternal malice against which mortal effort is futile. As Melville describes the whale in the final act of destroying the *Pequod*, specific elements of this accusation are clearly present” (Herbert 1615).

The naturalistic backdrop provided in part by “Cetology” serves to contrast Moby Dick’s symbolic character. Melville keeps the contrast apparent throughout the novel, often resorting to at least partially naturalistic passages concerning “mere” whales throughout the whole fabric of the narrative. Hence the danger in cutting out the expository chapters of text not related to the narrative of hunting Moby Dick. Doing so would separate the reader from the naturalism necessary to accentuate the symbolism of the White Whale. In fact, the tale weaves supernaturalism with naturalism to such a degree that removing one thread would unwind another. For example, Moby Dick is a supernatural agent near the end of the text, behaving as an instrument of providence. However, Ahab tracks him using a solidly naturalistic approach, making use of geography, climate, and an intricate knowledge of how whales behave and where they feed. “For with charts of all four oceans before him, Ahab was threading a maze of currents and eddies, with a view to the more certain accomplishment of that monomaniac thought of his soul” (Melville 215). Ahab is attempting to solve a metaphysical question with scientific inquiry—both supernaturalism and naturalism are pivotal to *Moby Dick* and the symbolism heaped upon the White Whale.

THE ANTHROPOMORPHIC SYMBOLISM OF THE TORTOISE

The significance of the tortoises is essential to the artistic project in “The Encantadas.” Melville stacks symbolism upon the creatures, much like he does with Moby Dick, but

throughout a naturalistic treatment of the robust reptiles, with an emphasis on their behavior and their colors. The symbolism is complicated and multi-faceted. First, Melville contemplates myths surrounding the tortoises, stating that "they [mariners] earnestly believed that all wicked sea officers, more especially commodores and captains, are at death (and, in some cases, before death) transformed into tortoises" (Melville 186). This passage not only reveals that sailors see tortoises as being connected with humans, but it also demonstrates Melville's insistence that the concept of the tortoise's existence as a punishment is important to further development of the symbolism, which soon comes. Though the narrator of "The Encantadas" does not seem to believe the myth of cursed sea captains, he does defend the dignity of its inspiration by stating the form of tortoises invites such myths, writing "there is something strangely self-condemned in the appearance of these creatures. Lasting sorrow and penal hopelessness are in no animal form so suppliantly expressed as in theirs" (Melville 186). In short, Melville is projecting human experiences onto a reptile. The tortoise's anthropomorphic symbolism differs from the White Whale's: whereas Moby Dick is connected to concepts of providence and unknowability, the tortoises are associated with human torment, in a physical connotation.

Of this torment Melville states that the tortoises have a "strange infatuation of hopeless toil" which forces them to "hold on their inflexible path" (Melville 191). The narrator of "The Encantadas" is fascinated that the tortoises audaciously continue to try and move forward and straight, even when inhibited by obstacles that they cannot overcome. On board a ship, such an impediment is the bulwarks—on the islands, tortoises must helplessly contend against resolute geography. But they nevertheless continue on in "their drudging impulse to straight-forwardness in a belittered world" (Melville 191). The tortoises cannot change their fate but continue despite the futility; they are incorrigibly obsessed with an unending pattern of toil. Such creatures suffer

for it: “I scraped among the moss and beheld the ancient scars of bruises received in many a sullen fall” (Melville 190). This element of symbolism attached to the tortoises is reminiscent of the myth of Sisyphus who is forever cursed to roll a boulder up a hill, only to have it roll down again. The toil is endless, not just for tortoises, but for people: “the thought of their wonderful longevity does not fail to enhance the impression” (Melville 186). It is not enough that it is cruel labor; it also lasts a very long time.

The tortoises are, in a sense, a living boulder, given their enormous shells that they must take with them everywhere. Moreover, though unknown to Melville and Darwin, the Galápagos Tortoises are in fact instinctually forced into a constant routine of harsh drudgery: the tortoises lay eggs near the coast and they travel back to the island highlands for feeding. On some islands, this trip takes roughly four months each way, given the slow pace of the animals (Howarth 107). Darwin took measurements of the tortoises’ speed in *The Voyage of the Beagle*. Yet, tortoises are not aware of their “penal hopelessness,” and thus Melville was attributing to them human suffering and sensibilities—an instance of anthropomorphic symbolism.

The empathetic picture of the tortoises is more of empathy for humans given the symbolism. Their drudgery throughout the long night brings them to death the next day when the narrator and the other sailors kill them for food. The narrator’s deep contemplation on the tortoise is not solely a preoccupation of a sailor, but rather a pensive philosopher who understands tortoises as being symbolic of something intrinsically human. In this context, the haunted and cursed nature of the Galápagos Islands is a reflection of how the narrator is haunted by what he sees the tortoises as symbolizing. Hence, long after the narrator has returned home from the Galápagos, the tortoise continues to enter into his mind, with burning letters upon its shell (Melville 187).

The other primary element of symbolism central to Melville's treatment of the tortoise is the significance placed on their dual color. "The tortoise, which has two sides, black on top and bright on bottom: we may hide one side but both still exist" (Howarth 106). The philosophical importance of the "two sides of the tortoise" is vast. Melville establishes, with the use of a reptile, a subtle metaphor of human nature, with its "black and bright" elements, both always present, though one may be more hidden than the other. Melville's narrator admonishes the reader to "enjoy the bright, keep it turned up perpetually if you can, but be honest, and don't deny the black" (Melville 189). This symbol of the human nature contained in the colors of a tortoise paint humans throughout "The Encantadas." Melville's deliberate project in "The Encantadas" was to demonstrate this duality embedded in human nature. Concerning the buccaneers that had on occasion lived on the island, the narrator comments in the sixth sketch:

Could it be possible, that they robbed and murdered one day, reveled the next, and rested themselves by turning meditative philosophers, rural poets, and seat builders on the third? Not very improbable, after all. For consider the vacillations of a man. Still, strange as it may seem, I must also abide by the more charitable thought, namely, that among these adventurers were some gentlemanly, companionable souls, capable of genuine tranquility and virtue (Melville 212)

The buccaneers are evildoers one day, pillaging the unearned spoils of others, but the next day they are transformed into idealistic transcendentalists who may compose poetry about the setting sun.

Melville also explores the symbolism behind the tortoise in the eighth sketch, "Norfolk Isle and the Chola Widow." Here the ship of the narrator rescues a woman and two of her dogs from the northern Norfolk Isle, where she has been marooned for several months. Her time on

the Galápagos Islands has been anything but idyllic. Her husband and brother drowned before her eyes while fishing some half mile off shore. This is Melville's take on "double death" with a "portrait of the surviving witness eviscerated by what she had seen" (Delbanco 224).

The toils continue. The French captain who was supposed to return never does, and Hunilla must survive on her own, enduring "misery's mathematics" amid "time's labyrinth." She does have contact with other vessels, but the details of the encounters are too terrible for recounting by the narrator, who states, "I will not file this thing complete for scoffing souls to quote, and call it firm proof upon their side. The half shall here remain untold. Those two events which befell Hunilla on this isle, let them abide between her and her God. In nature, as in law, it may be libelous to speak some truths" (Melville 229). It is plainly evident that in the silence surrounding these events, much more is said. Hunilla was the victim of cruel sexual assault, and then left stranded on the island, all at the hands of a whaling crew. Yet, men of the ship that finally rescues her are the complete opposite. They are moved to tears by Hunilla's narrative, treat her with the upmost respect and compassion, and deliver her back to the mainland, where the "captain sold the tortoise oil to a Tombez merchant; and adding to the silver a contribution from all hands, gave it to our silent passenger, who knew not what the mariners had done" (Melville 235). The contrast in human nature is thus again made quite apparent. The first whaling crew does great evil to Hunilla. The next ship to come along rescues her, is deeply touched by her suffering, and pools together extra money to give to her once she is left in Peru. The symbolism of the light and dark of the tortoise shell is again supplied through people in the sketches. Their oscillations of morality verify what Melville viewed as the light and dark sides of human nature.

The symbolism attributed to the tortoise in “The Encantadas” take two forms: the “penal toil” and the “black and bright” sides of humanity. Both elements are symbolic of human conceptions, whether they are human experiences or human nature. Melville chose the tortoise to communicate these ideas because his scientific eye revealed that tortoises can be so thought of in philosophical ways: the natural facts of reality—the tortoises’ behaviors and colors—supported metaphysical understandings.

ANTHROPOMORPHIC SYMBOLISM AS PROOF OF LITERARY NATURALISM

It is noteworthy that *Moby-Dick* and “The Encantadas” came decades before the era of literary naturalism. My assertion is not that Melville can be considered a literary naturalist, but rather is that he approached it and naturally embedded its primary attributes in his vast canvass without an explicit desire to do so. It was, as it were, accidental and organic. To restate Louis Budd, “In the pre-Darwinian United States the boldest novelists, especially Herman Melville, had sensed most of these ideas [literary naturalism], but nobody could combine these loomings into an integrated vision and technique. Melville came close because he resonated to some of the same ideas that educated Darwin” (Budd 29). I suggest that Melville’s use of symbolism via scientific naturalism did in fact create “an integrated vision” but that it is one of numerous “little lower layers” that can be pried out of the immensities. And yet, though literary naturalism is generally not preoccupied with symbolism or irony given that “in practice the naturalist is usually direct,” the symbolism of *Moby-Dick* and “The Encantadas” serves to strengthen and enhance their elements of literary naturalism by creating a deeper and more engaging set of thematic concepts (Pizer 144). Such devices leave a deeper impression and universalize the concepts, making their residue more likely to stick to the walls of the mind.

In fact, Melville was not capable of writing any other way. His natural methodology was to work through symbolism towards an understanding of truth. In his letters to the Nathaniel and Sophia Hawthorne, Melville bluntly stated his purposes for writing. Truth was what he labored toward, despite it was “ridiculous to men” (Melville 39). This was not to say that Melville thought he knew the truth; for the man who Nathaniel Hawthorne observed could “neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief” quite the opposite was the case (Hawthorne 21). “Truth is ever incoherent” writes Melville to the man to whom he dedicated *Moby-Dick* — Nathaniel Hawthorne (Melville 43). Even if he had wanted to write for strictly popular appeal, it would not have been possible for him: “Yet, altogether write the *other* way I cannot” (Melville 38). He must incessantly probe for the truth, though it was not attainable (and, usually, less marketable), much like the tortoises must continue in their drudgery. Therefore, the writing process for Melville was the fumbling for something solid to place his sensitive soul upon, despite the hardships of life and writing, and the irreconcilable nature of the universe. To wade through his experiences, knowledge, and feelings, Melville naturally resorted to a style of writing that attempted to take in various possibilities, and symbolism was one of the inevitable consequences. He admitted this to Sophia Hawthorne when he wrote there is “subtle significance in that thing [*Moby-Dick*]” (Melville 45). Similarly, Nathalia Wright understood the manner that Melville created works laden with symbolism, allusions, patterns, and exposition was organic to his thinking: “The allusions he made were not studied but involuntary; they came from him spontaneously, as idioms in his vocabulary, as patterns of his thought” (Wright 7). They were a natural component to his writing process.

How Melville’s anthropomorphic symbolism translates into anticipation of and participation in literary naturalism remains to be seen. The symbolism of the animals becomes

some of the primary components that make the texts trend, in part, towards literary naturalism. Melville intended the animals to be symbolic of elements of the human condition and their significance revolves around the themes that constitute literary naturalism: an emphasis on determinism, extreme and harsh settings, human nature, and the ultimate destruction of characters.

Literary naturalism is highly attentive to determinism: “most distinctively, they [literary naturalists] pushed further toward determinism—economic or biological or cosmic—than American novelists had cared or dared to go before” (Budd 43). Melville explored this concept in profound and complex ways, attempting in the process to demonstrate that the vast world conspires to destroy some its inhabitants by casting them into uncontrollable circumstances. The symbolism of the animals takes determinism as its centrifuge. Two contrasted views of determinism arise from religious and Darwinian conceptualizations of the universe and both are contained in *Moby-Dick* and “The Encantadas.”

The religious sense of determinism appears in *Moby-Dick*. Nathalia Wright’s *Melville’s Use of the Bible* is a significant study of the level of influence that Biblical concepts and scripture had on Melville’s literature, as well as his use of Biblical material in his literature. In a manner similar to *Melville’s Science: ‘Devilish Tantalization of the Gods!’*, which illuminates scientific concepts in virtually all of Melville’s works, *Melville’s Use of the Bible* demonstrates that Christianity and Judaism were no less important to understanding Melville’s writing, for they are just as diffused in the works as natural science. In a divine bit of criticism, Wright supplies readers with significant data concerning Melville’s implementation of the Bible:

A numerical estimate of them [allusions to the Bible] in proportion to the length of each volume is even more revealing, for thus arranged, his books stand in this order: *Clarel*,

Moby-Dick, Billy Budd and Other Prose Pieces, The Confidence Man, Poems, Pierre, The Piazza Tales, Redburn, Israel Potter, White Jacket, Mardi, Typee, Omoo... there thus appears to be a correspondence between the most ambitious expressions of Melville's genius and his use of the Bible...It was in his most profound thought and his most distinguished style that he relied most heavily on Scripture (Wright 9)

With an undoubtedly high level of allusions, it would be impossible for theological ideas to not intermingle with the natural symbolism that grew out of Melville's feverish writing style and thus determinism in a Biblical context became attached to the signification. The symbolism of the whale Moby Dick as an instrument of providence has already been explored in a previous section. What is most relevant to literary naturalism is how the supernatural elements surrounding the fabled whale relate to the pervading determinism in *Moby-Dick*.

Wright states that "the great motif that appears in *Moby-Dick* is prophecy" (Wright 78). In the context of religion, most specifically Christianity, prophecy is a phenomenon prevalent throughout the Bible that functions to highlight that God's will governs all destinies. Once accepted, the concept of God's will cannot fail to have an effect on believers: they develop a sense of determinism, though what they are destined for may not be known by them. A person may desire that their cup be taken away, but it is God that gave them the cup in the beginning, if they believe everything is God's will. Prayers are often hopes that God's ultimate command or plan shall not be as terrible as it could be. Since prayers presuppose God's control of the universe, they contain in them the assumption that the whole drama of life is planned out by God. The concept of determinism is inescapable, and though free will may be exerted it must always be subservient to, at the very least, God's omnipotence. Along these lines, it is nearly impossible Melville, whose thinking was highly influenced by Biblical scripture, and who

actively alluded to it in every major work, would not develop symbolism related to determinism, if symbolism was a natural element in his writing. Melville used other means to establish a strong sense of predestined doom, as Wright explains: “it is largely the presence of these prophetic characters [Tistig, Father Mapple, Elijah, Gabriel, and Fedallah] which creates in *Moby-Dick* its mood of fate—a mood pervading so many of Melville’s books” (Wright 81). The import of their prophecies is mostly looming destruction; Elijah foretells Ahab’s death and all who are associated with him (Wright 79). Yet all prophecies point to some predetermined event, and in *Moby-Dick* that something is the sinking of the *Pequod*. The crew’s “cup” is the death at the fins of Moby Dick. So while the various prophets that Melville sprinkled throughout his novel are not symbolic in and of themselves, they do point to the primary symbol of the text. The White Whale is not prophecy but rather the tool of providence—he is the fulfillment of prophecy, not the prophecy itself. And thus Moby Dick, a sperm whale, functions as a symbol for the determinism enacted by providence, or perhaps providence itself.

If the White Whale is symbolic of determinism from a religious standpoint, the tortoise of the Galápagos are symbolic of determinism in the Darwinian sense, in more than one way. This component resolutely takes Melville into the territory of literary naturalism because this central idea is the very womb that birthed it: “Literary naturalism derives mainly from a biological model. Its origin owes much to Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution, based in turn on his theory of natural selection. Darwin created a context that made naturalism—with its emphasis upon theories of heredity and environment—a convincing way to explain the nature of reality for the late nineteenth century” (Lehan 47). Whereas in religious determinism a person’s fate is planned by God, in a strictly biological model, fate streams out of environment and heredity. The very structure and substance of the creature grows out of the environment—it can be rightly

stated that the environment “creates” the creatures. Darwin related this idea in his meditations on the Galápagos Islands in his *On the Origin of Species*:

If we turn to nature...look at any small isolated area, such as an oceanic island, although the total number of the species inhabiting it, will be found to be small...yet of these species a very large proportion are endemic—that is, have been produced there, and nowhere else. Hence an oceanic island at first sight seems to have been highly favorable for the production of new species (Darwin 87).

The “new species” is the result of determinism from any number of complex factors, including, notably in the case of the Galápagos, geographical isolation. There exists a level of uncontrollable determinism in the origin of all animals, plants, and humans; for that to not be the case would be a paradox as delivered by Satan in *Paradise Lost*: “Know none before us, self-begot, self rais'd / By our own quick'ning power” (859–61). No tortoise, sperm whale, or human being can make itself; it must be made by something outside of itself; this necessarily smuggles an unavoidable determinism with it. If creatures cannot control their creation, then they certainly cannot control what they are born as and where they are born. It is determined for them, usually with a background of glowing indifference.

Melville flirts with biological determinism in “The Encantadas.” He marvels at the tortoises’ audacious inability to give up moving forward but he answers his own ponderings, in part, when he understands the behavior as a “crowning curse.” They do not have a choice in the matter, for no creature would choose to be cursed. Melville soon demonstrates that the tortoises’ “strange infatuation of hopeless toil” which forces them to “hold on their inflexible path” is provided by nature (Melville 191). Melville describes the geography as “full of metallic ravines and gulches, sunk bottomlessly into the hearts of splintered mountains, and covered for many

miles with inextricable thickets” (Melville 191). Over time, these obstacles “dent” and “blister” their shells, leaving behind “the ancient scars of bruises received in many a sullen fall,” partially in their “quest for scanty water” (Melville 190). This reason for travel was also touched on by Darwin: “The tortoise is very fond of water, drinking large quantities, and wallowing in the mud. The larger islands alone possess springs, and these are always situated towards the central parts, and at a considerable height. The tortoises, therefore, which frequent the lower districts, when thirsty, are obliged to travel from a long distance” (Darwin 327). The tortoises must behave in such a manner because the geography makes it impossible for them not to. Movement is essential to their survival. Moreover, their straightforward trajectory that they hardly alter is mainly the result of knowing no better than the shortest distance between two points is a straight line; this is an especially important habit for a creature as slow and clunky as a tortoise.

Melville’s use of whales and tortoises as symbols for elements of determinism also coincides with species of animals being killed off at swift rates by deliberate measures during the period of time when Melville wrote *Moby-Dick* and “The Encantadas.” Both sperm whales and Galápagos tortoises alike fell victim to intense hunting, for reasons quite obviously outside their control. Determinism afflicted generations of entire species with mass-slaughter. Melville devotes an entire chapter of *Moby-Dick*, “Does the Whale’s Magnitude Diminish?—Will He Perish?” to the question of whether whales can survive the depletion of their numbers given the booming whaling industry. At its height in the 1830s, the whaling industry of Melville’s time saw roughly 5,000 sperm whales being killed annually (Whitehead 1096). Melville ultimately concludes that whales will “outlast all hunting” but reveals in the process that he understands the potential of extinction to an animal so ruthlessly pursued. Similarly, Melville writes about the very common practice of capturing and killing tortoises for food and oil. The three tortoises that

are hoisted onto the ship are killed for food. Hunilla's party must capture and kill one hundred tortoises to simply pay for their trip out to Norfolk Island, where, it is presumed, they will likely kill far more than one hundred to make some money for themselves. Darwin also comments on the practice of hunting tortoises, stating "their numbers have of course been greatly reduced in this island, but the people yet count on two days' hunting giving them food for the rest of the week. It is said that formerly single vessels have taken away as many as seven hundred, and that the ship's company of a frigate some years since brought down in one day two hundred tortoises to the beach" (Darwin 330). Melville chose certain animals to be symbolic of elements of determinism which were, at the time of his writings, being afflicted by determinism themselves. It is important to also note how the sense of determinism stems in part from the harshness of environment. The tortoises contend against an environment that Melville deliberately conveys as a circle of hell. Throughout *Moby-Dick*, nature and the world are stated to be "oblivious...of...woe" and "so long cruel" (Melville 590). The harshness of environment also serves to exaggerate the extremes of human nature within literary naturalism, the broad concept associated with the tortoise shell.

In literary naturalism, people are products of their environment and serve to replicate its severity with their own severity to other people. Contained in human nature is the capacity to do great harm to other humans, and this capacity is most prominent in bitter circumstances. "Struggle for survival" necessarily means that the stronger people can injure those who are weaker, and there is more necessity to do so when the environment is accentuated with harsh realities. This concept is equally accessible in both contexts of determinism. The Bible talks of humanity's sinful nature, evolution of humanity's animal nature. In any event, Melville understood humans to be pulled at by conflicting factors and many of his most memorable

characters react to their harsh determinism and environment by simple passiveness. They understand their powerlessness so do not attempt a struggle against their formidable circumstances. Nathalia Wright connects this theme to both Melville's sense of Christianity and naturalism: "His [Melville's] nonresistance is at least as much naturalistic as religious in such characters as Pip, Bartleby, and Benito Cereno, but often bears the seal of the New Testament" (Wright 128). This passivity is resignation to the harsh determinism, much like the passivity of the tortoises. This passivity also springs from a character's inability to understand their environment. But in literary naturalism, characters do not receive answers, only their fate.

The deepest connection of animal symbolism with humanity can be identified using an example from Melville's literature, in a character that epitomizes literary naturalism: Captain Ahab. Here is the affronted man cast into a story of determinism from which he has no chance of escape. In him the symbolic elements of the tortoises and the White Whale resonate. There is no greater illustration of anthropomorphic symbolism's connection to literary naturalism than seeing the symbolism attached to a human figure within Melville's texts. This grants a nearly definitive picture: the animals are not only symbols for human concepts, but they directly relate to humans within the same texts as the animals.

The tortoises of "The Encantadas" are a representation of Captain Ahab, and to a degree, the traits of the White Whale are also personified in him. Melville is fairly explicit; near the beginning of "The Encantadas" it is stated that most mariners "believe that all wicked sea officers, more especially commodores and captains, are at death (and in some cases before death) transformed into tortoises, thenceforth dwelling upon these hot aridities" (Melville 185). Ahab is certainly such a candidate for wickedness—he manages to get virtually his entire crew destroyed. Melville then loads the tortoises with symbolism, all of which is personified in Ahab. Both the

tortoise and the monomaniacal Captain cannot alter their courses. The tortoises possess a "strange infatuation of hopeless toil" which forces them to "hold on their inflexible path" (Melville 191). The narrator of "The Encantadas" is fascinated that the tortoises audaciously continue on in "their drudging impulse to straight-forwardness in a belittled world" even when inhibited by obstacles that they cannot overcome (Melville 191). Likewise, Captain Ahab understands his position but cannot change that his "fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon [his soul] is grooved to run" (Melville 183). He is doomed before his mission begins, and perceives his fate. Yet the Captain continues on, resigned to the inevitable outcome. The White Whale is indestructible. And though Ahab is mostly consumed with his mission and boasts a "fatal pride," he also has a light side, though it barely emerges (Melville 564). In his conversation with Starbuck in Chapter 132, "The Symphony," he demonstrates a sort of sensitivity as he recalls his wife and child and manages to cry. Ahab develops a peculiar connection with Pip after his accident, and beyond his obsession, is a competent captain. He is not a wholly disdainful human being. There could not be empathy for him if he was so depraved. Thus, like the colors of the tortoise, Ahab is a conflict of the light and blackness, though the dark side ultimately triumphs. The resonance of the anthropomorphic symbolism of the tortoise with Ahab is important in that it reveals Melville's project of using animals as symbols for human experiences.¹⁰

¹⁰ There is also a layer of *Moby-Dick* which paints Ahab as a person quite similar to the White Whale. Ahab is as much of a player in the script as the whale is. Though Ahab believes the whale to be evil, it is he who stalks it. As a result, Ahab exists in an equal capacity as a servant to providence. Moreover, Ahab has lived at sea for the majority of his life. The text indicates he is 58 years old and has spent 37 years living at sea (Melville 590). Hence, he tells the ocean it is a family to him—a world full of his "foster-brothers;" the sea is just as much his home as it is for the White Whale (Melville 540). There are also spiritual and physical parallels created between Ahab and the White Whale. Consider Ahab's pipe and the spouts of whales. The despondent captain throws his pipe away early in the narrative, a signal he is resigned to what is to come: "and the last whale, like the last man, smoke his last pipe, and then himself evaporate in the final puff" (Melville 501). This demonstrates Ahab understands his own doom and its connection to the fate he wishes to bring about to Moby Dick. Lastly, Melville deliberately made Ahab to be physically part whale: his fake leg is a "barbaric" and "white" object made from a sperm whale jaw (Melville 135).

The symbol of the tortoise and the White Whale (anthropomorphic symbolism rooted in natural science) can aptly represent the plight and condition of Ahab (literary naturalism). The scientific naturalistic writing led Melville to create animal symbolism that represented the deterministic state of humanity, and human nature. Thus, in the matrix of Melville, natural science is morphed into literary naturalism. Perhaps the overall interplay of concepts in Melville's *Moby-Dick* and "The Encantadas" is best understood in light of Frank Norris' view of literary naturalism, which "placed realism, romanticism, and naturalism in a dialectic, in which realism and romanticism were opposing forces, and naturalism was transcending synthesis" (Pizer 107). Pizer summarizes this view thusly: "naturalism, in short, abstracts the best from realism and romanticism—detailed accuracy and philosophical depth" (Pizer 109). This understanding resonates truthfully with Melville's web of conceptualizations. Both "The Encantadas" and *Moby-Dick* contain strains of realistic detail and spiritual depth.

Herman Melville's works are complex and built on many pillars, chief among them natural science and the almost involuntary development and deployment of intricate symbols. Melville created a union between natural science and rich symbolism in such a way as to set his works of literature on a unique trajectory—one that contributes to the nearly endless interpretive possibilities for works like *Moby-Dick* and "The Encantadas." His use of animals is a powerful example of a writer merging the physical with the spiritual in a marriage of symbolism that drives at the human condition in all its complexities, uncertainties, and inescapable fates. The animals become human in the process, reminding readers of suffering, and the dignity of animals. As a result, Melville's creations become more than organisms struggling to survive—they become creatures of symbolism.

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