"I Know Him Not, and Never Will": *Moby Dick*, The Human and the Whale

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Abstract

In this thesis, I argue that Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* depicts the ocean and whales in a way that develops aesthetic theory into a proto-environmentalist message. Melville draws on theories of the mathematical and dynamic sublime as outlined by Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, while also employing Goethe's *Theory of Colours* in his depictions of the ocean setting. Goethe posits that opposing phenomena require one another to signify and to function, and Melville dramatises this idea throughout a complex and often self-contradictory novel. *Moby Dick* depicts whale hunting in a paradoxical, unstable way which both defends the practice and highlights its cruel nature. In considering this, I trace how depictions and cultural representations of whales have changed over time, shifting from the whale as icon of the monstrously non-human to the whale as touchstone for environmental humanism. Melville, despite the image of Moby Dick as a monster, also portrays whales in a way which humanises them and allows the reader to empathise with them, so allowing for a counter-discourse against whaling to emerge. The industrial consumption of marine animals is highlighted in *Moby Dick*, as Melville notes the various ways in which whales and similar creatures are used for food and other products. Unscrupulous methods of acquiring resources are paid particular attention in the chapter, 'Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish,' which I use as a guide to the contradictory ideologies at the heart of the text. I argue that the aesthetic theory embedded in the novel enables a nascent environmentalist consciousness, and I place such moments in dialogue with more recent accounts of whales and work from the field of the oceanic humanities.

Contents

Introduction

Moby Dick presents a clear representation of the sublime, as well as the relationship between humans and the natural world. I will expand on these discussions by arguing that the aesthetic perspectives within the novel, namely the sublime and colour theory, are connected to a message in favour of environmental preservation. The novel contains an implicit message in favour of preservation – what is currently known as sustainability as well as the ethical treatment of marine animals. This is present in Melville's depiction of the whale as a being with human-like emotions who suffers as a result of whaling. Environmental and resource preservation is also highlighted by the way Melville represents the acquisition and use of hunted whales. The idea of resources for consumption contrasts with that of the sublime. However, I argue a conception of the sublime can inspire a more sustainable, ethical treatment of marine life.

In current discourse on the novel, attention had been given to the ways in which the events Melville depicts are reflective of issues facing today's world. In a 2019 article for *The Guardian* published shortly before the Melville bicentenary, Philip Hoare claims *Moby Dick* has "never been more relevant" (2). In explaining how the novel's reflections on humanity remain relevant, Hoare notes how George W Bush's pursuit of Osama bin Laden had been compared to Captain Ahab's pursuit of the white whale by Edward Said (3). Similarly, Donald Trump's quest to build a wall is, as Hoare describes, "as irrational a pursuit as Ahab's" (3). Hoare goes on to claim: "But it is *Moby Dick*'s premonitory brilliance that continues to make it relevant" (3). The events at the end of the novel, in which the *Pequod* and all her crew except for Ishmael disappear into a watery vortex, see Melville predicting a mass extinction as well as a "drowned planet" (3). The whaling industry as portrayed throughout the novel acts as a prediction for the globalised world, in which there is a global pursuit of finite resources (Hoare 3).

A 2019 article in *The Economist* describes the *Pequod*'s crew as "avatars of modernity" (1). As the article states: "Their creator, Herman Melville—who was born 200 years ago, on August 1st 1819—was the first great writer of the age of

globalisation" (2). The novel displays harmony between crew members of different cultures, nationalities and races: "If differences are respected in Melville's globalised world, commonalities emerge, too. Sailors learn each other's languages and develop hybrid dialects" (3). The article concludes: "Prejudice and nationalism are too ingrained to vanish entirely; but, through mutual dependence on the high seas, interracial bonds are forged" (3). Today, Melville's influence remains throughout the globe:

> Iranian scholars debate the book's Zoroastrian and Islamic elements; Melville, some argue, believed fate trumped morality as the ancient Sasanians did. During the Cultural Revolution Chinese pedagogues claimed Melville was a rare anti-capitalist American author. Germans note the influence of Goethe; Japanese academics think Ahab's harpooner, the mysterious Fedallah, is one of their own. On the Antarctic Peninsula, meanwhile, huddle Mount Ahab, Tashtego Point and a glacier named Pequod. Two centuries after his birth, Melville continues to federate the world along one keel (4).

The world Melville creates in *Moby Dick* thus appears to pre-empt the world today. Globalisation is increased over the last fifty years. Recent years have also seen a rise in the kind of populist leaders who could be compared to Ahab. Furthermore, the current climate crisis has forced us to place focus on humans' relationships with the natural environment and the various ways our actions directly and indirectly affect it. Each of these issues is represented in the novel. Thus, the value in reading *Moby Dick* today is in the prevailing relevance of its narrative. The aesthetic value of relevance is such that portraying a world which appears similar to that in which the reader lives allows for reflection on the reader's own position in the world today and how they interact with it. From the novel's conclusion, the reader can infer the inevitable destruction of following a monomaniacal leader's mission to defeat a force of nature. From Ishmael's descriptions of the behaviour of whales, as well as his respect for the species, one can glean an attitude towards the natural environment that allows for sustainability. I will be discussing how the whale has been historically represented in art, and humans' fascination with the marine mammal. Subsequently, I will outline the aspects of Burke's and Kant's theories of the sublime which are reflected in the

novel, as well as Goethe's theory of colours. I will then discuss how the novel can be seen in relation to issues concerning the natural environment.

The Mystery of the Whale

Before the first chapter begins, the novel includes about eighty extracts about whales from various texts including the Bible and Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* The range of literature including references to whales highlights the fact that people have been particularly drawn to whales. Ishmael further produces multiple ways in which whales are represented from scientific, cultural and artistic perspectives. In the long encyclopaedic chapter titled 'Cetology,' Ishmael describes the scientific classifications of whales and their anatomical features. While it focuses on representing the whale from a scientific perspective, this chapter highlights the mystery associated with the whale. At the end of the chapter, Ishmael claims: "But I now leave my Cetological System standing thus unfinished, even as the great Cathedral of Cologne was left, with the cranes still standing upon the top of the uncompleted tower" (Melville 155).

The idea of incompleteness here implies that even scientifically, humans are not able to fully understand the whale. In 'Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales,' the narrator notes that: "The most ancient extant portrait anyways purporting to be the whale's, is to be found in the famous cavern-pagoda of Elephants, in India" (274). This image depicts Vishnu incarnated in the form of a leviathan (274). Ishmael goes on to note other historical images of whales as monstrous including depictions of Perseus rescuing Andromeda from a whale or "sea-monster" and the Biblical Jonah's whale, as well as images from accounts of sea voyages and natural history texts (Melville 275). What this chapter reveals is that people historically viewed whales as monsters. In a 2020 article in *The New Yorker,* Amia Srinivasan notes how whale songs "became in the nineteen-seventies, a big commercial success" (7). The popularity of whale songs shows a fascination people have with the whale, as well as a movement away from the representation of the whale as a monster. Srinivasan goes on to illustrate the element of mystery around whales by describing stories told about whales as reflecting "human uncertainty (Srinivasan 7). An example is: "Ancient cartographers used drolleries – hybrid monsters, part whale, part sea serpent – to

indicate the limits of their knowledge" (Srinivasan 7). This aligns with Melville's depiction of monstrous portraits of whales. Srinivasan cites the whale's size as a reason for its mystery, as the whale is "too large to be taken in easily by the human eye" (7). A photograph of the Earth in its entirety was produced before the first photograph of a free-swimming whale (Srinivasan 7). She states: "Contained in their mystery is the possibility that they are even more like us than we know: that their inner lives are as sophisticated as our own, perhaps even more so" (8). This presents a possible reason for people being drawn to the whale; their unknown elements bring about the possibility of similarities to us that we are unaware of. These potential similarities attract us to the whale. Melville's depiction of the whale is ambivalent; he humanises them while also characterising Moby Dick as a vicious monster. The novel thus poses the idea that similarities between humans and whales may exist, but the whale can also cause great harm. Melville presents the possibility that the mystery around the whale may conceal not kinship but danger to humans.

A Brief Summary of Burke and Kant's Accounts of the Sublime

Before discussing how Melville uses the sublime, one ought to understand what the sublime is. Two conceptions of the sublime which are reflected in *Moby Dick* are those of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. Throughout the second part of *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Edmund Burke outlines several properties of sublime objects: terror, obscurity, power, privation, vastness, infinity, succession and uniformity, magnitude, difficulty, magnificence, light, loudness, suddenness, and pain. Burke prefaces these properties by stating that, "the effect of the sublime in its highest degree" is astonishment (77). Astonishment is the halting of all movement of the soul with some degree of horror (77). This astonishment is such that the mind is so full of the sublime object that it is unable to process any reason on the object (Burke 77). Thus, the power of the sublime is its capacity to anticipate human reasoning (Burke 77).

While whales and the ocean may possess many of the sublime properties which Burke lists, the specific properties on which I will focus primarily in the first chapter are: terror, reverence, vastness, and infinity. According to Burke, fear is the most effective sensation in depriving the mind of its ability to reason and behave (77). Fear, in

functioning as the apprehension of death or pain, can function in a way which resembles actual pain (Burke 77). My interpretation of Burke's argument here is that when people believe pain is imminent, they will experience some kind of pain. This means that one need not be physically harmed by the sublime object in order to experience its effects. In describing terror as a component of the sublime, Burke includes the fact that several languages use the same word to express fear and wonder, or fear and reverence (77). The implication here is that there is a connection between fear and wonder or reverence. A further implication is that there are components of wonder and admiration, in addition to fear, in sublime objects. In describing the role of vastness in sublimity, Burke claims, "greatness of dimension is a powerful cause of the sublime" (86). Infinity, as a source of the sublime, typically fills the human mind with what Burke describes as "that sort of delightful horror, which is the most genuine effect, and the truest test of the sublime" (87). The phrase "delightful horror," which underpins the core effect of the sublime, reveals a simultaneous capacity for sublime objects to be fearsome yet pleasing to experience. Burke notes that even when objects are not in their own nature infinite, they may be able to deceive the mind into perceiving them as infinite; such that as the human eye is unable to grasp the bounds of an object, that object appears infinite and thus produces the same effects as the infinite (87). Thus, even if an object is not actually infinite, the perception of infinity is sufficient in creating the effect of the sublime.

In the first section of 'Critique of Aesthetic Judgement,' Kant provides an analytic of the sublime, as he details the transition from experiencing the beautiful to experiencing the sublime. Kant divides the sublime into two categories. The first is the mathematically sublime which concerns the magnitude of an object (Kant 120). Kant states: "The above definition may also be expressed in this way: that is sublime in comparison with which all else is small" (121). Kant goes on to claim that, "The estimation of magnitude by means of concepts of number (or their signs in algebra) is mathematical, but that in mere intuition (by the eye) is aesthetic" (122). The experience of the mathematically sublime involves apprehension and comprehension, and in order to avoid exceeding a maximum of one and a minimum of the other, a certain distance must be placed between the subject and the sublime object (Kant 123). Kant illustrates this using the following example: "In order to get the full

emotional effect of the size of the pyramids we must avoid coming too near just as much as remaining too far away" (123). The reason being:

> For in the latter case the representation of the apprehended parts (the tiers of stones) is merely obscure, and produces no effect upon the aesthetic judgement of the subject. In the former, however, it takes the eye some time to complete the apprehension from the base to the summit (Kant 123-4)

Being too far from the sublime object does not allow for an aesthetic judgement that would include apprehension. On the other hand, being in too close proximity to the object renders apprehension difficult to achieve.

The second category is the dynamically sublime. The dynamically sublime concerns might which, according to Kant, is "a power which is superior to great hindrances" (131). This power is associated with fear, as Kant states: "The aesthetic judgement can only deem nature a might, and so dynamically sublime, in so far as it is looked upon as an object of fear" (132). Examples of the dynamically sublime which Kant notes are: overhanging rocks, thunder clouds, volcanoes, hurricanes, and "the boundless ocean rising with rebellious force" (132). Such objects are fearful not for their size but for their capacity to be dangerous for those who experience them. The use of the sublime in *Moby Dick* allows the reader to conceptualise of a sublime experience. The reader is able to relate to Ishmael's position of reverence for the whale, as well as understand the fear associated with Moby Dick. Furthermore, the sublime objects are essential parts of the novel, as its title and focal point of the novel are the white whale. The sublime supports the idea of preservation. If an object is to be revered, and if the sublime is ultimately a pleasurable experience, then it follows that humans have an incentive to preserve these objects. The sublime also posits a reason why people are drawn to whales and the ocean, which is relevant to the discussion of humans' interactions with marine life. I will connect both conceptions of the sublime to specific parts of the novel and argue why Ahab ought not to be seen as a sublime figure. I will also discuss the sublime in combination with the novel's portrayal of whaling and the whale as a resource.

A Brief Outline of The Ideas in Goethe's *Theory of Colours*

Melville implements Goethe's ideas on colours throughout the novel. Goethe's inspiration for *Theory of Colours* was the desire to grasp the universal truthfulness in the revelations of subjective experiences (Giesenkirchen 6). My reading of this aim is such that it alludes to the potential for individual sensory experiences to reveal universal truths. Goethe claims: "the eye sees no form, inasmuch as light, shade, and colour together constitute that which to our vision distinguished object from object, and the parts of an object from each other" (xxxviii). He goes on to state that the visible world is constructed from light, shade and colour (Goethe xxxviii). Goethe states, "The eye may be said to owe its existence to light, which calls forth, as it were, a sense that is akin to itself" (xxxix). Goethe expands on this notion by claiming that the eye is "formed" in order to perceive light (xxxix). According to Goethe, "[…] light and its absence, are necessary to the production of colour" (xiii). In describing how certain colours can be seen, Goethe states: "Next to light a colour appears which we call yellow; another appears next to the darkness which we call blue" (xiii). Both blue and yellow can be altered by lightening or darkening, and they combine to produce green (Goethe xiii).

Furthermore, Goethe states that colours "belong to the eye itself" and require an action and reaction from the eye (xii). As Giesenkirchen notes, Goethe aimed to prove the initial precondition for emerging colours is the interaction between light and darkness (9). He argues that white, when darkened becomes yellow and black that is lightened becomes blue (Goethe 206). The novel's application of Goethe's colour theory reveals the intentional nature of Melville's use of colours in the novel's settings. The aesthetic value in these colours is seen as they are used in revealing truths about the human experience.

Looking at the novel's use of colour theory provides answers to why Moby Dick is particularly fearsome because of his white colour. I will examine the idea of opposite phenomena functioning in unison which is shown throughout Moby *Dick.* I will also examine Ishmael and Ahab's reflections which appear against colourful settings, as well as Ishmael's comments on water gazing. One of the most notable application of Goethe's theory in *Moby Dick* is the chapter, 'The Whiteness of the Whale.' Here, the narrator questions why the white whale is particularly frightening because of his

colour. This chapter can be linked to Melville's repeated use of water imagery, as Goethe draws a connection between blue and white; beneath the blue water is the white whale.

Moby Dick Through an Environmental Lens

The way in which Melville depicts the acquisition and consumption of marine life as resources aligns with current issues facing fisheries and highlights unsustainable human behaviour that has unfortunately continued to be prevalent. Melville also portrays whales in a way that highlights the unjust suffering they undergo as a result of whaling practices. This is pre-emptive of recent sentiments expressed in public discourse around whaling. What are now considered environmental issues are present in the novel, namely the idea of annihilation of humans, irresponsible and cruel whale-hunting, and the over-use of resources.

Elizabeth Schultz notes the distinction between "two dominant nineteenth-century perspectives:" Henry David Thoreau's subjective transcendentalist view of nature and Charles Darwin's perspective of objective science (98). Melville engages with these perspectives through the novel's central characters, Ishmael and Ahab. Both reveal perceptions of nature as infinite and regard the white whale through subjective perspectives. Ishmael is, however, is determined to provide a view of whales from several different perspectives. One of these is an objective, scientific perspective which is conveyed in the novel's cetological chapters. In doing so, however, he presents scientific inaccuracies and thus his objective approach is weakened. In his depiction of transcendentalism and objectivity, Melville provides an additional perspective on nature which allows for unity between nature and humanity.

Melville posits a perspective of nature which includes a kind of kinship between humans and non-human animals. Throughout the novel he does so through his portrayal of whales as possessing human-like qualities and emotions as well as establishing their social bonds to one another. Whales are shown to be capable of compassion for one another as they protect their injured companions. In addition to the relationships whales have with each other, Ishmael feels a kind of fraternal connection to them as he describes their behaviour. Furthermore, Melville presents

whaling in a way that reveals intense physical suffering amongst whales. A notable example of this is when he portrays an incident in which a cutting-spade inflicts such intense pain that a whale injures his fellow whales as a result. Moreover, dying whales throughout the novel are presented in such a way that their deaths are lamented.

In establishing these two premises, that whales think, feel, and behave in similar manners and that whaling causes great suffering, Melville allows for a message against whaling to be gleaned from the novel. Such sentiments are expanded upon as Ishmael draws a parallel between the idea of whales becoming extinct and humans becoming extinct: "And the last whale, like the last man, smoke his last pipe, and then himself evaporate in the final puff" (Melville 479). His contemplation on the possibility of extinction of whales also leads to the notion that extinction is unlikely insofar as the number of whales killed is limited. The events around the end of the novel present the notion of a form of vindication for whales, as well as the natural environment restoring itself to its state prior to human interference. The climax of the novel results in the *Pequod* and its crew disappearing into a vortex, after which the sea "rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago" (Melville 598).

Despite presenting whales as feeling beings who suffer as a result of whaling, Melville includes a chapter dedicated to a defence of whaling. In this chapter, Ishmael refers to history and lore around whaling. His admiration for the practice is based on the historical prestige he associates with it. However, Ishmael ultimately fails to justify the suffering inflicted on whales and reflects a lack of awareness of the potential long-term consequences of whaling. In current discourse, whaling is largely opposed, as seen in the responses to Japan's withdrawal from the International Whaling Commission. The consumption of whale meat has also decreased significantly over the last fifty years. The novel pre-empts current environmental discourse.

The chapter 'Fast-fish and Loose-Fish' displays how whales are regarded as commodities and such commodities are acquired and utilised in unscrupulous and wasteful manners. The notions of fast and loose fish can be applied outside of hunting whales to broader issues around how humans view and interact with the natural world. Melville also highlights the question whether the whole world is but a resource up for

consumption by whomever can acquire it the fastest. Moreover, the novel includes a chapter devoted to chowder, in which chowder is seemingly produced automatically and is consumed so often that Ishmael produces an image of himself becoming a fish. This chapter raises the question of whether humans are consuming an excessive amount of fish. In addition to chowder, the consumption of fish and other sea creatures is displayed through an extensive explanation of the history of whale as a dish. Here, it is revealed how eating whale meat is associated with nobility. Given that the idea of nobility is linked to the sublime, I would consider what it means for people to be able to eat a sublime object.

The consumption of fish throughout the novel is reflective of recent issues around fisheries' resources. A 2016 study on maritime security notes that products from fisheries are both widely traded and widely consumed globally. The ability of consumers to access these resources is, however, threatened when unsustainable fishing practices are employed, as such practices disrupt ecosystems and thus harm the supply of fish. Fisheries' supplies are also damaged as the result of overly efficient fishing in order to acquire remaining stocks as quickly as possible. Furthermore, certain states become exploited for their resources as a lack of effective security structures leaves them vulnerable to illegal activities. These issues of scarcity, unsustainable practices and exploitation are all reflective of Melville's notion of fast and loose fish. The methods of acquiring resources under this notion also allow for unscrupulous practices illustrated in Stubb's use of deception in order to harvest ambergris from a sick whale.

The whale as an item for human consumption is, however, contrasted with Melville's depiction of the human-like actions and emotions which whales have, as well as with the idea of the whale as a revered, magnificent being. Over time, there have been shifts in societal ideas around the extent of humans' responsibility to the natural environment such that societal consciousness of this responsibility has increased and been captured in domestic and international policy-making. There have also been society-wide changes in how whales are generally perceived. While they were once regarded as resources for consumption as well as potential threats to humans, humans later developed the notion of whales as beings worth protecting and admiring. This alteration in perception is reflected in pop culture, namely in films which depict

whales and their relationships with humans. Earlier films portrayed whales as antagonists while later films represented positive connections between whales and humans. From the various ways in which whales have been represented, the question of how Melville's depiction aligns with and differs from these representations emerges. I will examine environmental perspectives which emerge in relation to current discourse on whaling. I will also discuss how Melville raises perspectives on resource use, and how the novel can be read in light of current issues facing fisheries as well as the ways in which marine life indirectly harmed by humans. For if the sublime is so powerful, how have humans been able to inflict such damage on it? I argue viewing whales and their habitat as sublime objects with reflection-inspiring colourings can bring about a desire to preserve the ocean environment. This desire for preservation can in turn produce more sustainable behaviour towards the ocean. A combination of recognising the pleasure in experiencing the ocean and – in any capacity – the whale and treating them with respect in the form of distance will allow the whale to continue to his awe-inspiring existence.

I. Delightful Horror: Elements of the Sublime in *Moby Dick*

In examining how the aesthetics of the novel are connected to a relationship between humans and the natural environment, it must first be established what kind of aesthetics are presented in *Moby Dick*. This chapter will focus on how Melville applies ideas of the sublime from both Burke and Kant's accounts. I will begin by discussing Melville's use of the qualities of the sublime which Burke explains, namely reverence fear, and vastness, and infinity. Firstly, I will explain how fear, vastness, and infinity are applied to whales throughout the novel. I will then discuss how these sublime qualities are met by Moby Dick specifically. Subsequently, I will outline Merrill Whitburn's addition of nobility to the sublime and how this is consistent with Melville's depiction of whales. I will then examine how Melville's portrayal of the ocean too reflects qualities of the sublime. Following this, I will examine how the novel portrays sublime experiences in terms of the Kantian perspective of the nature of the sublime experience and how it is pleasurable. I will also discuss Melville's use of the colour white as an agent that enhances the sublime experience. Finally, I will discuss the question of whether Ahab can be considered sublime. In explaining why Ahab ought not to be considered sublime, I will discuss Robert Zoellner's analysis of Ahab's psyche.

As Merrill Whitburn points out, Melville would have owned a copy of Burke's *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful.* Fear, reverence, astonishment and infinity – properties of the sublime which Burke discusses – are consistent with the way Melville portrays whales throughout the novel. In the first chapter, when Ishmael explains his desire to partake in a whaling voyage, he claims: "Chief among these motives was the overwhelming idea of the great whale himself. Such a portentous and mysterious monster roused all my curiosity" (Melville 22). The first word Ishmael uses in describing the whale is "great," a word associated with prestige and admiration. However, included among the image of greatness and wonder is the word "monster." A monster is fearsome and threatening. The element of danger of the whale, in combination with beauty, is further presented in 'The Tail:' "In striking at a boat, he swiftly curves away his flukes from it […] No ribs of man or boat can withstand it" (Melville 295). The whale is able to inflict a large-scale, life-threatening degree of damage on people and man-

made objects. Ishmael previously credits the whale's strength for its beauty, but here shows how this strength is also a source of its fearsomeness. Melville thus captures the combination of fear and reverence which Burke considers features of the sublime. Moreover, the immense size of whales is mentioned throughout the novel, as in describing the tail Ishmael claims, "At its utmost expansion in the full grown whale, the tail will considerably exceed twenty feet across" (Melville 293). The image of the twenty foot-long part of a whale combined with words such as "utmost expansion" and "exceed" reflects Burke's idea of the infinite or, the perceived infinite as a sublime quality.

Moby Dick is no exception to the combination of wonder and terror. Ishmael states, "Yet as of late the Sperm Whale fishery has been marked by various and not unfrequent instances of great ferocity, cunning and malice in the monster attacked" (Melville 152). Moby Dick is not simply capable of harm in theory; he has on multiple occasions committed acts of great harm. This means the white whale would be feared by those had encountered him, as well as anyone who had heard of such encounters. Moreover, "cunning" and "malice" imply the monstrous behaviour is intentional, as opposed to the result of blind instinct. The novel's most significant pre-textual instance of Moby Dick's capacity to inflict harm is his altercation with Captain Ahab. The incident is described as Captain Peleg draws attention to Ahab's missing leg before the journey commences: "Lost by a whale! Young man, come nearer to me: it was devoured, chewed up, crunched by the monstrousest parmacetty that ever chipped a boat" (Melville 72). Moby Dick's power is too much to be described with the euphemism "lost by a whale." The words "devoured" and "crunched" reflect both intent and destruction. The white whale did not simply take Ahab's leg, he deliberately destroyed it. Moby Dick is also not just described as monstrous, but the most monstrous – according to Ahab. The extent of Moby Dick's extreme capacity to commit harm means he aligns with the sublime property of fearsomeness.

Whitburn mentions a critique of Burke's account of the sublime which states that his definition is too broad such that instruments of torture, being terrifying, would be included in this conception of the sublime (Whitburn 36). Whitburn advocates for the addition of a system of nobility, to which actions and performers of actions associated

with sublimity must conform, to the definition of sublimity, claiming it is already implicit (36-37). Melville remains consistent with this addition by portraying whaling as a dignified profession while also presenting the crew of the *Pequod* with elements of nobility such as the chapter title 'Knights and Squires' (Whitburn 37). In describing the right whale's head, Ishmael notes that the incrustation of barnacles atop the head is commonly referred to as the crown; "you will take great interest in thinking how this mighty monster is actually a diademed king of the sea, whose green crown has been put together for him in this marvellous manner" (Melville 265). The use of the word "crown" implies the right whale conforms to the system of nobility which Whitburn mentions. I would, however, amend Whitburn's inclusion of a system of nobility to include aesthetically pleasing qualities in addition to elements of nobility. This is consistent with Burke's notion of fear as connected to wonder and reverence, for visual pleasure can be encompassed in the wonder and reverence which are combined with fear. The whale is not only associated with kings, but also depicted throughout the novel as a creature possessing great aesthetic charm. In 'The Tail' Ishmael compares the whale's tail to other objects which warrant praises from poets: the antelope's eye and the bird's plumage (Melville 293). Poetry often celebrates beauty. Thus, the tail must be beautiful. Ishmael confirms this in stating: "In no living thing are the lines of beauty more exquisitely defined than in the crescentic borders of these flukes" (Melville 293). Lines are an element of drawing and a measure of precision and accuracy in depicting the drawn object. The implication is thus that the tail is comparable to a technically sound work of art.

Moby Dick may be a source of destruction and terror, but he is also described using language of beauty. As Ishmael introduces Moby Dick's appearance, he claims the white whale is "seen gliding at high noon through a dark blue sea, leaving a milky-way of creamy foam, all spangled in golden gleaming" (Melville 191). The word "gliding" provides an image of grace and ease of movement. This description thus implies that Moby Dick possesses a degree of majesty. The image of "golden gleaming" reveals how there is beauty in the white whale's movements, as gold is associated with objects of high value and gleaming denotes brightness. The white whale's teeth are described as "glistening" before Ishmael notes "the glittering mouth" (Melville 571). The words "glistening" and "glittering" are associated with valuable objects such as jewels. Such diction contributes to establishing Moby Dick

as pleasing to look at. When Moby Dick is eventually sighted by the *Pequod's* crew, Ishmael says, "Not the white bull Jupiter […] not Jove […] did surpass the glorified White Whale as he so divinely swam" (Melville 570). The idea of the whale being unsurpassed by Jupiter reveals that he is perceived as a godlike figure. This view of Moby Dick is further perpetuated by Ishmael describing his movement as "divine." The white whale, when first appearing in the novel, is portrayed as an object of beauty as well as a godlike creature. This means Moby Dick would inspire reverence. The white whale thus fulfils Burke's criteria of the sublime by producing both fear and reverence.

Like leviathans, the ocean too is depicted using language associated with fear. Immediately following the image of a marriage of sea and air, Ishmael reminds the reader, "[…] far down on the bottomless blue, rushed mighty leviathans, sword-fish, and sharks; and these were the strong, troubled, murderous thinkings of the masculine sea" (Melville 563). The words "troubled" and "murderous" have connotations of violence. These dangerous creatures are referred to as "thinkings" of the sea. It is as though the sea itself causes their capacity for violence; the violence is inherent to the sea. This kind of allusion to the violence and danger associated with the sea is seen in chapter 58, as Ishmael, comparing the sea to a savage tigress claims: "[…] so the sea dashes even the mightiest whales against the rocks, and leaves them there side by side with split wrecks of ships" (Melville 287). The comparison to a tigress means not only does the sea act as a home for dangerous creatures, but it is itself a dangerous being. The capacity for the sea to inflict harm is so great that it can reduce whales, who are themselves powerful and dangerous, to something on par with the wrecks of ships. Ishmael states the reasons behind the threatening nature of the sea as he claims, "No mercy, no power but its own controls it […] the masterless ocean overruns the globe" (Melville 287). The sea is not under the control of any person or entity while occupying most of the earth. The idea that our earth largely consists of that which we cannot control would arouse fear. A further reason for the sea being a site of danger is, "[…] the subtleness of the sea; how its most dreaded creatures glide under the water, unapparent for the most part, and treacherously hidden beneath the loveliest tints of azure" (Melville 287). The sea is thus not only threatening in itself; it conceals other dangers beneath its outward beauty. The fact that fearsome creatures are hidden increases the fear associated with them, as one cannot predict their appearances.

Jeffrey Downard uses the Kantian account of the sublime to analyse the novel, with a focus on Melville's discussion of the whiteness of the whale. Kant states that the experience of the sublime is "a delight in an extension affecting the imagination itself" (121). He goes on to claim, "But precisely because there is a striving in our imagination towards progress *ad infinitum*, while reason demands absolute totality" (121). Our imaginations regard objects as infinite while our reasoning faculties conceive of the object as a finite whole. Downard notes that, "The primary reason we find the experience of the sublime so attractive is that the initial feelings of repulsion lead us to reflect on the infinite character of our own powers of reasoning" (7). As Kant states:

> For here a feeling comes home to him of the inadequacy of his imagination for presenting the idea of a whole within which that imagination attains its maximum, and, in its fruitless efforts to extend this limit, recoils upon itself, but in so doing succumbs to an emotional delight (124).

In my interpretation, while our imagination cannot conceive of the sublime object in its totality, our reasoning faculty is aware of the concept of the infinite and surpasses our imagination in being able to identify the extent of the sublime object. This causes us to feel pleasure alongside the initial feelings of inadequacy. The use of our reasoning faculties appears to be inconsistent with Burke's conception of the sublime as overwhelming such that our minds cannot process reasoning on the sublime object. I would, however, argue the overwhelming sensation which Burke ascribes to the sublime that hinders our reasoning capacity is that which Kant describes as initial pain. Our minds are initially filled with the sublime object and unable to process reasoning on it, which is a painful experience. However, after some time passes, our capacity to use our theoretical and practical reasoning powers emerges and the painful experience becomes a pleasurable one.

Kant further explains the pleasure in sublime experiences by discussing the feeling of deliverance from danger as "a state of joy" (132). He claims that when we face dangerous objects, "[p]rovided our own position is secure, their aspect is all the more attractive for its fearfulness; and we readily call these objects sublime" (132). If we

are in a position of safety when regarding a fearsome object, this fearsomeness draws us to the object. Kant explains the attraction towards such objects: “Because they raise the forces of the soul above the height of vulgar commonplace, and discover within us a power of resistance of quite another kind, which gives us courage to be able to measure ourselves against the seeming omnipotence of nature” (132). We are thus drawn to sublime objects because, while we are not in real danger, we are able to feel powerful in the face of seemingly all-powerful objects by withstanding the sublime object.

Downard states that “it is the fact that the colour white simultaneously stands for what is most noble and pure, and at the same time also stands for what is most deadly that is the source of the special terror that Ishmael claims to experience when confronted with Moby Dick” (3). These associations align with Burke’s account of the sublime. The combination of white as associated with divinity and white as an intensifying factor in evoking terror confuses Ishmael, who admits it may not be possible to examine the reason for increased feelings of terror (Downard 5). Downard claims, “Nevertheless, he insists that there is something about the colour white that serves to heighten these feelings” (5). Downard says of whiteness: “This aspect of the experience is precisely what is needed, on Kant's account, to transform the feelings of fear into an aesthetic experience of the sublime. The reason is that something gives rise to an experience of the sublime only if we are capable of seeing it as infinitely large or infinitely powerful” (8). In my interpretation, the colour white allows an object to be seen as infinitely large or powerful. Ishmael asserts there is a property in whiteness of certain objects which changes our responses to them into a sense of terror while Downard suggests the whiteness of such objects activates our imagination, causing the object to appear infinite (Downard 9). My understanding of Downard’s suggestion is that white objects appear as a kind of blank canvas on which we can project our imagination. Since there are few limits to our imagination, we imagine the object as infinite. From Ishmael’s argument, it follows that our imagination conjures up fear in response to this blank canvas. The idea of the infinite is overwhelming and thus fearsome. Moreover, if an object is associated with imagined possibilities, it follows that this object will be associated with the possibility of causing harm.

Ishmael offers the theory "[…] that all colours are merely secondary properties that do not inhere in substances themselves" (Downard 9). Downard claims that the significance of Ishmael's argument lies in a consideration of the distinction between the sublime and the beautiful (9). Downard explains, "In the experience of the beautiful, it is the underlying unity of the appearance of the object that draws our attention" (9). In the case of sublime experiences, however, "[…] it is not the underlying unity of the objects that comes to mind. Rather, we experience the sublime especially in those things that seem to exhibit a lack of order" (Downard 9). An implication of this claim, with which I disagree, is that sublime objects are not made up of parts which aid the functioning of the whole object. Nothing in the novel suggests that certain parts of the whale do not fulfil a purpose relating to the functioning of the whale as a whole. The lack of order Downard mentions is more likely to refer to how the object is viewed such that there is a level of ambiguity in the functioning of the object. This ambiguity in the object's appearance allows for the abyss-like nature to occur. Ishmael's conclusion thus implies that the colour white alludes to an underlying chaos beneath an outwardly beautiful surface (Downard 10).

In Kant's view, the criteria for sublimity allude to us deeming war as of a higher rank than peace (Downard 10). This is because, "[…] war brings out what is most noble in human beings. It forces us to rise up above our personal interests and to fight for a higher cause" (Downard 10). 10). Downard presents this argument as a reservation of Kant's analysis. He then notes: "Captain Ahab is the general of the ship who is leading his troops into battle against the army of the sperm whale" (10). From this characterisation of Ahab, it would follow that he could be perceived as sublime. However, "In Kant's account, we can only hold the general in high esteem if he is courageous in battle, and also capable of being civil when in society" (Downard 10). Ahab does not meet this criteria. Moreover, Starbuck highlights how the choice to hunt down Moby Dick out of a need for revenge is not justifiable (Downard 11). Downard, however, states: "I believe that Ahab's and the war both exemplify the experience of the sublime" (12). In such a dispute around the aesthetics of the sublime, according to Kant's analysis, proof lies in the aesthetic judgements we form, such that Downard considers Ahab and the battle to be sublime in aesthetic terms (Downard 12-13).

I would, however, contest Downard's view that Captain Ahab manifests the sublime in his mission to defeat the white whale. While Ahab's quest can be described as a battle wherein Ahab is the leader, Ahab himself ought not to be considered a sublime object. In examining Ahab and his madness, Robert Zoellner draws attention to a passage in which Ishmael considers Ahab as a man with a "globular brain" and "ponderous heart" who has been placed in a cycle of perpetual grief and pain must become a "mighty pageant creature" fit for noble tragedies (Melville 71, quoted in Zoellner 93). Zoellner goes on to show why Ahab is not in fact a "mighty pageant creature." If Ahab is not this "mighty pageant creature," then he is not fit for noble tragedies.Zoellner describes Ahab as being intent on gaining "supernatural revenge" by chasing Moby Dick until "he spouts black blood and rolls fin out" (Melville 143 quoted in Zoellner 95). Zoellner notes that this kind of mission would typically be considered heroic (95). Ahab's perceived heroism would align with the element of nobility as a criterion for being considered sublime. Zoellner, however, poses the question of whether Ahab, during the course of the novel, achieves the level of heroic greatness called for by his purpose and whether he truly becomes the being capable of avenging the human race (95). If Ahab does not achieve heroic greatness, he ought not be viewed as sublime.

In his investigation, Zoellner draws attention to the inner Ahab, who is revealed in passages in which Ishmael develops Ahab's psyche (95). One such example is when Ishmael discerns what part of Starbuck's mind is under Ahab's control, in which it is implied the complete spiritual man is made up of four psychological areas: soul, mind, will, and body (Zoellner 95). Zoellner argues: "He has lost that multidimensionality of intellect, that poly-faceted roundness of personality, which makes the human person human" (97). In my understanding, throughout the course of the novel, Ahab is no longer capable of thinking of multiple different areas. His mind is focused on defeating the white whale to the point where it functions in a single direction and thus Ahab has lost his humanity. A mind such as Ahab's which is only capable of a single idea is not a mind at all (Zoellner 97). Ahab acknowledges that the singularity of his purpose has rendered any further thought impossible, "…but Ahab never thinks; he only feels" (Melville 460, quoted in Zoellner 95). Although feeling is intrinsic to being human, Ahab functioning by feeling and not thinking means that he does not function to the full extent of being human. Ahab is typically associated with

the role of a tyrant or dictator. I would argue that Ahab's lack of humanity is consistent with his functioning as a dictator although this role does not render him any more human, despite making him analogous to real-world dictators.

The image of Ahab in his hammock sees Ishmael differentiate between the soul and the characterising mind (Zoellner 97). This is reflective of the mind-soul-will-body notion (Zoellner 97). In the average person, the soul would be in an integral and unified relationship with the characterising mind, resulting in a single entity of the combination of mind and soul (Zoellner 97). The soul would provide essential vitality which is given purpose by the mind and without which the mind would be unable to function, as the soul would be merely diffuse energy without the characterisation provided by the mind (Zoellner 97). The soul and the mind must thus be in unison with each other in order for humans to function. Ahab's vitality does not come from living but rather from being active (Zoellner 99). Ahab is frequently associated with images of heat and fire, as his vitality is active in the way that a fire is active and only metaphorically alive (Zoellner 99). In my interpretation of this argument, Ahab possesses a life force but lacks the unity between soul and mind needed to truly be alive. The mind characterises the soul in the same way that it characterises or aims the actions of the will (Zoellner 99). Free will is free insofar as it has a range of possible directions towards which the mind could direct it (Zoellner 99). For Ahab, however, his unnatural "frantic" mind traps his will in a single characterisation such that although his will is active, it is not free (Zoellner 99). Ahab within the novel is thus an intellectual zombie who exists separately from his own soul and the vitality of the natural world (Zoellner 99). Ahab's separation from the natural world thus implies that an inherent part of the human experience is to be connected to the natural world. Moreover, at the end of the novel this separation does not save Ahab from the force of the natural world.

From Zoellner's characterisation of Ahab as lacking both free will and a true mind, it is reasonable to infer that Ahab is not the "mighty pageant creature" capable of greatness. For, based on Zoellner's analysis, Ahab is missing autonomy such that the battle against the white whale is not driven by Ahab's mind and soul. Rather, Ahab is being controlled by forces motivating his "unnatural" mind. Ahab is thus not truly human or rather not truly Ahab. Burke's notion of an element of nobility in sublime

objects implies that nobility is a property inherent to the object. Heroic greatness is not an inherent quality of the Ahab who appears in the novel. On the contrary, it is an expectation of Ahab and the Ahab of the novel does not possess the unity of mind and soul or the life force which would allow for such inherent qualities as greatness or nobility. These qualities form parts of the multi-dimensional mind of a person. But since Ahab does not have the functions of mind which provide person-hood, it follows that he does not possess heroic greatness and is thus not a sublime object. Downard implies it is Ahab's Ahab-ness, an inherent quality about his person-hood, which makes him sublime. However, since Ahab lacks such person-hood, it would follow that he ought not to be considered a sublime figure.

The way Melville depicts whales, particularly the white whale, as well as the ocean aligns with both Burke and Kant's accounts of the sublime. Melville captures the sublime properties of vastness and infinity while also displaying the combination of noble elements and aesthetic pleasure with the capability of inflicting harm. Furthermore, whales and the ocean embody both the mathematically and dynamically sublime with the white whale's colour acting as an enhancement of the sublime experience. Reading the novel using a Kantian perspective does allow for the possible interpretation of Captain Ahab as a sublime figure. However, Ahab's psychological state throughout the novel and his lack of essential human qualities, in my view, mean he is not sublime.

II. Light and Dark Matters: Melville's Use of Colours

In examining how humans interact with the sublime objects which are the ocean environment and its inhabitants, I wish to look to the way in which Melville depicts the backgrounds of the novel, particularly his use of colours and the symbolism behind these colours. These backgrounds are comprised primarily of Melville's descriptions of the sea and sky which surround the *Pequod* throughout the novel. My focus in this chapter, in terms of the aesthetics of the novel, is on how Melville's use of colours, according to Giesenkirchen aligns with Goethe's *Theory of Colours* and how Melville's use of colours allows for reflections on the connection between the physical world and the spiritual world as well as on the human condition. Moreover, Melville's use of colours reveals the symbolism of the white whale and Ahab's determination to defeat him. While I would argue that, at times, Giesenkirchen misrepresents Ahab's intentions, she offers compelling analysis on the effects and meanings of the novel's colourful backgrounds. Giesenkirchen focusses primarily on the relationship between Melville and Goethe, while I expand on her discussion through close readings of the colour-driven reflections presented throughout the novel.

Giesenkirchen discusses the connection between Goethe's *Theory of Colours* and Melville's writing, stating: "The Goethe-Melville relationship is philosophically more complex than Melville's oft-mentioned rejection of Goethe as a neo-Platonic believer in a harmonious universe would suggest" (4-5). In my understanding, *Theory of Colours* aims to integrate Goethe's analysis of subjective sensory perception within an objective analysis of the material world in ways which led to an interpretation of aesthetic colour experiences (Giesenkirchen 3). Goethe claims, "Throughout nature, as presented to the senses, everything depends on the relation which things bear to each other" (75). Interactions between different objects and subjects is thus essential to sensory perception. Subjective sensory perception means that the ways in which colours interact with each other, and the subject's interaction with them, allow for meanings to be ascribed to colours. For the sensory experience of observing colours evokes our subjective experiences and associations with those colours and we are then able to connect certain colours with certain meanings.

From Giesenkirchen's analysis one can regard the links between a physical environment and the human soul, and between inner reality and external phenomena as central to Moby Dick. Giesenkirchen highlights passages in 'The Gilder' and 'The Fountain,' in which, "[…] an array of rich colours stimulates Ishmael's enveloping -- albeit ephemeral -- fancy of man's at-homeness in the world" (Giesenkirchen 7). At the end of 'The Fountain' Ishmael concludes: "Doubts of all things earthly, and intuitions of some things heavenly; this combination makes neither believer nor infidel, but makes a man who regards them both with equal eye" (Melville 374). Ishmael thus views his own condition through this "equal eye" which allows him to see embodiments of both the spiritual and the earthly as functioning in combination with one another. Giesenkirchen holds that Ishmael's reflections in this chapter demonstrate, "Goethe's idea that the 'gleichgultige' (equal) human eye completes the totality of inner and outer reality" (7). My understanding of this notion of completing the inner and outer reality is that it refers to the capacity to acknowledge both internal (spiritual) and external (physical) phenomena as functioning in conjunction with one another in order to make up the full reality in which mankind exists.

Prior to this contemplation on the equal eye, Ishmael discusses whether the spouting of whales consists of water or purely vapour (Melville 369). This discussion leads to his argument that rainbows only appear through vapour, which leads to the reflection, "And so, through all the thick mists of the dim doubts on my mind, divine intuitions now and then shoot, enkindling my fog with a heavenly ray" (Melville 374). Doubts are compared to vapour while rainbows symbolise divine intuitions. Ishmael is stating that his divine intuitions only appear amidst his doubts. This is reflective of Goethe's argument that, "When darkness is presented to the eye it demands brightness, and vice versa" (15). Goethe implies that opposing phenomena bring about a desire for each other. Following Ishmael's reflection, the presence of doubt thus calls for intuition. Melville echoes this notion as he claims: "For there is no quality in this world that is not what it is merely by contrast. Nothing exists in itself" (65).

In 'The Gilder' when Ishmael warns: "When beholding the tranquil beauty and brilliancy of the ocean's skin, one forgets the tiger heart that pants beneath it […] this velvet paw but conceals a remorseless fang" (Melville 459). Here, the viciousness of a tiger functions alongside the calm sea, as do the earthly and the spiritual in 'The

Fountain.' Ahab, in this chapter, comes to think of one's journey from infancy to adulthood which begins with "thoughtless faith" that becomes doubt, then scepticism, then disbelief before the final "pondering repose of If" (Melville 460). Ahab ends his thoughts with: "Our souls are like those orphans whose unwedded mothers die in bearing them: the secret of our paternity lies in their grave, and we must there to learn it" (Melville 460). Connections between the physical environments and the human soul are referenced as Ahab speaks of "landscapes in the soul […] parched by the dead drought of the earthly life" (Melville 460). Ahab believes human souls thus have uncertain sources which can only be discovered in death; life on earth provides no such substance during its "drought." Ahab's thoughts on the uncertainty underpinning the journey of humanness as well as the uncertain origins of our souls arrive while Ahab has been temporarily affected by the beauty of "such soothing scenes" (Melville 459). The colour-filled settings of these two chapters thus allow for reflections on the human experience.

An example of the type of intense colourings that occurs in the novel is Melville's use of blue and yellow. Goethe says of these colours: "Next to light, a colour appears which we call yellow; another appears next to the darkness, which we call blue" (xIii). Light and the absence of light (darkness) are necessary to produce colours (Goethe xIii). This means that since yellow and blue are "next to" light and darkness respectively, they are the most intense and original colours. The combination of yellow and blue occurs in 'Brit.' As Ishmael describes Right Whales feeding on the yellow brit, he observes: "[…] so these monsters swam, making a strange, grassy, cutting sound; and leaving behind them endless swaths of blue upon the yellow sea" (Melville 274). This chapter concludes with Ishmael highlighting the subtle and concealed danger within the sea before drawing a parallel: "For as this appalling ocean surrounds the verdant land, so in the soul of man there lies one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy, but encompassed by all the horrors of the half known life" (Melville 274). The human soul includes both happiness and the suffering that comes from earthly life; happiness and suffering which are represented by light and dark. As yellow is light containing some darkness and blue is darkness infused with some light, it follows that neither of the forces of suffering and joy functions completely independently. All joy contains occurs in combination with some suffering and vice

versa. The extension of Ishmael's reflection on the human experience is thus that recognising happiness requires one to have experienced suffering.

Moby Dick is associated with light, either as a reflector or a source of light, as well as fire (Giesenkirchen 10). Goethe claims: "A dark object appears smaller than a bright one of the same size" (6). Moby Dick would thus appear larger than other sperm whales. This aligns with the idea that whiteness enhances sublime qualities and further establishes Moby Dick as an exceptionally "monstrous" whale. Giesenkirchen argues that Ahab's pursuit of the white whale is thus an effort to control and defeat light, fire and whiteness (10). In placing Ahab in direct opposition to a manifestation of light, it follows that Ahab represents darkness. However, I would argue that Giesenkirchen's view of Ahab's mission, while not entirely inaccurate, appears overly general. Ahab does not wish to kill any white creature, only Moby Dick. His determination to see the white whale's demise is also largely motivated by the loss of his leg which was caused by Moby Dick (Melville 174). Giesenkirchen's idea of Ahab's motive neglects this element of revenge, although it is possible Ahab does regard the whale as representative of light in addition to his personal hatred of Moby Dick.

According to Giesenkirchen, "Ahab […] in his defiance of the 'pasteboard mask' of the phenomenal world, consciously rejects the world of colours and thus the potential delights of earthly life" (8). Ahab, as a representation of darkness, embodies not only an absence of light and colour but opposition to colour. Goethe states: "Colour is a law of nature in relation with the sense of sight" (xI). He also claims that, "The eye may be said to owe its existence to light" (xxxix). If light is necessary for sight and sight is necessary to perceive colour, it follows that light is necessary to experience colour. This means that in rejecting colour, Ahab rejects light. In further explaining Ahab's rejection of "pasteboard masks," Giesenkirchen discusses Robert Zoellner's claim that Ahab's quarter-deck speech provides a paradigm which influences the whole novel (8). In this speech, Ahab declares: "All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks […] some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask!" (Melville 175). Objects we see, according to Ahab, are simply façades concealing the reasoning faculty. He seeks to break through these façades to

find the reasoning behind them. This means he seeks to look beyond the opaqueness of colours to see "the light with which we see" (Giesenkirchen 8). Ahab's mission to "strike" the light used to see these colours or masks could thus reflect the desire to eliminate the masks; destroying them by destroying their source, which is the light.

I would, however, pose a challenge to Giesenkirchen's assertion that Ahab rejects the world of colour and earthly pleasure, in the sense that his rejection is not absolute. In addition to Ahab's reflections in 'The Gilder,' while Ahab looks out at the sunset from his cabin window he observes, "Yonder, by ever-brimming goblet's rim, the warm waves blush like wine. The gold brow plumbs the blue" (Melville 179). Here Ahab is pointing out the contrasting blue and gold and the "blushing waves." This means Ahab, in this moment, is observant of the colours in his environment. The phrase "blush like wine" reveals Ahab's experience of these colours is pleasurable. Ahab may aim to "strike through the mask" but he does not exist in a life devoid of colour, nor is he immune to the effects of the colours Melville uses in depicting the novel's backgrounds. Therefore, while Ahab does strive to defeat light and opaqueness, he does not oppose the colourful world in all instances, as Giesenkirchen implies.

Melville often emphasises the blueness of the ocean, as he uses it as a symbol of the unknown depths and unfathomable flux of both thought processes and earthly existence (Giesenkirchen 11). The ocean is frequently referred to by its colour which, on Goethe's view is of an elusive beauty (Giesenkirchen 11). One such example appears in 'The Symphony,' during which Ishmael begins the chapter by drawing the reader's attention to the sea and sky: "The firmaments of air and sea were hardly separable in that all-pervading azure" (Melville 563). Ishmael observes further, "Aloft like a royal czar and king, the sun seemed giving this gentle air to this bold and rolling sea; even as bride to groom" (Melville 563). The contrast of the "gentle" air and the "bold, rolling" sea highlights how seemingly opposing elements have combined in this "all-pervading azure" to produce something of beauty and tranquillity. This beauty is further highlighted as Ishmael exclaims, "Oh, immortal infancy and innocency of the azure!" (Melville 563). The sea and sky combined thus produce a sense of everlasting youth and innocence, which Melville explicitly connects to "the azure." According to Giesenkirchen, Goethe describes the pursuit of pleasant objects

which retreat from us as “looking at the blue,” which is an accurate description of Ishmael’s actions in ‘The Symphony’ (11).

Melville also discusses water-gazing throughout the novel. An early example is when Ishmael states, “Yes, as every one knows, meditation and water are wedded forever” (Melville 13). “Every one” implies that there is a universality in the experience Ishmael describes, which is that being in close proximity to water allows for a state of meditation. As Ishmael attempts to explain why people are drawn to water he mentions “that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned” (Melville 13). He goes on to state: “But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all” (Melville 13). The “mild image” refers to Narcissus’ own reflection, which means Ishmael implies that we see our own reflections in bodies of water. Ishmael then describes our reflections as “the ungraspable phantom of life.” “Phantom” denotes something illusory or imagined. This means that, according to Ishmael, people are drawn to water due to the unattainable, illusory reflection of themselves which water provides. I would amend Ishmael’s argument here to state that the reason people are so inclined is because these illusory images suggest versions of ourselves and our lives which are superior to those in reality, and this attracts us to such images.

Moreover, Ishmael believes if we look into the sea in a state of meditation, we will see the “blue, bottomless soul pervading mankind and nature” (Melville 159, quoted in Giesenkirchen 12). The symbolic interplay between water-gazing and the pursuit of the white whale implies the vast nothingness of the blue of the ocean has its ultimate underlying substance in the whiteness of the whale (Giesenkirchen 12). The white whale is the core solid object beneath the vast, ever-expanding water. This is analogous to Goethe’s observation that white snow can produce “bluish shadows” (34). Melville’s use of colour sees blue and white appearing as “gradations” in the representation of the same object (Giesenkirchen 12). Blue and white as one entity appears when Moby Dick is described as “half blending with the blue of the sea” (Melville 557, quoted in Giesenkirchen 12). The connection between water gazing and the white whale means that in pursuing imagined versions of ourselves, and

pursuing the soul within mankind and nature, the white whale is the outcome. The white whale is the object that is revealed upon gazing into the ocean.

Ishmael's considerations of the effect of whiteness seen in nature and its impact on human systems of signification sees Melville pursuing Goethean symbolism in its most radical conclusions through the symbolic interpretation of whiteness (Giesenkirchen 14). According to Giesenkirchen, "Goethe found that whiteness designated the first and last, the purest and simplest degree of physical existence, marking substances and objects on the verge of losing their physicality or visibility" (14). Whiteness is thus associated with objects which only just exist in the physical world: objects in which the idea of nothingness is present. This means that the white whale displays the idea of nothingness. In 'The Quarter-Deck,' Ahab exclaims: "Aye, aye! It was that accursed white whale that razed me; made a poor pegging lubber of me for ever and a day!" (Melville 174). Ahab blames the loss of his leg on the *white* whale, placing the word "white" next to "accursed." The implication here is a connection between the colour of the whale and the actions consistent with being cursed, namely taking Ahab's leg. The loss of Ahab's leg and the colour white are also connected when Ishmael first sees Ahab and observes, "[…] not a little of this overbearing grimness was owing to the barbaric white leg upon which he partly stood" (Melville 107). As the whiteness of the whale contributes to his fearfulness, Ahab's white leg contributes to the solemnity around him. Moreover Ahab's false leg being white serves as a reminder of the white whale causing his maiming. The white leg is a mark of how Ahab's real leg was reduced to nothingness, indicated by the colour white. As Ahab speaks of hunting down and defeating Moby Dick, he asserts his desire for the white whale to spout "black blood" (Melville 174). Black is the opposite value of white. Ahab wants to bring about the opposite value of the white whale; he wants not only to destroy it but to destroy its whiteness in doing so.

Ahab becomes united with the white whale in death as, in Melville's view, "[…] we all seem to be united with nature mostly through the fact of our mortality -- which whiteness, after all, traditionally also symbolizes" (Giesenkirchen 15). Since humans possess mortality, which animals and plants also possess, it is a uniting force. The white whale causing Ahab's death means that the whale brings about a part of Ahab that is intrinsically human; a part he shares with all living things. Moreover, the white

whale being both a cause of death and having the colour associated with death means Moby Dick can be viewed as a representation of death. The fear and disgust aroused by the whiteness of certain objects is explained when Ishmael states that white is both the "pallor of the dead" and the colour of the shrouds which cover their deceased bodies (Melville 200). Ghosts and phantoms are associated with a white fog, and the "king of terrors" according to evangelists rides a pale horse (Melville 200). Ishmael considers whether whiteness is a reminder of the "heartless voids and immensities of the universe" which confront us with the threat of annihilation, or if whiteness is not a colour but the absence of colour (Melville 204). The chapter concludes with Ishmael remarking: "And of all these things the Albino whale was the symbol. Wonder ye then at the fiery hunt?" (Melville 204). The white whale is thus a representation of both substance beneath the nothingness of the ocean and himself a vision of nothingness. This means that in water-gazing, in searching beneath the "soul pervading mankind and nature" the search may reveal the possibility of annihilation or it may reveal only further nothingness.

Due to the way in which Melville uses colours, the novel, therefore, contains frequent uses of contrasting elements: light and dark, the physical environment and the soul of man, the external world and the spiritual world, and concreteness and nothingness. Such juxtaposed concepts require each other in order to be recognised and engaged with. While the novel displays opposing phenomenon functioning in unison, Ahab's mission to defeat Moby Dick (and by extension, light) is an example of opposite phenomenon functioning against one another. The reflections prompted by Melville's colourful vistas reveal proposed truths about the human soul, that it comes about under the condition of uncertainty which cannot be mitigated until death, and that it encompasses moments of peace and joy surrounded by suffering. Melville's use of colour notably includes the titular white whale and the meanings attached to him. Whiteness is seen to represent light, while light is the source from which we can see other colours. White may also blend with blue and act as a solid substance beneath the blue liquid of the ocean. Whiteness also symbolises death and the proximity to nothingness in objects. These meanings behind whiteness are all manifested in Moby Dick. The use of colours throughout the novel reveals how humans' interactions with the ocean and the creatures within it can be a pleasurable and experience that allows for reflection, or a reminder of an underlying nothingness and impending death – as is

the case with the white whale. Melville's application of Goethe's colour theory reveals two notable aspects of humans' relationship with the ocean environment. Contrasting elements function in unison and require each other to function. Some of these elements include the souls of mankind and the physical environment. From this, it follows that humans and the natural environment need one another in order world as a whole to function. The contrast of the white whale beneath the blue water also reveals the nature of humans' observations of the ocean. On one hand, the experience of gazing at the beauty of the ocean and reflecting is pleasurable. Discovering the emptiness that Moby Dick represents, however, would not be a pleasurable experience. Nevertheless, from the latter observation one can infer that painful experiences and pleasurable ones occur in conjunction with one another.

III. Whales, Whaling and *Moby Dick* From an Environmentalist Perspective

Whereas previous chapters have focussed on the way in which Melville portrays the ocean environment and its inhabitants in an aesthetic sense, this section will focus on the way humans interact directly with whales and the ocean. This chapter will discuss both humans' capacity for cruelty and their connection to non-human species, as well as the power of the ocean environment to outlive humans. The primary focus of this chapter will be on a kind of environmental vision that emerges from *Moby Dick*, with specific reference to how whaling is portrayed throughout the novel. Elizabeth Schultz examines Melville through the lens of environmentalism. This chapter will engage with Schultz's arguments beginning with her characterisation of dominant perspectives on environmentalism and the extent to which Melville appears to pre-empt these perspectives through Ishmael and Ahab. I will subsequently discuss how Melville depicts whales as sharing emotions and characteristics with humans, and how this exacerbates the cruelty of whaling. I will then examine Schultz's arguments on what the novel's final chapter reveals about humans and the natural environment. Moby Dick, however, includes a chapter in defence of whaling which I will examine in relation to Schultz's discussion of Melville's environmental vision. Finally, I will discuss how current attitudes towards whaling are consistent with those Schultz outlines. The word "nature," as Schultz frequently uses it, refers to the ocean and its non-human inhabitants.

In her introductory paragraph, Schultz remarks that, in contemporary American culture, "the image of Herman Melville's white whale is enlisted in the service of such environmental organizations as Greenpeace and the Centre for Marine Conservation" (Schultz 97). However, other environmentalists associate the events of the novel "with the perpetuation of an irresponsible and illegal slaughter of whales in our times" (Schultz 97). Such contrasting interpretations of the significance of Moby Dick imply the novel has been used for a variety of commercial and political ends (Schultz 97). In my view, the contrast lies in the novel being used both in support of whaling and in support of efforts to conserve whale populations. Schultz goes on to state, "such interpretations raise important questions as to what the environmental vision of Melville's novel might be" (97). Although Melville has not been canonised by nature writers or by the environmental movement, he does focus on the natural environment

throughout Moby Dick (Schultz 97). When noting the distinction between the subjective and scientific perspectives of nature, Schultz claims that such a distinction is "useful in examining the environmental vision which Melville constructs in Moby-Dick" (98). Schultz claims: "While endorsing both of these perspectives, Melville also questions them and in the process reveals not only an environmental conscience but also an environmental position whereby nature and culture might co-exist" (98).

The novel's central characters, Ishmael and Ahab both engage with nature in a transcendental manner, as they view themselves in relation to nature's infinite and unknown possibilities (Schultz 98). Ahab declares, "O Nature, and O soul of man! […] not the smallest atom stirs or lives on matter, but has its cunning duplicate in mind" (Melville 312, quoted in Schultz 98). Ishmael's description the sea as "that deep, blue, bottomless soul pervading mankind and nature" reveals his transcendental vision (Melville 158, quoted in Schultz 98). In my understanding of Schultz's argument, Ishmael and Ahab view nature as reaching beyond the physical realm and having a connection to the soul. Furthermore, both Ahab and Ishmael consider the white whale from their subjective perspectives; while Ahab sees Moby Dick as an agent of evil, Ishmael sees the white whale as an immortal deity (Schultz 99). Schultz, however, juxtaposes this observation by stating: "Through both Ahab and Ishmael, Melville also reflects an objective, scientific perspective" (99). She notes: "In contrast to his demonic interpretations of nature, Ahab also contemplates it as an incomprehensible life-force" (Schultz 99). While chasing Moby Dick for the third day, Ahab considers "that sort of common grass that will grow anywhere, between the earthly clefts of Greenland ice or in Vesuvius lava" (Melville 523). The contrast of extreme temperatures in which grass can grow reveals the tenacious everlasting presence of plant life. Ishmael, "persists in contemplating all whales in objective and scientific as well as historical, cultural, and literary terms" (Schultz 99). The cetological chapters of the novel, in which Ishmael attempts to classify whales and examine their behaviour and anatomy, present scientific inaccuracies in addition to subversions, refutations and deviations from scientific sources (Schultz 99). One such example is when Ishmael claims: "Be it known that, waiving all argument, I take the good old fashioned ground that the whale is a fish, and call upon holy Jonah to back me" (Melville 145). Here, Ishmael uses the Biblical character of Jonah in his objection to Linnaeus' scientific claim that whales and fish are separate species

(Melville 145). This means that within the scientific, cetological section of the novel, there exists both scientific inaccuracies and references to religious doctrines. Schultz argues that Melville was, "skeptical with regard to interpreting nature according to either a transcendental or a scientific perspective" and that he "developed a third perspective, one based on an understanding of a unity between humanity and nature, a unity derived from an emotional and social kinship" (100). Through this third perspective, Melville can be read as endorsing an environmental vision with a conscience (Schultz 100).

According to Schultz, "Humanised, with shared emotions and behaviour, whales are made to appeal to his nineteenth- (and I may add, twentieth-) century reader's feelings" (100). An example of this occurs when Ishmael claims, "In Noah's flood he despised Noah's Ark" (Melville 472). By referring to the whale as "he" and affording the whale the human ability to despise, Ishmael is speaking of the whale using the language one would use to speak about a fellow person. Furthermore, in 'Schools and Schoolmasters,' Ishmael describes groups of whales or "schools" using language associated with humans. "Like a mob of young collegians, they are full of fight, fun, and wickedness, tumbling round the world at such a reckless, rollicking rate, that no prudent underwriter would insure them any more than he would a riotous lad at Yale or Harvard" (Melville 410). This view of whales illustrates Robert Zoellner's argument that Ishmael develops a sense of "fraternal congenerity" towards the whale, noting how the whale is not entirely alien to Ishmael but rather a brother (Zoellner 185, quoted in Schultz 101). This means that Ishmael considers the whale to be connected to humans in a familial manner, which implies that humans ought to care about the plight of whales as they care for their own families. This chapter sees whales connected to one another as well as to humans. In differentiating between male and female schools, Ishmael states: "But strike a member of the harem school, and her companions swim around her with every token of concern, sometimes lingering so near her and so long, as themselves to fall a prey" (Melville 410). These female whales protect their injured companions to the extent that they themselves risk injury. This means whales are, according to Ishmael, capable of great compassion towards one another.

Portraying whales with human characteristics and emotions as well as depicting their connection to humans intensifies the cruel nature of whaling practices. In 'The Grand Armada,' Melville depicts a whale nursery in which new-born whales, described with a resemblance to human infants, are trapped by their umbilical cords becoming entangled with harpoon lines (Schultz 104). The whales are seen as abundant while the *Pequod*'s crew utilises drugs, heavy wooden blocks attached to harpoons and cutting-spades in their hunting and slaughtering of whales (Schultz 103-104). Ishmael describes one whale injured with a cutting-spade: "But agonising as was the wound of this whale, and an appalling spectacle enough, any way: yet the peculiar horror with which he seemed to inspire the rest of the herd" (Melville 406). The words "appalling" and "horror" imply a deliberate attempt on Melville's part to portray whaling as the cause of unjust suffering. Unjust suffering in beings who have been established to share traits with humans. The extent of the harm caused by a single cutting-spade wound is shown further, "So that tormented to madness, he was now churning through the water, […], wounding and murdering his own comrades" (Melville 406). This moment contrasts with the aforementioned image of female whales protecting a member of their school. The capacity of whales to care for each other highlights the magnitude of the pain this whale would have to endure in order to maim and kill his fellow whales.

The dying whales portrayed throughout the novel reflect, "revulsion and remorse at the waste and loss of cetacean life, revulsion and remorse which is underscored because of the kinship between whales and humans" (Schultz 105). The very first whale killed by the Pequod's crew is described using emotive phrases such as, "His heart had burst!" (Melville 286, quoted in Schultz 105). Schultz claims: "In dying, this whale is not merely a statistic or a resource; Melville transforms it, especially through his touching concluding sentence, into a suffering, feeling being" (105). Melville thus intentionally arouses sadness and pity in the reader over the deaths of whales throughout the novel. These emotions in turn affect how the reader views whaling. As Schultz argues, "[…] consequently that reader is forced to consider human beings as agents for the whales' suffering and destruction" (100). In my understanding of Schultz's argument, drawing connections between whales and humans causes the reader to feel sympathy for the whales. This sympathy then leaves the reader to in condemnation of the whaling practices that cause suffering. Melville's

depiction of the connection between human beings and leviathans is underpinned by "allusions correlating the extinction of whales with the extinction of humanity" (Schultz 109). Schultz goes on to state, "The ramifications of this correlation are developed as he also implies an interrelationship among diverse species by considering the disastrous consequences resulting from the loss of a single species" (109). Ishmael connects the extinction of whales to that of mankind: "The last whale, like the last man, smoke his last pipe, and then himself evaporate in the final puff" (Melville 479). Here, the last whale and the last man appear to cease existing simultaneously. My reading of Schultz's claim is thus that Melville, in drawing a parallel to the extinction of whales and that of humans, implies that one species dying out will cause the demise of others. While mentioning the possibility of extinction for whales, Ishmael considers buffalo "which, not forty years ago, overspread by tens of thousands the prairies of Illinois and Missouri" (Melville 479). Ishmael acknowledges that "at the present day not one horn or hoof of them remains in all that region; and though the cause of this wondrous extermination was the spear of man" (Melville 480). He, however, asserts that the distinction between hunting whales and buffalo is that forty men could kill forty whales over forty-eight months, while the same number of men over the same time period could kill "not forty, but forty thousand and more buffaloes" (Melville 480). The view on extinction which emerges here is that if humans only hunt and kill a certain number of a species, that species will not become extinct.

The pursuit of the white whale results in Moby Dick retaliating and destroying the Pequod and its crew (Schultz 110). Ishmael narrates: "And now, concentric circles seized the lone boat itself, and all its crew, and each floating oar, and every lancepole, and spinning, animate and inanimate, all round and round in one vortex, carried the smallest chip of the Pequod out of sight" (Melville 597). The immense power of the sea is highlighted here as the ship and all its parts and occupants are completely obliterated. The novel's conclusion reads: "Now small fowls flew screaming over the yet yawning gulf; a sullen white surf beat against its steep sides; then all collapsed, and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago" (Melville 598). Schultz claims that this conclusion "supports a moral vision in which human and whale lives […] are vindicated, thus anticipating the desire, if not the design, of twentieth-century environmental activists for the annihilation of forces

antagonistic toward marine conservation" (110). Schultz's third layer of analysis on the novel's conclusion is: "In addition, it implies the power of nature to take care of its own, to restore itself to a prelapsarian condition" (110). Not only does the sea engulf the dead, but the small birds fly above them, indicating how both the natural environment of the ocean and the animals surrounding it have outlived the ship's human crew. From Schultz's first argument, it follows that the sea and its non-human inhabitants are better capable of surviving than humans. Her second argument implies the destruction of the *Pequod* and its crew, except for Ishmael, appears as some kind of justice for the whales killed throughout the novel at the hands of this crew. Since the reader has been led to feel sympathy for the slaughtered whales, the idea that the reader would feel a sense of justice at the crew's deaths seems plausible. Moreover, the idea of whaling ultimately leading to human deaths in addition to non-human deaths serves to enhance the reader's sentiments against whaling. Melville's repeated use of the phrase "rolled on" displays the inevitability of the sea continuing to move forwards as it did long ago. The reference to "five thousand years ago" illustrates Schultz's claim about the sea restoring itself.

The moral implications of the novel's depiction of whaling practices are, however, juxtaposed with Ishmael's defence of whaling. In 'The Honour and Glory of Whaling,' Ishmael states: "The more I dive into this matter of whaling, and push my researches up to the very spring-head of it so much the more am I impressed with its great honourableness and antiquity" (Melville 380). Ishmaels's admiration of whaling appears to be connected to historical accounts of whales being killed. Furthermore, such accounts include the adventures of "heroes, saints, demigods, and prophets" (Melville 382). Ishmael concludes this chapter with, "Perseus, St. George, Hercules, Jonah, and Vishnoo! There's a member-roll for you! What club but the whaleman's can head off like that?" (Melville 382). Thus, Ishmael's reasons for considering whaling "honourable" are that it has been done for many years, and it has been done by prominent historical figures. These reasons, to the reader, provide little justification for the "waste and loss of cetacean life" caused by the practice (Schultz 105). Concepts such as "honour" and "antiquity" seem rather small and inconsequential in the face of the tangible harms done to countless whales. Harms which are exacerbated by Melville drawing the connection between whales and humans as well as using emotive language.

Ishmael's notion of the glory of whaling, thus, complicates Schultz's discussion of what Melville's environmental vision is. As Schultz's analysis reveals, Melville deliberately depicts the effects of whaling in a way that could easily be interpreted as a message against the practice. Moreover, Ishmael defending whaling as a profession contrasts with Schultz's argument that he is a "proto-environmentalist" who does not see the whale as an antagonist (111-112). Why then would such a chapter as 'The Honour and Glory of Whaling' be included? Schultz observes how it is after surviving the events of the final chapter that Ishmael seeks to learn about "life and nature, whales and human beings" (110). An implication of this point is that Ishmael experiences a shift in his environmental views over time, such that his defence of whaling could reflect his sentiments prior to gaining his knowledge about whales.

Another possible explanation for Melville's inclusion of 'The Honour and Glory of Whaling' is that there are distinctions between the overall novelistic effect and the opinions of the narrator. While Ishmael supports whaling as a profession, Melville creates an image of the effects of whaling that reveals its cruel nature. Furthermore, in 'Does the Whale's Magnitude Diminish? Will He Perish?' Ishmael concludes by describing the whale as, "immortal in his species, however, perishable in his individuality" (Melville 481). Ishmael believes whales are not likely to become extinct; such a belief further explains why Ishmael would consider whaling a worthy profession while still feeling a fraternal connection to whales. He is aware of the short-term suffering and loss of life but not the long-term danger to the species and is thus able to defend whaling in theory. I would argue that Ishmael's attempt at defending the practice of whaling does not negate the sentiments in favour of preserving whale populations and preventing their suffering.

While Ishmael's defence of whaling focuses largely on his notion of glory, whaling also played a key role in the American economy in Melville's time. Edward Sugden notes that, "In the wake of the War of 1812, American merchants, ship captains, and politicians sensed that the economic and political future of the globe was bound up with the struggle to control the whaling industry" (23). This means that the whaling industry was so powerful that having control of it allowed for a significant influence over global politics and economics. Sugden goes on to claim following the United

States gaining control of the whaling industry, “Herman Melville estimated that the industry employed 18,000 men and brought in $7 million per year, while the collective worth of the ships was around $20 million” (24). This provides a further possible reason for Ishmael to defend whaling; the industry created a significant number of employment opportunities and generated substantial amounts of profit. Amia Srinivasan notes: “American colonists pioneered the on-board rendering of oil from whale blubber” and that, “By the mid-nineteenth century, pelagic whaling was the fifth-largest industry in the United States” (4). The significant role of the whaling industry meant a large impact on whale populations. Srinivasan claims that, “An estimated two hundred and thirty thousand sperm whales were killed in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth, that number grew to more than seven hundred thousand (4). Srinivasan goes on to state that as nautical technology advanced, whalers were able to hunt the types of whales which had previously been too quick (5). The increase in the number of whales killed and the increased capabilities of whalers to hunt them undermines Ishmael’s analogy of the buffalo. For Ishmael’s reasoning relies on there being only a limited number of whales killed such that whales cannot become extinct. However, Ishmael himself may not have known about the extent of the rise in whale hunting capabilities. Moreover this aspect of the novel reveals how American patriotism is in tension with proto-environmentalism, as whaling has had an undeniably positive effect on America’s economy. This then raises the question of whether the value of whaling to the American economy outweighs the suffering of whales as well as the existential threat to the species.

Currently, public perceptions of whaling align with the kind of sentiments which Schultz mentions. For there exists a general desire to protect whales from extinction. According to Science Magazine, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) aims to, “ensure the recovery of cetacean populations to pre-industrial levels and reaffirming the moratorium on commercial whaling” (Normile 111). Opposition to whaling recently arose in public discourse following Japan’s 2018 decision to withdraw from the IWC while resuming commercial whaling in its own waters (Normile 110). Japan’s withdrawal from the IWC “triggered fierce criticism around the world” (Normile 110). Such widespread criticism is reflective of a large-scale disdain for whaling among the general population, as well as within environmental organisations. Normile further claims, of the IWC’s motives: “But the fight is no

longer just about sustainability; whaling opponents say the bloody hunt for the majestic mammals is simply inhumane" (110). Here, the contrast between the "majestic" whales and the "bloody" practice of whaling is consistent with how Melville depicts whales and whaling. Normile states, "Shifting consumer tastes and a growing environmental awareness have already led to a steep decline in Japanese whale meat consumption, from 203,000 tons in 1965 to just 4000 tons in 2015" (111). This further highlights how opposition to whaling and a desire to conserve whale populations, which Schultz notes, continue to be prevalent.

Melville's idea of the ocean environment is one that combines a subjective, transcendental perspective with an objective scientific approach. The way in which Melville humanises whales, as well as his depiction of whaling practices allow the reader to interpret the novel's message as being one against whaling and in favour of preserving cetacean lives. The final chapter presents the idea of justice for the slaughtered whales as well as the idea that the ocean is powerful enough to outlive humans. From the novel, one can glean a message about the immorality of whaling, despite Melville's inclusion of a chapter in which Ishmael attempts to advocate for the glory of the practice. Moreover, the kinds of sentiments against the cruelty associated with whaling which emerge throughout the novel remain prevalent in today's society. *Moby Dick* is simultaneously supportive of and critical of whaling, and advocates both for whales and whalers. This tension is never truly resolved. Even as the novel's end sees the *Pequod* destroyed, another whaling ship, the *Rachel* remains. However, as the previous chapter discusses, Melville uses opposite elements which require each other in order to function simultaneously. Perhaps the praise of whaling is needed for its critique.

IV. Kin or Commodity: Marine Animals as Natural Resources

The previous chapter focused on the views of on environmental issues one can glean from the novel. This focus was grounded in whaling and the sentiments about it, both throughout the novel and in current public discourse. This chapter will further examine how the novel depicts environmental issues with a focus on the acquisition and consumption of natural resources. I will begin by discussing the chapter entitled 'Chowder,' which portrays an excessive consumption of sea creatures in an industrial fashion. Melville also notes how whales have been used as food as well as the production of several other objects. Subsequently, I will discuss the notion of "fast fish and loose fish" and what it reveals about the acquisition and use of natural resources, namely whales. I will then examine Rebecca Giggs' 2015 'Whale Fall' as a text with both parallels and areas of contrast to *Moby Dick*. For Giggs' beached whale and the public's actions around it juxtapose the whale as a resource and a fast or loose fish. The idea of kinship with the whale, which Giggs discusses, is consistent with the way Melville humanises whales. At the same time, however, both Melville and Giggs consider the whale a separate, alien figure.

The novel displays not only the damage caused by whaling but also humans' desire to use and consume objects from the sea. One notable example of this is in the fifteenth chapter in which Ishmael encounters the Try Pots, which he describes as the "fishiest of all fishy places" (Melville 67). The house and its surroundings are filled with objects from the sea: "The area before the house was paved with clam-shells. Mrs Hussey wore a polished necklace of codfish vertebra; and Hosea Hussey had his account books bound in superior old shark-skin." (Melville 68). These objects all display how creatures from the ocean can be utilised by people for aesthetic purposes. Such things at the Try Pots are also used as food. Chowder is perpetually prepared and served for every meal, "till you began to look for fish bones coming through your clothes" (Melville 68). The implication here is that continuously eating fish will transform one into a fish; as though the continuous consumption of a product will permanently connect someone to that product. The nature of this chowder is described in mouth-watering detail: "It was made of small juicy clams, scarcely bigger than hazel nuts, mixed with pounded ship biscuits, and salted pork cut up into little flakes! The whole enriched with butter, and plentifully seasoned with pepper and salt'

(Melville 67). The image of the small clams and pieces of pork contrasts with the notion of "plentiful" which denotes abundance. The image of abundance is exacerbated by the fact the chowder is cooked and served seemingly all day.

The way in which a chowder is presented, readily available at the mere utterance of "clam" or "cod," causes the operations within the Try Pots to appear automatic and reflective of an industrial factory. While Melville does not mention any possible scarcity of fish, excessive consumption of a natural resource will eventually lead to scarcity. According to a 2016 article by R. Pomeroy et al., "Today, over three billion people worldwide rely on fish for at least twenty percent of their average per capita intake of animal protein" (95). Furthermore, "Fishing is the largest extractive use of wildlife in the world, and fisheries products are the world's most widely traded foods, with commerce dominated by the developing countries" (Pomeroy et al. 95). This means that 'Chowder' can be seen as a reflection of the world's reliance on fish as a resource, as it is both widely traded and widely consumed. However, "When marine ecosystems and fish stocks are degraded or overexploited, the capacities of the sector to deliver on its food security, nutritional, and livelihood functions are limited or reduced" (Pomeroy et al. 95). This degradation can be caused by fishing which, along with other "anthropogenic disturbances" changes and destabilises aquatic ecosystems, increasing "their vulnerability to functional and productivity collapse or ecological transition" (Pomeroy et al. 95). Pomeroy et al. go on to state: "Unsustainable fishing practices result in direct changes to the structure and composition of aquatic and marine ecosystems, changes that make them less resilient and less able to produce food for millions of people" (95). This reveals that with more excessive fishing results in a compromised ecosystem which then results in a lessened capacity to source enough quality resources to meet consumer needs. This is illustrated in Melville's image of fish bones through one's clothes. Here, Ishmael imagines fish bones protruding from his clothes after eating an excessive amount of chowder. From this image, one can infer that when people consume a certain product too frequently, they begin to mirror that product. And from this it follows that if the product is vulnerable, the consumer becomes vulnerable too.

In addition to fish, whales have been consumed by humans and Melville points this out. Following the scene in which Stubb dines on a whale steak while sharks feed on the whale's carcass, Ishmael provides an account of the history of whales as food. The right whale, three centuries prior to the events of the novel, was a French delicacy and porpoise meat, served in round balls, continues to be regarded as "fine eating" (Melville 241). Ishmael claims the reason whale is not considered a "noble dish" is its size and richness (Melville 241). He states: "Look at his hump, which would be as fine eating as the buffalo's (which is esteemed a rare dish), were it not such a solid pyramid of fat" (Melville 241). People thus consider eating part of a large animal a noble feat, as though the ability to consume something so powerful makes humans more powerful. The whale is not only utilised by humans as food. Ishmael notes that, "People in Nantucket invest their money in whaling vessels, the same way that you do yours in approved state stocks bringing in good interest" (Melville 73). This highlights the substantial commercial value of hunting whales and implies a large number of whales are hunted. As the novel details, whales are hunted for the materials they provide for human use. The sperm whale produces oil, "as in the case of a very large Sperm Whale, will yield the bulk of one hundred barrels of oil" (Melville 246). The right whale is also said to "yield you some 500 gallons of oil and more" (Melville 265). The right whale is also a source of whalebone which, although in decline at the time of the novel, was previously used in the manufacturing of women's farthingales (Melville 266). A similar substance is harvested from the sperm whale's jaw in order to make "all sorts of curious articles including canes, umbrella sticks, and handles to riding-whips" (Melville 264). The financial value in whaling as well as the variety of products made from parts of whales highlight the extent to which whales are a commodity to humans. The idea of the whale as a commodity is juxtaposed with that of sublimity. The power of the sublime in this case does not stop humans from being able to hunt and consume the whale.

The way in which natural resources are used and consumed is further explored in 'Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish.' The acquisition of ambergris is, according to Hilda Urén Stubbings, "making a 'loose fish' out of at least one of the whales […] because once a whale was loosened, according to the customs of whaling, Stubb would be within his rights to explore it for precious ambergris" (58). The notion of a "loose fish" is explained in the eighty-ninth chapter, in which Ishmael speaks of laws around

possession. A fast fish is owned by "the party fast to it" while a loose fish is "fair game for anybody who can soonest catch it" (Melville 308). The dead whale from which Stubb harvests the ambergris is thus a loose fish because it was discarded and Stubb reached it soonest. Ishmael expands on these definitions stating: "Alive or dead a fish is technically fast, when it is connected with an occupied ship or boat, by any medium at all controllable by the occupant or occupants" (Melville 373). A fast fish thus belongs to anybody who can claim it while a loose fish, previously unclaimed, is free to whoever can most quickly acquire it. In both of these conceptions of possession, importance is placed on the ability of people to acquire a resource before others while no consideration for the preservation of such resources is mentioned. Natural resources are thus seen as free for people's consumption with the consumption taking priority over the life and longevity of the resource itself. This kind of emphasis on speed in acquiring resources is noted by Pomeroy et al. as they state that over-harvesting causes the collapse of fishery populations, which leads to: "the selection of more destructive and over efficient fishing technologies in the 'rush' to catch remaining stocks, thereby further depleting fishery populations" (96). The desire to secure fish quickly and efficiently thus worsens the issues which lead to this 'rush.' A focus on acquiring resources as quickly as possible harms not only the resources themselves but has a knock-on effect which causes "increased levels of poverty, economic stress, conflict and escalating violence among the various competing user groups in the coastal waters" (Pomeroy et al. 96).

The sick whales which Stubb convinces the crew of the *Bouton de Rose* to discard are fair game under the notion of fast and loose fish. Stubbings claims the interaction with the *Bouton de Rose* draws attention to the wasteful use of natural resources by displaying how whales are inevitably used imprudently under the existing circumstances (126). Stubb manipulates the captain of the *Bouton de Rose* into releasing the whales by convincing him "that only yesterday his ship spoke a vessel, whose captain and chief-mate, with six sailors, had all died of a fever caught from a blasted whale they had brought alongside" (Melville 453). His plan is able to work, as his accomplice "had not the slightest suspicion concerning the ambergris" (Melville 452). Ambergris, according to Melville, is a "soft, waxy" substance that is "so highly fragrant and spicy, that it is largely used in perfumery, in pastiles, precious candles, hair-powders, and pomatum" (425). Once Stubb has acquired the whale, he exclaims

“a purse! A purse!” as he finds the ambergris (Melville 455). A “purse” is associated with money. Stubb’s excitement about the ambergris is thus rooted in a desire for financial gain. The way in which Stubb goes about seeking this particular financial gain is by lying to the captain of the *Bouton de Rose* and concealing information from the man who helps him. This furthers Stubbings’ claim by showing how the acquisition of natural resources entails immoral tactics.

Moreover, the mindset of resources as loose fish prevails (Stubbings 127). Ishmael claims:

> What was America in 1492 but a Loose-Fish, in which Columbus struck the Spanish standard by way of wailing it for his royal master and mistress? What was Poland to the Czar? What Greece to the Turk? What India to England? What as last will Mexico be to the United States? All Loose-Fish (Melville 414).

He goes on to posit that “the Rights of Man and the Liberties of the World” as well as “all men’s minds and opinions” are also loose fish (Melville 414). The rules of possession which govern whaling practices, as Ishmael implies, extend to shape how people treat foreign land, and how people treat each other. The penultimate question Ishmael poses in this chapter is: “What is the great globe itself but a Loose-fish?” (Melville 414). Stubbings argues that this alludes to the irreversible impact made by technological exploitation on the natural environment (127). In my interpretation, Melville/Ishmael is suggesting that an entity with enough power could come to own the earth itself. This is consistent with Stubbings’ argument which implies the extent to which the natural environment has been utilised is so great that the world itself is essentially owned by those who use it. In addition to being owned, it had been ruined. Stubbings notes that although Melville would not have been able to predict the extent of the misuse of natural resources, the notion of the world as a loose fish reveals he was aware of an implicit moral anarchy in the behaviours mankind displayed towards the earth (126). The idea of “moral anarchy” here alludes to a lack of control or restraint in acquiring and utilising natural resources such that there are little to no regulations on how many loose fish one can claim. Those claiming loose fish would be states with the resources and capital needed to do so. As Edward Sugden notes: “The United States soon seized control of the whaling industry. In the southern

fisheries alone, they exploited superior ship design, the low cost of building materials, and a transnational workforce to have 700 vessels operating there compared to Britain's 34 in 1841" (24). This means that the United States, in Melville's time, would have been in the position to acquire loose fish.

The kind of moral anarchy that Stubbings highlights is alluded to by Pomeroy et al., as they note that effective governance and functioning infrastructure are fundamental to the viability of the global commons (95). In their absence, "state and non-state actors can engage in or support piracy, illicit commerce (smuggling and human trafficking), illegal fishing, environmental pollution […] while exploiting a country's territorial waters and exclusive economic zone" (Pomeroy et al. 95). This highlights how the notion of fast and loose fish is practised, as nations left vulnerable by a lack of effective governance are used for the acquisition of resources. These nations as fast and loose fish is further illustrated as Pomeroy et al. state: "Poorly governed or ungoverned maritime spaces also invite undue influence from predatory states seeking to exploit a country's offshore fisheries, energy, or natural resources" (95). These states are thus treated as loose fish.

The role of a body such as the International Whaling Commission and the current decline in the market for whale meat, however, reveals a shift in attitude towards natural resources. Rather than viewing each whale as a fast or loose fish, regulations are placed on how whales can be hunted. According to Robert Falkner, "By the early twentieth century, leading industrialised states had begun to introduce the first environmental policies at the domestic level, but it took until the 1970s for international society to establish states' general responsibility for the *global* environment" (102). Falkner goes on to note that:

> Environmentalist ideas originate in social and ideational shifts during the nineteenth century that occurred largely in response to the dramatically increased impact of human societies on the natural environment, brought about by the technological and economic changes of the industrial revolution (103).

Societal mindsets shifted in favour of humans' responsibility to the natural environment. These shifts included changes in how people viewed whales.

Lawrence and Phillips claim that society's perception of whales has shifted over the last 150 years (695). They state: "Animals that were considered horrifying monsters in Melville's time have been reconstructed into almost mythical creatures deserving of our respect and admiration" (695). In terms of tracking this shift, they note that international regulations in order to control the type and number of whales hunted were developed in the 1930s and that, "Beginning in the 1960s, the regulatory discourse around whales began to shift significantly, from an understanding of whale stocks as natural resources to a concern for the preservation of species" (696). Despite the notion of whales as endangered losing credibility following the IWC's 1986 moratorium on commercial whaling, sentiments against whaling have prevailed (Lawrence and Phillips 696). Lawrence and Phillips claim: "The anti-whaling discourse currently conceptualizes the whale neither as a resource to be managed nor as a species in danger of extinction, but as an animal with special qualities that make it inherently valuable" (696). This contrasts directly with the idea of whales as fast and loose fish.

Lawrence and Phillips go on to highlight how the image of the whale has also changed in popular culture over time (697). They note that films produced prior to and during 1977 (including a film adaptation of *Moby Dick*) portrayed whales in a negative light, as threats to humans, while "The movies produced after 1980 present a very different image of whales and their relationship to people" (Lawrence and Phillips 697). I would argue that Melville does not depict whales as wholly positive or negative during the novel. Throughout the novel, Moby Dick himself is portrayed as a dangerous monster who has harmed humans and eventually causes several deaths at the end of the novel. In Ahab's view, Moby Dick is the novel's antagonist. Melville, however, does not depict whales as solely malicious; they are shown in a positive light throughout the novel in the parallels drawn between whales and humans and their relationships with each other. They are also portrayed as sources of beauty and wonder, a representation which even Moby Dick receives. A notable example of a film with a positive representation of a whale is *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* (1986), in which "a humpback whale from the 20th century is needed to save mankind by replying to the probe" (Lawrence and Phillips 697). The films "most emblematic"

of the shift in cultural discourse around whales are *Free Willy* (1993) and its sequels (Lawrence and Phillips). Lawrence and Phillips state:

> Thus, the initial focus is an ethical one, in which the unique nature of the whale is highlighted through its connection to the boy. In *Free Willy II*, the film engages both the ecological and ethical discourses, as a crashed oil tanker endangers human and animal lives and Willy and Jesse must both work to save the day. *Free Willy III* refocuses squarely on an ethical conceptualization of the whale, as this time Willy is threatened by illegal whalers (698).

From this description of the films, it follows that the cultural discourse around whales after the shift includes narratives in which whales are innately connected to humans while also at risk of being harmed by unethical and irresponsible human behaviour.

In 'Whale Fall,' Rebecca Giggs describes her experience of attempting to aid a beached humpback whale (45). Giggs notes the high degree of public attention given to the whale and the "festive" atmosphere, despite the whale becoming re-stranded (45). The end of *Moby Dick* sees human lives lost in a battle with a whale. 'Whale Fall,' on the other hand depicts the death of a whale, despite humans' efforts to save it. Both texts, however, reveal similar relations between humans and whales. Giggs states, "[…] so astonished were the crowd and such a marvel was the animal that immoderate hope was difficult to quash" (Giggs 45). This hope is connected to the whale as a "marvel" and source of astonishment. Giggs thus implies that the extraordinary nature of the whale caused people to feel optimistic about its ability to be saved. The image of the whale as a sensation inspiring hope for its rescue contrasts with Melville's depiction of fast and loose fish. In 'Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish,' whales are seen as objects for possession and consumption while Giggs presents the beached whale as a creature whose life people wish to preserve. The whale's life, however, could not be saved. Giggs discusses how the whale is to be killed: "A bolt through the brain would take too long for the heart to register it; a shock to the heart wouldn't transmit to the brain instant death. Suffering was inevitable and visible" (47). The repeated mention of the whale's heart and brain here reminds the reader that the whale is a being capable of thinking and feeling; the whale's suffering is further impacted, and the reader wants it to be prevented. The way in which Giggs draws attention to

the whale's suffering reflects how Melville humanises whales in highlighting the suffering caused by whaling. Giggs, in contrast, depicts humans with an incentive to stop the whale's suffering even when its life cannot be saved.

Giggs discusses how whales who ingest litter, due to their layer of blubber, absorb "heavy metals and inorganic compounds found in pesticides, fertilisers, and the other pollutants that powder the modern sea" (50). She goes on to state, "I thought of the humpback in the dump. The whale as a landfill. It was a metaphor, and then it wasn't" (Giggs 50). This image of the whale as a site of garbage disposal, at first, appears to symbolise the damage to ocean inhabitants caused by humans. However, this image of a whale filled with garbage has been a literal occurrence. Srinivasan notes similar occurrences. Pilot whales, consumed by the Faroese people, are becoming inedible due to toxins from mining and agricultural runoff, and condensed emissions in the ocean (Srinivasan 9). Srinivasan states: "Whales consume much of the eight million metric tons of plastic that enter the oceans each year, which gather in swirling trash vortexes known as gyres and can extend for miles" (9). This highlights how humans' economic activity and unsustainable disposal of waste have had devastating consequences on whales. Srinivasan also notes that, "Ecologists have warned that the dramatic shifts associated with climate change could subject even relatively large whale populations to sudden extinction" (10). This means that although people, as Giggs shows, possess a desire to protect the lives of whales, damage to marine animals continues to be inflicted as the result of human behaviours.

As the whale dies, Giggs claims, "What felt important in that moment was the act of seeing this through to the end, of agreeing not to leave the whale alone. Kinship, I guess, was what we proffered" (53). Although attempts to save the whale failed, the compassion towards the whale remains, and this compassion is expressed through solidarity. The idea of "kinship" between humans and whales is expanded on: "Life on that scale – *mammalian* life on that scale – so unfamiliar and familiar simultaneously. Oh, the alien whale. The world-bound whale" (Giggs 53). Giggs' emphasis on the scale of the whale implies that it is the whale's immense size which renders it unfamiliar or "alien" to humans. The whale being a mammal, however, makes him familiar; humans and whales share a place in the class Mammalia. The familiarity of whales to humans is reflective of Melville humanising whales

throughout *Moby Dick*. Moreover, the idea of the whale as an unfamiliar, alien figure is conveyed by Melville as Ishmael states: "Dissect him how I may, then, I but go skin deep; I know him not, and never will" (Melville 396). Even if he physically dissects a whale, it will produce only a surface-level understanding. The whale is too complex a creature for Ishmael to truly, fully comprehend. Humans and whales may share connections, but we cannot understand the intricacies of the whale's thoughts and feelings. Giggs describing the whale as "world-bound" draws attention to the fact that the whale venturing away from the ocean is what caused its demise. In *Moby Dick*, Ahab and most of his crew die as the result of their journey on the sea in pursuit of a whale. 'Whale Fall,' on the other hand, details a whale dying as the result of it moving from sea to land.

Several clear parallels exist between these two texts: the depiction of a whale suffering, the way in which whales are humanised while still inspiring awe and wonder among people, and the idea of damage to the ocean environment caused by humans. They reveal how, despite a shift towards viewing whales as beings who ought to be protected rather than treated as expendable resources, whales are still harmed by exploitative and irresponsible actions committed by humans. Unlike in chapters such as 'Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish' the whale is not seen as a commodity to be hunted and stripped for parts. People come together with the intention to save it and its death is lamented. The desire to preserve the lives of whales is, however, juxtaposed with Giggs' mention of the whale's corpse in a rubbish dump. The whale has thus gone from a resource free to the fastest claimant to a piece of waste. Public sentiments towards whales and whaling may have shifted but irresponsible and exploitative actions by humans towards the natural environment prevail.

Both 'Whale Fall' and *Moby Dick* reveal how humans' perceptions of whales are nuanced and have, in some ways, changed over time. In addition to becoming more conscious of humans' responsibilities to the natural environment, humans view whales as creatures worth protecting, as opposed to resources or threats. Giggs and Melville both produce an image of the whale as simultaneously a friend or family member to humans and a foreign, mysterious being who cannot be fully known. Perhaps it is an undue focus on the idea of whales being separate from humans that has contributed to the kind of exploitation of natural resources which Stubbings and

Pomeroy et al. point out, as well as other types of environmental damage which Giggs notes. Despite an increased environmental consciousness and shifts in how whales are perceived, exploitative and unsustainable actions continue to harm oceans and their inhabitants. The events of *Moby Dick* culminate in the white whale causing the destruction of the *Pequod* and its crew, but humans have destroyed whales both directly through whaling and through environmental damage and unsustainable fishing practices. This means that humans are capable of causing destruction to sublime objects. Familiarity and kinship seem to be an incentive for people to strive for the protection of non-human animals. However, I believe the unfamiliarity of the whale is a contributing factor in it being perceived as a thing of beauty and magnificence. This magnificence could be used in combination with familiarity in providing humans with incentives to preserve the lives of whales, as people generally wish to live alongside objects of beauty. Unfortunately, the desire to be close to animals can also harm them and their habitats. Srinivasan illustrates this as she states: "At least thirteen million people worldwide have been going on whale-watching tours each year, leading to more and faster diesel-powered boats" (10). From both Giggs and Melville's texts, messages against irresponsible practices with regards to the ocean environment emerge. Melville depicts humans' desire to consume and use sea creatures as commodities as well as the prevalence of exploitative actions concerning natural resources and the dangers of over-using such resources while Giggs notes the consequences of waste dumped into the ocean. While individual attitudes appear to have moved towards an increased awareness of and support of environmental protection when it comes to whales in Giggs' text, environmental damage continues. Even though the whale himself is not regarded as a loose fish in this context, it seems as though Ishmael's suggestion that the world itself is a loose fish has unfortunately been proven true.

Conclusion

Throughout history, people appear to have been fascinated by the whale. Whales have been represented aesthetically in several different ways: in literature, in portraits, in the Bible, in accounts of Natural History, in films. What is the whale to us? What does it represent? Earlier depictions of the whale presented him as monstrous attacker, while more recent depictions have framed the whale as an asset to humanity and a being worth preserving. An aspect of the whale to which humans are particularly drawn is the sense of mystery around them. Their immensity rendered them difficult to accurately display in their entirety, leaving us with an incomplete idea of the whale. Presumably, in the face of the unknown, humans created the image of the monstrous whale. More recently, however, the image of the whale as a monster to be feared has disappeared and humans view whales as creatures to admire. Films portray whales as having a positive effect on people, whale watching tours are popular, and people listen to recordings of whales "singing." In addition to this aesthetic appreciation, people perceive a connection towards whales since, like us, they are large mammals who bond with each other and communicate vocally. Nonetheless whales have remained mysterious to us. Within this mystery, however, people can perceive a greater connection to the whale.

Melville's in particular represents whales in multiple ways, revealing different aspects of their relationship with humans. Moby Dick is portrayed as monstrous and capable of inflicting great physical harm on humans. This is most notably displayed in him being the cause of Ahab's missing leg. Ahab views Moby Dick as his antagonist and enlists the entire crew of the *Pequod* in his mission to destroy the white whale. Ahab's quest ultimately culminates in Moby Dick's success as the *Pequod* and nearly all her crew are destroyed at the climax of the novel. Moby Dick is undoubtedly presented as a threat, and the danger around him is exacerbated by his white colour. White renders him a blank space on which imagined danger can be projected. He appears as a void beneath the ocean's surface, which implies that looking into the ocean in search of meaning only leads to nothingness. However, Moby Dick is also portrayed as an object of beauty even within his representation as a monster. Whales, throughout the novel, are generally described with a sense of nobility as well as beauty, as Melville associates them with greatness. Melville also humanises whales in his depiction of

their behaviour. They are shown to experience the kind of emotions which humans experience. In their interactions with each other, they mimic aspects of human families and Melville compares their infants to those of humans. They are shown to care for one another, as humans care for their friends and families. Ishmael conceptualises a kind of familial bond with the whale. Furthermore, this humanised portrayal of whales increases the reader's ability to empathise with them when the novel displays the pain and suffering they endure as the result of being hunted by humans.

In its representation of the whale and the ocean environment, the novel highlights particular aesthetic experiences, namely those of the sublime and humans' responses to colours. Melville depicts the ocean and whales as sublime objects, as they incite fear as well as reverence among those who experience them. They are large in size, seemingly infinite, and capable of causing great destruction to people and man-made objects. The experience of the sublime allows for both the acknowledgement of a threat of danger as well as pleasure from the experience. For, the danger associated with these sublime objects is combined with their beauty and the awe and wonder they produce. Throughout the novel, Melville uses striking combinations of colours such as blue and yellow. Melville's use of colours creates backgrounds against which Ishmael and Ahab reflect on the human experience. Ahab considers the uncertainty which underpins human existence while Ishmael reflects on the presence of intuitions amidst doubts in his mind. The frequent references to water-gazing, which are connected to the blue of the ocean, highlight self-reflection and a search for a superior version of ourselves. The colours utilised throughout the novel also highlight how opposing forces can operate in unison; how one phenomenon is needed in order to for its opposite phenomenon to occur. Such opposing values, light and darkness, are encompassed in Ahab's mission to defeat the white whale. Moby Dick, being white in colour, represents light while Ahab represents darkness. Ahab essentially aims to defeat light by defeating the white whale.

The opposing values which Melville depicts are reflective of people's relationship with whales. On one hand humans are drawn to the mystery around whales. This mystery produces a sense of alienation around them. On the other hand, we are also attracted to whales due to the sense of familiarity produced by the traits we share with

them. They present both separation from us and connection to us as well as both potential danger and aesthetic beauty, all of which Melville portrays during the course of the novel.

Whales are also represented in relation to consumption. Melville outlines the consumption of whales and other marine animals as food, as well as the various ways in which whales are made into objects utilised by humans. From this tendency to consume marine life, the desire to secure resources as quickly as possible emerges. This leads to unethical and unsustainable methods of acquiring resources which harm both marine animals and consumers. Melville describes the process of acquiring resources quickly as the notion of fast fish and loose fish. The idea of a loose fish, a resource that belongs to whomever is most quick to claim it, is applied to areas outside of whaling such that the world itself is seen as a loose fish. Furthermore, the kind of unethical acquisition and use of resources that Melville highlights are seen in recent issues faced by fisheries. Unsustainable fishing practices threaten marine ecosystems and prevent a sufficient food supply while poor management of fisheries leads to weaker states being exploited for resources.

In addition to damaging methods of obtaining whales as natural resources, Melville also depicts the nature of whaling itself. During Melville's time, whaling formed a significant part of the United States' economy and the United States held a large amount of power over the global whaling industry. In addition to economic prosperity and employment, whaling had associations of honour and glory. Ishmael explores this as he dedicates a chapter to discussing the historical prestige around whaling. Melville, however, also portrays the cruelty associated with whaling. Throughout the *Pequod*'s voyage, the reader is shown the high level of violence and pain inflicted on whale populations due to whaling. In combination with Melville humanising whales, this pain is particularly striking. Whaling is currently monitored by the IWC, which was established to regulate international whaling and has imposed limitations on commercial whale hunting. Moreover, the public is generally opposed to whaling, and consumption of whale meat has decreased over recent years. The general public, as of recent years, also views whales in a positive light, wishing to listen to their sounds and witness them during whale-watching tours. Films made after 1980 have

represented whales as assets to humanity, and whales have been used to symbolise environmental conservation.

However, damage to the ocean environment, including that which does not target whales directly, remains. The presence of waste in the world's oceans as a result of human activity has caused whales to ingest plastic as well as substances which render their bodies poisonous. This harms not only the whales but groups of people whose lives depend on whale meat. Climate change may also result in the extinction of whale populations. Even activities which focus on bringing humans closer to whales have adverse effects on the environment.

Humans are thus capable of damaging and killing sublime objects. This has been, and continues to be, done both with and without the intention to kill whales. While the sublime is associated with danger, and whales have been historically represented as threatening, humans in fact pose significant danger to whale populations and the environment in which they live. This danger lies not only in hunting whales but in the indirect harms created by the spill-over effects of unsustainable practices. The desire to consume resources and acquire them as quickly as possible has been a significant factor in these harms, as a prioritisation of efficiency can damage marine populations. However, even at the point at which whales are to a much lesser extent seen as resources for consumption, humans' actions continue to harm them. We thus ought to consider not only the short-term suffering of individual whales but the long-term effects of our practices. While a feature of the sublime is the appearance of infinity, the risk of extinction shows us that the sublime is not in fact infinite.

The whale as a sublime object appears to be contradicted by the image of the whale as a resource to be hunted and used for parts. I argue that the kind of aesthetic experiences which Melville depicts throughout the novel can acts as an incentive to preserve the ocean and its inhabitants. As both Burke and Kant's accounts reveal, the experience of a sublime object is ultimately a pleasurable experience. This means that people have an incentive to preserve the existence of sublime objects, as the loss of the sublime would mean fewer pleasurable experiences. People have an interest in maintaining that which gives them pleasure. Thus, associating the ocean and whales with the sublime acts as an incentive to practise sustainability. The notion that whales

are beings worthy of reverence as opposed to expendable resources would allow for more responsible behaviour from humans. An idea of the sublime would also affect the way in which these objects are interacted with. Kant's theory of the sublime notes how a certain level of distance must be maintained in order for the sublime experience to occur. Thus, in treating the whale as sublime, we ought to avoid venturing too close. This would prevent situations in which whales and their habitats are damaged by humans' desire to be in close proximity to them. In 2017, a dolphin was killed in Argentina after several tourists took photographs of themselves holding the creature. An idea of marine animals as, not props, but beings worthy of reverence would have preserved the creature's life.

Furthermore, the aesthetics presented in the novel align with reflections on the human experience. Namely, the use of contrasting colours such as blue and yellow reflect the contrasting elements of humanity such as doubts and intuitions. Ishmael's discussion of water gazing is linked to Melville repeatedly noting the blueness of the ocean. Within this discussion of water gazing, Ishmael reveals how people are drawn to water due to a desire for fulfilment, a desire for a superior image of themselves. The blue of the ocean occurs alongside the whiteness of Moby Dick. This whiteness, which represents nothingness, existing beneath the blue water means that there is a possibility that the reflection and searching taking place as part of water gazing only reveals a void. This revelation, however, alludes to the fact that even if searching only leads to nothingness, the true value may lie in the search itself. Melville's use of colours in connection with such reflections of humanity highlights a link between the aesthetics of an environment and humans' relationship with that environment. For, if the ocean was not so blue, we may not be so drawn to looking into it.

The aesthetic experiences generated by sublime objects and colourful settings influence how people view the world and their place within it. Through the experience of the sublime we can view ourselves in relation to sublime objects. That is, we can acknowledge our smallness and lack of power in comparison to these objects. We can also take pleasure in our ability to rationalise in the face of the perceived infinite. Moreover we can enjoy the lack of imminent danger which comes from a certain level of distance from the object, such that in acknowledging the object's fearsomeness we can enjoy our own position of safety. From the ways in which different colours

interact with each other, we can associate symbolic meanings with these colours. Within these meanings we can reflect on the human experience. From the interaction between light and dark, we can see how contrasting elements of our own humanness can function in unison. Thus, a conception of the world in an aesthetic sense allows us to perceive our own position in the world and the way we function in it.

From the novel, one can gain a view of the sublime and colour theory. The ability to recognise such aesthetic experiences then translates into the ability to recognise them in the physical world. As we consider the experiences of the physical world which are pleasurable, experiences generated by sublime objects, colourful vistas, or bodies of water, we can appreciate why they are pleasurable because of notions of the sublime and colour theory. Recognising pleasurable experiences in the physical world gives us an incentive to preserve that world. The aesthetic phenomena portrayed in *Moby Dick* contrast with the novel's portrayal of whaling which renders sublime creatures as objects for consumption who undergo significant suffering. I argue, however, that both kinds of representations of the whale present interpretations in favour of sustainability. The reader can glean a message against the unnecessary suffering that results from whaling as well as one for preventing the extinction of whales. On the other hand, the reader can interpret Melville's use of the sublime and colour theory as the promotion of preserving the ocean and the creatures in it.

I would argue that throughout the novel, Ishmael displays a perspective which aligns with sustainability. His descriptions of the whale are appreciative while also acknowledging the limitations in his understanding of the creatures. In 'Loomings,' he states: "Chief among these motives was the overwhelming idea of the great whale himself. Such a portenous and mysterious monster roused my curiosity" (Melville 16). The way in which Ishmael describes the whale here reveals the respect and admiration he holds for such creatures. Ishmael also notes the importance of the ocean:

> Why upon your first voyage as a passenger, did you yourself feel such a mystical vibration, when first told that you and your ship were now out of sight of land? Why did the old Persians hold the sea holy? Why did the Greeks give it a separate deity, and own brother of Jove? (Melville 13)

Ishmael is thus aware of historical and cultural accounts of the significance of the ocean, as well as the individual's feeling of wonder in response to being on the sea. While Ishmael demonstrates being drawn to the whale and its environment, he also acknowledgement the limitations in his ability to fully understand the whale. Upon describing the whale's tail in great length Ishmael concludes: "Dissect him how I may, then, I go but skin deep. I know him not and never will" (Melville 396). This revelation occurs after Ishmael provides accounts of the whale' physical make-up as well as humans' cultural and historical representations of the whale. Although he shows a clear interest in understanding the whale from numerous perspectives, Ishmael acknowledges he can never understand the whale beyond the surface. This acknowledgement implies humans are small and limited in relation to objects and creatures in nature. To acknowledge this is to respect the natural environment, rather than claiming to be more powerful than it. Moreover, Ishmael's descriptions of the whale and the ocean reflect a perspective which considers them entities of value, worthy of preservation, as opposed to objects for use.

At the novel's conclusion, Ishmael is the sole member of the *Pequod*'s crew to survive: "Buoyed up by that coffin, for almost one whole day and night, I floated on a soft and dirgelike main. The unharming sharks, they glided by as if with padlocks on their mouths; the savage sea-hawks sailed with sheathed beaks" (Melville 599). Here, the sea which destroyed the *Pequod* is soft. Dangerous sharks and birds surrounding Ishmael do not harm him; they even appear hindered in their ability to inflict damage. Thus, it is those who demonstrate respect towards the natural environment and its inhabitants who can survive its power.

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